

## GALL MITE

### BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION

A gall mite is a curious insect, which generally feeds on the foliage of trees. It essentially has a two-stage life cycle, immature (encased within the gall), and adult, which feeds on the foliage and causes the formation of the gall. It does over winter in the adult stage and hence can be quite invasive if not properly treated.

### APPEARANCE AND SYMPTOMS

The gall is one of the most characteristic insect related markings on foliage and can appear quite threatening when first noticed. It manifests itself as a long "spike" erupting perpendicular to the foliage. This serves as a maturation nest for young mites. An adult mite, which either has over wintered or freshly hatched, will ascend to the foliage (the underside) and feed by an inoculating-like method (tiny holes rather than large bite marks). This damage cannot be seen without a lens. The damaged spot then rapidly erupts producing a pouch-like gall. The adult then resides within the gall and continues feeding until it lays eggs (at a prolific rate). When the young mite matures it escapes the gall and continues the cycle once more. Hence the characteristic spike is the most recognizable damage caused by the gall mite.

### CONTROLS

The preferred method of control involves suffocation of the mite by a dormant oil spray. The dormant oil is an emulsification, which can be applied easily with the Dial-a-Spray. Dormant oil can only be applied before the buds have broken for the year as the heavy hydrocarbon-based oils will block the stomata of the leaf (sites of gas exchange) and burn the tissue.

Keeping the plant as healthy as possible with slow, deep watering once a week depending on weather and with regular fertilizing is the best prevention against any insect or disease.

Although the gall mite is unattractive and quite frightening at first sight, its presence usually does not impair the growth of the tree.