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Believe it or not many summertime plant insect problems (especially scale) can be controlled by applying a winter dormant oil spray now. I know it is highly purified oil especially formulated to apply to plants, but every time I think of oil I think of southern fried cooking. In the south we call it grease, tend to fry about anything and would starve to death without a frying pan. Frying pans and southern boys have a long heritage. This is one reason why my daughter's boy friend's company in Iraq thought it was hilarious when he was whacked in the head with a frying pan. They were out searching for insurgence when a surprised lady let her frying pan fly.

A winter dormant oil spray is a biologically friendly way to control tough to kill insects like scale. Scale are called scale because of a covering or scale they produce to cover and protect themselves. This covering is impermeable to most insecticides making them very hard to kill with typical contact insecticides. What an oil spray does is to coat the scale preventing the movement of oxygen therefore suffocating or drowning the insects. The only limitation is that to get good control you must cover the entire plant. Spraying the top and bottom of all the leaves, stems and limbs of a large tree or shrub is troublesome. Always follow all label directions, they are the law.

Some plants are more prone to get scale. Plants such as camellias, Euonymous, Pittosporums, maples, peaches, plums, cherries, and just about any plant under stress should be watched carefully to catch scale populations at an early stage. Once scale attack a plant they suck the plant juices from the plant, produce honeydew that fall on the leaves, cause black sooty mold growth and cause the leaves to fall.

We at Clemson University Extension Service provide many ways for you to learn more about gardening, decorating and country living. First of all, you can take our Master Gardener Class. Sign-up for the class by paying your \$150 materials fee at the Extension Office before January 13th. Call 843/661-4800 for more information. Next, you can take classes at the Red Barn at the Pee Dee State Farmers Market. We in cooperation with the S.C. Dept. of Agriculture present our first class for the New Year "Starting Plants from Seed" by our Florence County Master Gardener Co-President, Barbara Matthews. This class is on Thursday, January 12th 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Cost \$10.00 per person. Call Betty Boykin at 843/665-5154 for more information. Finally you can watch both of our Emmy Award winning T.V. programs, Making-It-Grow (MIG) and Down Home with Tony and Amanda. MIG can be seen at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday nights on regular ETV.

However, at present Down Home can be seen on digital cable and some satellite systems on the SC Channel (channel 802 on Time Warner Cable). Also, you can view both programs on the web at www.mig.org.

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