



## What Are Mealybugs?

Have you noticed your plants or trees suffering from bare branches or unseasonal leaf drop? If so, you may be looking at a mealybug infestation. These small soft-bodied insects feed on a variety of plants and trees, including many species found in the desert. You may also spot their cotton-like, waxy egg sacs attached to leaves and branches of your plants.

## How Do They Harm Plants?

Mealybugs thrive in warm climates, and if left untreated, infestations can cause leaf drop, stunted growth and fruit damage to your plants. While plants in good health can withstand a small population of mealybugs, a large infestation can significantly weaken and potentially kill the host plant.

## How Should I Treat Mealybugs?

One of the most important steps in mealybug control is to prevent them from entering your garden or landscape in the first place. By checking new plants, pots and other items being introduced into your landscape, you give yourself the opportunity to stop a potential infestation.



Mealybug infestation caused bare branches and leaf drop at the top of this cascalote tree.

If you do see mealybugs on your plants, physically pruning off infested branches and leaves is one way to manage these pests. If the plant can withstand water pressure, spraying down the portion of the plant where mealybugs are present is another option. Horticultural oils, insecticides and other chemicals are widely available but have proven to be a difficult way to control mealybugs.



**Left** Close-up picture of a mealybug. Photo by D Kuru is licensed under CC-BY-SA-3.0-AT



**Right** Picture of mealybug infested plant covered in wax and insect waste. Photo by Forest and Kim Starr is licensed under CC-BY-2.0

