

Poinsettia thrips

What is Poinsettia thrips?

Poinsettia thrips (*Echinothrips americanus*) is an emerging pest of greenhouse and ornamental species in eastern USA and in some parts of Europe and Asia. This pest has the potential to vector viruses and can impact on integrated pest management programs.

What does it look like?

Adult Poinsettia thrips, which grow up to 1.6 mm in length, are distinguishable from other thrips by their general appearance. Their body is dark brown with red internal pigment, and the unusually slender forewings have transverse light and dark bands. Legs are bicoloured (brown and yellow), while their slender antennae are predominantly yellow.

Larvae are predominantly yellow and have bright red eyes. The segmented abdomen has a row of hairs present on each side.

What can it be confused with?

Common green house thrips (*Heliothrips haemorrhoidalis*) is the only thrip species in Australia that may be confused with Poinsettia thrips. Common greenhouse thrips have no red internal pigment or yellow legs, and the forewings are paler in the adult.

What should I look for?

Poinsettia thrips feed on leaf tissue and the damage of light spots on the leaf is very similar to typical mite or thrips damage. It will feed on both the upper and lower leaf surfaces but is usually more common on the lower surface. Their numerous but shallow punctures result in injured tissue with a shrunken appearance. Infested leaves will have numerous black specs on them that are faecal droppings of the thrips. They also will feed on parts of the flower.



Lance Osborne, University of Florida

Mature Poinsettia thrips are darker in colour, have wings and a thinner body shape



PaDiL (Laurence Mound)

Fixed specimen of adult Poinsettia thrips



How does it spread?

Adult Poinsettia thrips can fly and distribute through crops rapidly. Larvae are unable to fly, but readily distribute between plants by walking and through human and animal assistance. Most long distance movement is through transportation of infested nursery stock or other plant material.

Where is it now?

Poinsettia thrips is present throughout eastern USA, but is more predominant in the southern regions. This pest has also been reported in Europe, Japan, Taiwan and Thailand.

How can I protect my production nursery from Poinsettia thrips?

Check your production nursery frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common pests of the nursery production industry so you can tell if you see something different.

If you see anything unusual, call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
1800 084 881**



Immature Poinsettia thrips are pale green in colour with distinctive red eyes

Lance Osborne, University of Florida

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