

# The Augusta Chronicle

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## COLUMNS

# Campbell Vaughn: Here's what to do when clover mites invade your homes

**Campbell Vaughn** Columnist

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### Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

Primarily a nuisance, they feed on plants and can sometimes invade homes.

While generally harmless, large infestations can damage turf grasses near buildings.

Crushing them leaves a red stain due to a pigment in their bodies, not blood.

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When I get more than four emails about a subject in a two-day period, I know the invasion has begun.

The clover mites have arrived. And when they arrive, they come in large numbers. Since the weather has been so nice, these small arachnids are out and ready to lay some eggs.

When we get some good moisture and we get some consistent warmth in spring, these tiny mites invade. When I say tiny, they are about the size of the “O” from a penny’s “In God We Trust”. Most of what I hear from folks is they are all over a concrete wall where they love to lay their tiny little eggs. They are really common on south facing sun exposure because of the consistent warmth of the radiating heat.

They really are more of an unsightly pest and a little creepy for non-insect loving people like me, but they really don’t do much harm. Sometimes they do get in the house, but a little dose of bifenthrin will usually do the trick. Ortho Home Defense is an easy one with a self-contained sprayer. If you are not able to spray them in the

house because you can't get any insecticides due to lockdown, they will die out pretty quickly because of low indoor humidity. Vacuums work well, too.

Clover mites are exclusive plant eaters including a healthy diet of grasses, algae, moss, mold, some ornamental plants and clover. These little vegetarians hop on their helpless prey and suck a little sap out of them for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Being so small, they normally only leave a tiny trace of actually being on a plant. Heavy infestations can do some damage to turf grasses that are close to a building or possibly some other plant they might enjoy more than others, but these eight-legged critters are mainly just a nuisance.

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When crushing the mites on a surface that shows color well, like a concrete wall, they will leave a red stain. This is not blood, but a red pigment in their bodies and can leave a lasting mark.

Clover mites are parthenogenetic, which is a fancy word meaning they develop from unfertilized eggs, and their population is composed entirely of females. An entire generation lasts about one month when the wine party is over.

Females lay about 70 eggs each in drier more protected areas with some sun exposure for the eggs to maintain some warmth during the cooler winter temperatures. The eggs overwinter and then hatch in the spring.

