Apple and pear suckers

Apple sucker (Psylla mali (Schmidberger)) used to be one of the more serious pests of apple, but nowadays it is so well controlled by routine sprays that infestations are rarely seen except in gardens or unsprayed cider orchards.

Pear sucker (Psylla pyricola Förster), however, has increased in importance in recent years and large populations have become established in some orchards in the pear-growing areas.

**Nature of damage**
In spring the immature apple suckers (nymphs) feed by sucking the sap, mainly in the blossom trusses although leaf buds may also be attacked. Large populations can cause brown discoloration of petals on partly opened blossom buds or even death of these buds. The
Aphids and other plant bugs
discoloration resembles, and is sometimes mistaken for, frost damage.

Description and life history
Apple sucker overwinters in the egg stage and has only one generation per year. It lives only on apple. The eggs are oval and pale straw-coloured, barely visible without magnification but easily seen with the aid of a hand lens. They are laid mainly on the fruit spurs, generally along leaf scars, and to a lesser extent at the base of the leaf buds or scattered on the twigs (Fig. 1.2).

In south-east England, hatching begins when varieties such as Cox's Orange Pippin or Bramley's Seedling are at the bud-burst stage and is complete by green cluster. Thus in a normal season eggs hatch during April in Kent, but slightly later in more northerly areas. The newly hatched nymphs have a distinctive flattened body and are orange-brown with red eyes. Drops of sticky fluid (honeydew) and very conspicuous white or iridescent waxy threads (see Fig. 1.1) are produced by the nymphs and are usually seen easily on infested trusses. No sooty mould is associated with honeydew on apples (cf. pears). After the second moult the nymphs become bright green and rudiments of wings can be seen (Fig. 1.1).

Four to six weeks after hatching, the first adults appear. They are small insects, 3 mm long, with bodies that are greenish-yellow at first but darken later; the wings are transparent with green veins and are folded over the body when at rest (as in Fig. 1.4). The adults live and feed on the apple tree throughout the summer and early autumn. Egg laying begins towards the end of August and continues for about one month; the adults then die.

Pear sucker
Nature of damage
Pear sucker nymphs feed on developing leaf and blossom trusses in the spring and on leaves in the summer. Blossoms may be killed when infestations are large. Sooty moulds grow on the honeydew excreted by the nymphs, so that blackened shoots and foliage (Fig. 1.3) are an indication of pear sucker infestations; these moulds persist on the wood into the dormant season. The moulds may also cover the fruits, spoiling their appearance.

Pear suckers can also cause damage later in the season when the young of the third generation feed on the developing fruit buds. This may result in death or a reduction in vigour of fruit buds, thus causing a decrease in the following season’s crop. Very large infestations in late summer may lead to premature defoliation in September or October.

Description and life history
Unlike apple sucker, pear sucker overwinters in the adult stage (Fig. 1.4). The adults are similar in appearance to those of apple sucker but are slightly smaller (about 2 mm long) and dark brownish-black. In winter they can be found resting on pear trees, but some disperse to trees and other vegetation outside the

Fig.1.2 Eggs of apple sucker on apple spur (× 16)