

GROWERTALKS

Pest Management

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2026 Thrips parvispinus Update

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Over the last two years, a lot of fog has burned off around *Thrips parvispinus* (Tp). The industry knows more than it did and, more importantly, has a working answer for what to do about it. Identification is one of the places the fog has genuinely lifted.

Most growers know the name now and watch for it, but recognition on the ground is a different story. In more than one case, a grower treated what looked like an ordinary problem with Western flower thrips (WFT) and got no results. A closer look revealed a different species.

The leadership decision

Speed has a direct impact on results. Tp reproduces quickly enough that a short delay is often the difference between a killable population and one that becomes a permanently installed budget item.

Last year, a small grower discovered a suspected infestation and acted within days, rather than waiting to confirm it first. He salvaged a shipment that a slower response would likely have lost entirely. Tp breeds quickly, so the grower's fast action saved a lot of money.

By contrast, a slow or fitful remediation means a facility still wrestles with the consequences months later. How willing management is to walk toward the problem shapes how large and expensive the fix becomes. By pre-approving quick reaction to trigger-point events, both grief and costs will drop.

A field playbook

That willingness carries into the field, where the IPM team's playbook has its own new rules, starting with the first one: This is not WFT with a different name.

- Tp hides among the leaf tips, not so often in the flowers.
- It moves faster and has a tail-flip defense that WFT doesn't have.
- The pesticides for WFT don't work as well.
- The ones that do tend to increase resistance among two-spotted spider mites.

A program built for WFT and simply pointed at Tp underperforms. A treatment designed for Tp, however, does work. Prevention is the first step, as "The Karate Kid"'s Mr. Miyagi well knew: The best way to avoid a punch is not to be there and the cheapest outbreak to fight is the one that never starts.



Heidi Doering, national ornamental specialist at Koppert, put the same idea into field terms: “I tell growers to assume everything coming in is dirty. Don’t assume it’s clean, and look for Tp.”

Tp’s dark-bodied adult female and yellow larva shelter along a leaf vein.

That shift—treating incoming material as infested by default rather than trusting someone else—is rising as standard guidance, not an extra precaution. Use dips and sprenches to cut the load on incoming material.

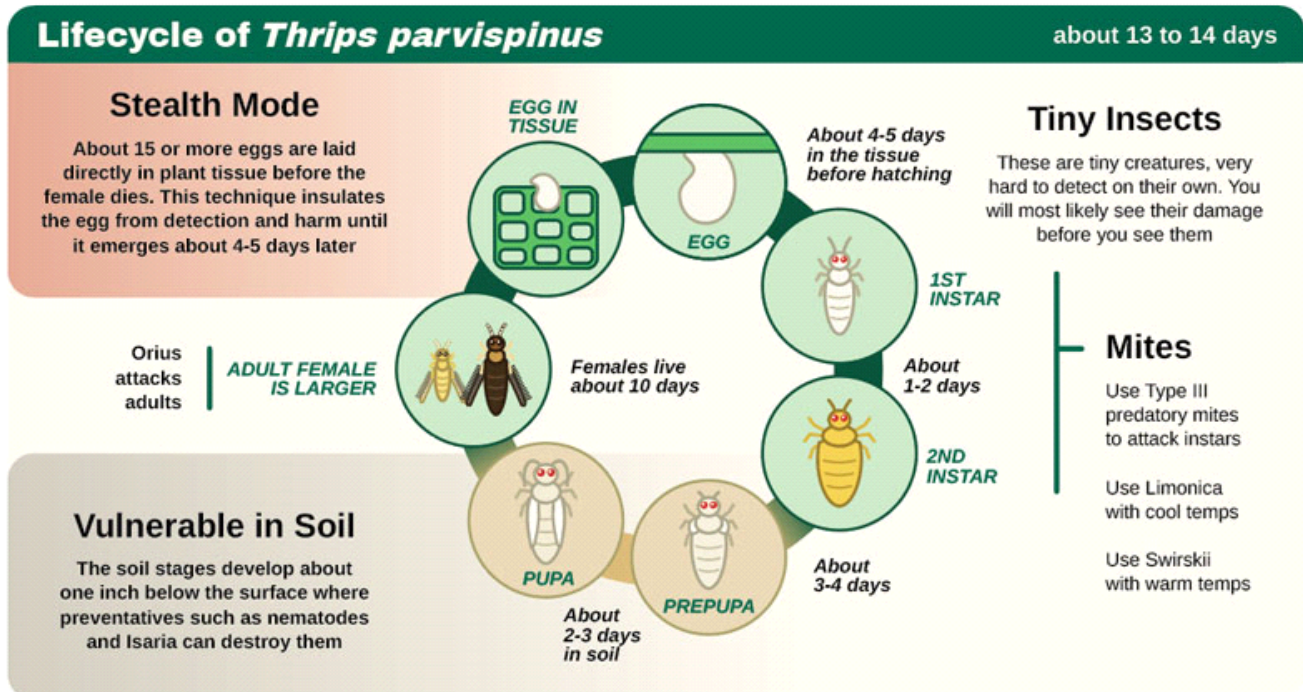
She points to a simple way to test the assumption before Tp becomes a problem: pull a small sample of cuttings from a variety with a history of trouble, seal them in a container and watch for seven to eight days to see what emerges.

