

## MEALY BUG

### **Description:**

The Citrus Mealy bug and the Long Tailed Mealy bug.

### **Detection:**

Mealy bugs are off-white in colour and have oval flattened bodies growing to about 3mm long. Waxy strands that resemble legs occur along the sides of the body and some species also have a long "tail." Normally they leave small cottony masses, their eggs, where the leaves join onto the stem. They like dark places so be sure to check under the leaves and well inside the foliage of a plant regularly. A severe infestation will cause wilting, discolouration and stunted growth of a plant. They also excrete a sticky honeydew which could attract a black sooty mould. Another type of mealy bug lives on the root system of the plant in the soil. They suck sap from the roots and if the plant is left untreated it will eventually turn yellow and die. They can normally be seen in the water tray of the plant or on the surface of the soil.

### **Control:**

Control can be difficult because of the 'fluffy' coating that covers the bugs, this prevents and protects them from sprays affecting them so the best way is to swab off the white cottony egg mass with an alcohol-soaked cloth (methylated or white spirit). You may also wipe the whole plant carefully, but some plants will burn from the alcohol so test a small area first.. Mist the insects with a mild soapy solution and repeat if necessary on a weekly basis. For severe infestations, a systemic chemical would be most effective as this would be taken in by the insect rather than having to penetrate the mealy bug's waxy coating.