

Spanish Moss

Tinandsia usneoides

SYMPTOMS

Long gray strands of moss hanging from limbs and branches. The strands may be up to 20 feet in length and are intertwined. Heavily loaded branches may be weighted down.

DESCRIPTION OF PEST

Spanish moss is an epiphyte (a plant that grows on another plant, but not as a parasite). Epiphytes use the host plant only for support. Spanish moss is a true flowering plant and will produce tiny, yellowish-green flowers in late spring to early summer. Plants produce seeds which are wind-blown and may lodge in bark crevices where they germinate. Spanish moss does not produce roots, but has small overlapping scale-like leaves which trap water and airborne nutrients. This plant grows along the coastal plains of the Southeast.

Spanish moss does not directly harm other plants, but may indirectly cause problems with weighting down branches or shading out foliage. Plants that are less vigorous may have a larger population of Spanish moss due to the increase in sunlight to the branches where it is hanging.

MANAGEMENT

CHEMICAL

There are no chemical controls

BIOLOGICAL

Increasing tree vigor through proper nutrition may help. Removal by hand is the only practical method of reducing the population.



Closeup of Spanish moss strands. Notice the brown seed pods.



A magnified view of a dried flower.

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Spanish moss hangs from a crape myrtle in Moncks Corner, SC



Notice the tiny scale-like leaves that collect and hold water and airborne nutrients.

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