

# Scale

Orchids can be destroyed by two species of insects called **Scale**. Both cause injury by sucking plant sap through piercing, slender mouthparts and injecting toxic saliva into the foliage, stem, and in some cases root tissue.

Scale are mobile for a short period of time. Once they have found a suitable feeding place they insert their mouthparts, lose their legs and antennae and start producing their shell cover. This shell cover is how we identify the species of scale we have. The scientists have stated that white and hard shells are Boisduval scale and the soft and brown shells belong to the coccus hesperidum scale. In reality both species have hard and soft shells at different times within their life cycle so identification should be done visually.



Boisduval



Coccus Hesperidum

**Prevention and Control:** There is no real practical method to prevent scale except to isolate **new** plants for two weeks. Daily inspection is the best method to control the insect. If you can stay on top of the problem before it takes hold you will have fewer losses.

**Eradication:** When the insect takes hold scale can be found on leaves, stems and even roots.



Small fluffy patches of immature scale

When a plant is infected as above, remove it from the medium and treat the entire plant including the tops of roots. It is most important that the dried sheathing is removed before treatment. The little critters love to hide where they cannot be seen.

Using a soft bristled toothbrush scrub 100% of the leaves, stems and root tops with the following solution:

Mix into a spray bottle

1/3 Murphy Oil Soap (premixed to label directions)

1/3 70% Isopropyl (Rubbing Alcohol)

1/3 Tap Water

The Alcohol kills the adult scale on contact and the Murphy Oil smothers the eggs. Repeat this whole process in two to four weeks.