

Blackcurrant Gall Mite or 'Big Bud Mite'

The Blackcurrant Gall Mite or 'Big Bud Mite' as it is more commonly called, is an important and widespread pest of blackcurrants, causing reduction of vigour and more significantly the spread of a virus-disease called Reversion Virus.



DAMAGE:

The mites which are invisible to the naked eye, live and breed within blackcurrant buds, causing a condition known as 'big bud'. The mites feed on tissue within the developing buds. There may be several thousand mites within a single bud.

As attacked buds begin to swell during the summer, they soon become noticeably round and distorted and are very conspicuous after leaf fall. Healthy buds are pointed and longer rather than broad. In the following spring, they swell further and although they may open they do not usually produce leaves or flowers. The swollen buds measure up to 15mm across and remain on the bushes until June or July when they eventually dry out and die. Heavy infestation of buds and shoots affects bush development and reduces cropping.

More importantly, if a bush develops even a single 'big bud' it is doomed to eventually get Reversion Virus for which there is no cure. 'Ben Gairn' is the only blackcurrant variety resistant to Reversion Virus and is ideal for areas where Big Bud Mite/Reversion Virus is common.

CONTROL:

There are no chemicals available to amateurs to control this pest. Removing and burning shoots with 'big bud' from lightly infested bushes in late winter will limit infestations, although it will only be a matter of time before the bush shows the first signs of Reversion Virus. Badly affected bushes should therefore be removed and burned immediately after fruiting. Bushes suffering from Reversion Virus should be dug up and burned as soon as the symptoms of the disease are diagnosed.

Ensure that new bushes are Ministry Certified. Consider growing blackcurrant variety 'Ben Hope' which is resistant to the Blackcurrant Gall Mite. Do not plant clean stock near old bushes that are infested with mites.