

invade the plant. They are feeding on an exudation from the aphids and are an excellent indicator that this problem is present. Treatment is to spray with a suitable pesticide, and those based on the organic insecticide pyrethrum are both effective and user friendly. Other sprays are available and many gardeners have their own recipes such as soapy water sprays and other family remedies. Wherever possible apply these treatments at the time of day when bees are not active but avoid the evenings so that leaves are not left wet overnight.

Begonias are also attractive to the usual chewing insects which delight in making small holes in all the leaves rather than just eating one and leaving the rest for us to enjoy! Again, pyrethrum based sprays are effective so long as you catch the insects at work; there are other chemical sprays available with longer lasting effects and you may eventually be forced to seek these alternatives although I really don't like using them.

Nematodes

Nematodes are parasitic worms and are the most numerous multi-cellular animals on earth. A handful of garden soil will contain thousands, mostly beneficial. However some few are harmful to plants and will inhabit and feed upon both roots and leaves. Nematode feeding in plants will reduce the flow of water and nutrients into the plant, increasing its susceptibility to other stress factors such as over-watering and insufficient or incorrect nutrition. If you suspect that nematodes are attacking your plants examine the roots - nematode infestation will be indicated by cysts or knots on the roots. Treatment is available in the form of a chemical solution with which the area surrounding the plant is saturated. Ask your nursery to recommend a suitable product. The only other solution, and perhaps the best one, is to destroy the infected plant and avoid planting in that spot for several months. Take cuttings before destroying the plant if it is not too late.

Prevention

Again I stress that prevention is the best way to deal with likely pests or diseases. Keep your plants growing strongly by proper fertilising, watering and pruning and ensure a flow of fresh air round indoor and glass house grown pots.