

# Fast Facts - Spittlebugs

By Nanette Londeree

## Signs

- ❑ Adult insects that resemble leafhoppers but characteristically sit froglike with the head elevated
- ❑ Adult insects (froghoppers), about 0.25 inch long generally brown or green and dull colored with a ring of spines on the apex of the tibia which distinguishes them from leafhoppers
- ❑ Larvae that are greenish, soft-bodied, leafhopper-like, and about 0.25 inches long

## Symptoms

- ❑ Adults observed jumping (up to 2 feet) from plant to plant
- ❑ Masses of thick foam seen on a wide variety of herbaceous plants in spring

## Cause

- ❑ One of the species of froghopper larvae in the *Cercopidae* family of insects
- ❑ Foamy mass is produced by nymphs after they begin to feed; thought to be a protection from predators and drying

## Optimal Conditions / Habits

- ❑ A wide range of plants including strawberry, legumes and many flowers
- ❑ Spittlebugs are more likely to become abundant on woody plants when they migrate from nearby herbaceous plants

## Treatment

### Prevention:

- ❑ Maintain good garden sanitation; spittle bugs overwinter as eggs laid on plant stems
- ❑ Cut weeds or wash spittlebugs off alternate hosts in the spring before the insects mature and can spread

### Elimination:

- ❑ Tolerate the situation until it passes, a matter of a few weeks.
- ❑ Wash nymphs off plants with a forceful stream of water; repeat two to three times if needed

## Good Guy / Bad Guy?

- ❑ A moderately bad guy – more of a nuisance pest
- ❑ As they suck plant juices, heavy infestations can distort plant tissue and slow plant growth
- ❑ Generally do not seriously harm established woody plants



Middle and bottom photos courtesy of UC Davis IPM website