

## Insect and Mite Galls on Plants

### How Galls are Formed

Galls are abnormal swellings of plant tissue, usually on leaves and twigs. They may be caused by insects, mites, bacteria, fungi, or nematodes. Most insect and mite galls are caused by chemicals produced by the egg laying and feeding activities. The chemicals cause the affected plant cells to swell. Aphids, midges, wasps, psyllids, beetles as well as eriophyid mites can cause galls.

### Are Galls Harmful?

Galls may disfigure twigs and foliage, but they do not seriously affect the health of trees and shrubs. Chemical control is usually not recommended. If a plant appears unhealthy, search for additional causes such as cultural problems or diseases.

### Cultural Control

To prevent completion of the insect or mite life cycle prune out twig and stem galls while they are green. Small holes in the gall indicate that the inhabitants have escaped to repeat the cycle. To control leaf galls rake up and destroy infested leaves.

### The Following Galls May Be Controlled With Horticultural Oil.

#### Cooley Spruce Gall

Pineapple-like galls on the tips of blue spruce and Douglas fir are caused by an adelgid (aphid-like insect). Spray with a horticultural oil at the dormant rate before bud break in March, or use the summer rate in early April, or July-August. Prune out small infestations in summer.

#### Eastern Spruce Gall

Pineapple-like galls on the bases of twigs of Norway and white spruce, and occasionally black and red spruce are also caused by an adelgid. Spray with a horticultural oil at the dormant rate just before bud break in March, or spray the summer rate in July to August just as the galls open. Prune out green galls in summer.



*Oak Apple Gall*



*Oak Gall*



*Eye Spot Gall*



*Cooley  
Spruce  
Gall*



*Eastern  
Spruce  
Gall*

### **Maple Bladder Gall**

This gall is caused by an eriophyid mite, and is generally found on silver and red maple. Spray trees with a horticultural oil at the dormant rate before bud break in spring. Once galls have formed on leaves, it is too late for treatment. These galls rarely require treatment.



*Maple Bladder Gall*

### **Hickory Leaf Stem Gall**

This gall is caused by an aphid. Spray trees with a horticultural oil at the dormant rate in late spring just as new growth begins. Sprays are not effective once the galls begin to develop.

**USE INSECTICIDES WITH CARE. READ THE LABEL DIRECTIONS. FOLLOW ALL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.**

Mention of trade names in this publication does not constitute an endorsement by the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, Maryland Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources.

**Author: John A. Davidson, Extension Entomologist, Department of Entomology, University of Maryland, College Park, MD**

**Revised 4/92: Mary Kay Malinoski, Regional Specialist, Home and Garden Information Center, 12005 Homewood Rd. Ellicott City, MD 21042**