

# Pest Profile



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**Common Name:** Cotton (Melon) Aphid

**Scientific Name:** *Aphis gossypii*

**Order and Family:** Hemiptera, Aphididae

**Size and Appearance:**

	Length (mm)	Appearance
<b>Egg</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When first deposited, the eggs are yellow, but they soon become shiny black in color.</li> <li>- The eggs normally are deposited on catalpa and rose of Sharon.</li> </ul>
<b>Nymph (s)</b>	0.5 – 1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nymphs resemble adult aphids except for size.</li> <li>- The nymphs vary in color from tan to gray or green, and often are marked with dark head, thorax and wing pads, and with the distal portion of the abdomen dark green.</li> <li>- The body is dull in color because it is dusted with wax secretions.</li> </ul>
<b>Adult</b>	1.0 – 2.0 (wingless) 1.1 – 1.7 (winged)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The body of the wingless parthenogenetic females is quite variable in color: light green mottled with dark green is most common, but also occurring are whitish, yellow, pale green, and dark green forms. The legs are pale with the tips of the tibiae and tarsi black. The cornicles also are black.</li> <li>- Small yellow forms apparently are produced in response to crowding or plant stress.</li> <li>- Winged parthenogenetic females; head and thorax are black, and the abdomen yellowish green except for the tip of the abdomen, which is darker. The wing veins are brown. The egg-laying (oviparous) female is dark purplish green; the male is similar.</li> <li>-Have cornicles, which resemble “tailpipes”</li> </ul>

**Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.):** Sucking

**Host plant/s:** Melon aphid has an extensive host range. It is a cosmopolitan pest that feeds on numerous kinds of plants; in southern California, it is especially injurious to citrus. This species feeds on a wide variety of plants (members of 25 plant families) including asparagus, beans, begonia, catalpa, citrus, clover, cucurbits, cotton, ground ivy, gardenia, hops, hydrangea, okra, spinach, strawberries, tomatoes, violet and weeds. Some of the crops it attacks besides cucurbits and citrus also include cotton. Host weeds include milkweed, jimsonweed, pigweeds, plantain, and field bindweed.

**Description of Damage:** Melon aphids feed on the underside of leaves, or on growing tip of vines, sucking nutrients from the plant. The foliage may become chlorotic and die prematurely. Their feeding also causes a great deal of distortion and leaf curling, hindering photosynthetic capacity of the plant. In addition, they secrete a great deal of honeydew, which provides a substrate for growth of sooty mold, so the quality of fruit may be impaired and the photosynthetic capacity of foliage further hindered.

In addition, these insects vector a number of viruses. In the San Joaquin Valley, this aphid can vector cucumber mosaic, zucchini yellow, and watermelon mosaic viruses, among others. These virus diseases may be more destructive to crops than direct aphid feeding. The end result of feeding by this aphid is loss of vigor, stunting, or even death of the plants.

#### **References:**

- Capinera, J.L. (2001). Handbook of Vegetable Pests. Academic Press, San Diego. 729 pp.  
Cucurbits Melon Aphid. [UC Online Pest Management Guide](#). (29 February 2016).  
Hogue, C. L. (2015). *Insects of the Los Angeles basin*. J. N. Hogue (Ed.). Los Angeles, LA: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.