Prevention is more than the leaves

Research has confirmed the pest pupates roughly an inch deep in the growing medium, not on the plant. Soil-targeted treatments exploit that, timed to hit the pupal stage before it re-emerges as adults.

“Either a soil mite or a nematode,” confirms Chris Anzell, a Koppert technical advisor. Foliar sprays alone, he notes, never reach it.

Crop host matters, too. A University of Florida trial found insecticides that performed well on one ornamental crop produced no measurable control on another. The lesson: Test a protocol before moving it to another crop.



When it comes time for treatment, the industry is migrating toward a blended approach. Biological products, nematodes and fungi, applied both above and below the soil line, lay down a preventative screen that suppresses Tp.

If an outbreak breaks through, use targeted chemistry on the hot spot. A quick stomp doesn’t just stop Tp; it also

limits the resistance pressure a heavier chemical program would otherwise put on two-spotted spider mite control.

[Access a companion research brief, with full sources and further reading.](#)

What success looks like

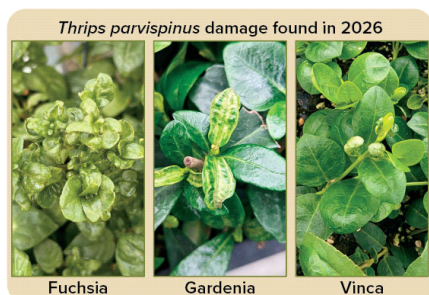
Two real outcomes illustrate what this looks like in practice, at different speeds.

In the fast, clean version a tropical crop operation caught an infestation early, treated it fast and lost nothing. No inventory was damaged; plants shipped on schedule at full retail value. Tp reappeared a year later, on a different crop at the same facility, with the same treatment and the same outcome. This shows a functional protocol can produce repeatable results.

The slower, messier version is more likely. A hoya grower started with heavy chemistry when Tp first appeared. When that didn't work, they brought in Koppert's Phil Gerry, who built a blended program that worked. Applied consistently, it held, and the approach still stands today.

"We haven't really taken our foot off the gas," he said of the ongoing effort.

Both cases are genuine successes, but they also share another relationship: Fast action starts the plan; a steady, committed routine keeps the effort on track. A quick fix doesn't guarantee a solution lasts; sustained applications, even messy ones, tend to hold. That same pattern, steady pressure outperforming a one-time fix, describes the pest's larger trajectory, too.



Looking ahead

Tp is joining the roster of regular pest villains, the same way WFT already has. Within a single site, Tp moves like checkers, not chess — short hops, not long-range moves — creeping outward from an epicenter into whatever crop sits next to it, rather than turning up across a facility all at once. Left unattended, an infestation that started in one tropical crop can gradually work its way into neighboring benches, tropical or not, over time.

Tp does jump to adjacent crops. Scout for common denominators:

- **Wrinkled or tightly curled leaves at the branch tips**
- **Striped or speckled loss of chlorophyll in the leaves**

Across the industry the host list is broader. In 2026, Koppert has confirmed cases on fuchsia, bidens and vinca—plants with no tropical relative anywhere nearby. It's not common, but it did happen. In the future, don't assume a crop is safe just because it isn't a tropical.

One issue is still being debated: trap color. Some growers see stronger results in the field with white cards; recent research favors blue cards, but doesn't test against white. No study has tested the full range head-to-head under controlled conditions, so neither claim has been disproven.

Questions like that are why some of today's guidance will likely be refined again before next season. What's already settled is speed. Acting promptly keeps the cost of this pest small; waiting for certainty tends to raise the expense.

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