

# The Hidden Pest - Lace Bugs!

by Gloria Shusdock, CMG

## **Broadleaf evergreens**

### ***Rhododendron, Azalea, Andromeda***

*During the fall clean-up of the garden, much to my surprise, I found what turned out to be a hidden pest affecting some of the broad leaf evergreens; **lace bugs**. I initially thought the mottled leaves were the result of the severe drought. Not so! The underside of the leaves were covered with black spots and very tiny black bugs. Two thorough sprayings of Neem Oil finally killed the bugs. I've seen another FGC member with a *Rhododendron* infected. So, check your plants, you too may have this hidden pest in your garden.*

Adults and nymphs suck chlorophyll from the underside of leaves. This causes the upper surface to appear stippled with minute white spots. Later, these small spots merge and the leaves turn yellow. Heavily infested plants become unsightly and vitality is reduced. Severe infestations may cause pre-mature leaf drop on shade trees, and even the death of small shrubs. The presence of these pests can also be determined by the black or brown fecal spots they leave on the lower leaf surface.

**Biologic Control** – Unfortunately this often fails to provide adequate control especially for plants located in full sun.

**Chemical Control** – Contact insecticidal soap, horticultural oil, and Pyrethrum Blends and conventional insecticides can be used. The underside of the leaves must be thoroughly sprayed when using contact insecticides for control to be adequate. The chemicals are not absorbed by the leaves.



Andromeda in my garden



Azelea plant in my garden

