

Leafhoppers & Spittlebugs

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Leafhoppers (Cicadellidae) or sharpshooters (Fig. 1) and spittle bugs or froghoppers (Cercopidae) are related and resemble each other. Leafhoppers are often slender (torpedo-like) and rarely exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in length- most are much smaller. Spittlebugs are a little larger as a rule, and are stouter (fatter) than leafhoppers. Leafhoppers have one or more rows of small spines along the length of the hind tibia (Fig. 2), while spittlebugs (Fig. 3) have but a few stout spines on the hind tibia. Spittlebug nymphs create a frothy foam (Fig. 4) within which they hide and feed. Spittlebugs are not much of a pest in our area. Leafhoppers can be a serious problem on a number of ornamental plants such as roses and several fruit trees. Leafhoppers cause several types of damage to plants and are usually quite host specific. The types of damage they cause include chlorosis (often clusters of rosettes (Fig. 5) or white spots usually concentrating along the sides of the midrib) and sap loss; several transmit diseases such as curly-top on beans; some cause stunting or leaf-roll; some cause damage to twigs when they lay eggs. Leafhoppers secrete honeydew and when sufficient numbers are present there can be a build up of sooty mold fungus on the honeydew.

If leafhoppers become a problem, they can be managed by products at garden stores that list leafhoppers on the label and that are clearly labeled for use on the target plant. Follow label directions carefully if insecticides are used.



**Fig. 2. A sharpshooter.
Note the multiple spines on
the hind leg. By. K. Grey**

**Fig. 1. Rose leafhoppers.
Author unknown.**



Fig. 3. A spittlebug. By K. Grey.



Fig. 4. Spittle mass of a frog hopper. By A.L. Antonelli.



Fig. 5. Typical leafhopper damage. By A.L. Antonelli.

References

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