

Orius Banker/Companion Plants to Combat Thrips Population Spikes - Peter Armando, Rick Yates- rev 4.6.11

Orius can be slow to build up to helpful numbers in spring greenhouses using the traditional “Black Pearl” pepper banker plant approach. Inundative releases can be expensive. The following program is designed to economically utilize Orius (Oriline i) to avoid spikes in a thrips population as the weather warms in early spring and beyond. This program is in addition to the BCA’s already in place to control thrips such as predatory mites and beneficial nematodes.

As the weather warms make 3-4 consecutive weekly releases of 1 Orius per 10 sq ft. Release in and around blooming plants because Orius can feed on pollen in the absence of thrips. Orius also can feed on spider mites and caterpillar eggs. Peter Armando, Griffin, encourages growers to back up 5 weeks from Mother’s day to start the program, although it would still have value if started later. Orius like to lay eggs near developing flower buds and this timing matches up well for many crops. Peter adds that the best time to release Orius is late in the day when the louvers are closed and thrips are active.

Certain plants can serve as banker or companion plants for Orius, serving to provide abundant pollen but also to attract thrips to where Orius may congregate. Examples include: alyssum, African marigolds, chrysanthemums, gerbera daisies, ivy geraniums and peppers. Christine Champagne from Grower Direct Greenhouses, Somers, CT has observed that Cosmos, Sensation Mix, (Sensation White especially), is particularly well suited to encouraging Orius populations. Release Orius on and around



these plants. Peter suggests adding a breeder pile or sachet of the predator mite, *A. cucumeris* (*Amblyline cu*), to the companion plant to feed on the thrips attracted to the pollen source while Orius numbers build.