

Mealybugs seem to be a problem on houseplants in the winter months. Although most homes are frequently drier at that time over watering and/or excess humidity favor insect multiplication.

You may have noticed cotton-like masses on your plants. Closer examination would show that these relatives of scale insects are oval shaped and look white because of the waxy coating on their bodies.

They may appear not to move at all but if you watch you will note that they slowly crawl on the undersides of leaves. They especially like crevasses at the base of leaves making it difficult to get rid of them by mechanical means such as scraping. Who cares? Your plants! Mealybugs use their sucking mouth parts to withdraw fluid from plants, gradually weakening them. This makes the plants susceptible to diseases. Mealybugs should be taken seriously as each female can lay over 500 eggs!

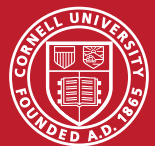
Mealybugs are often difficult to control. The best time to kill them is when they have just emerged and before they have formed a waxy coat. Since there are often many generations the indoor gardener must be vigilant. What to do? You can

pick them off by hand or use a swab dipped in alcohol. I personally find this tedious and I would probably never get around to the repetition that is needed especially if one has a large number of plants. The easiest treatment is to wash affected plants in a dilute solution of detergent in water (2 teaspoons detergent per gallon). Wash off the plants being sure to cover the undersides, then rinse them. Examine your plants at regular intervals and repeat as needed. 🍷



## Mealybugs on Houseplants

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