

Less Noxious but Effective Spray for Mealy Bugs, by Mike Mack

This spray consists of the following:

- Bonide Eight. Active ingredient permethrin. 1 1/2 tsp/quart water
- Safer Insect Killing Soap. Active Ingredient potassium soap 1/2 tsp/quart water
- Optional Spectracide Immunox. Active Ingredient myclobutanil. 1 1/2 tsp/quart water

The permethrin is recommended to treat clothing to kill ticks. In fact you can buy pretreated clothing for this purpose and evidently the effectiveness will last through 3 or 4 washings. It is also used in shampoos to kill head lice particularly for children. It is only very slightly absorbed by the skin and is low toxicity and not a carcinogen as far I was able to learn. The permethrin, an artificial pyrethroid, can kill mealy bugs but doesn't penetrate their waxy coating well. The potassium soap is used to dissolve the waxy coating enough to allow the permethrin to get at the mealy bugs. I started off 1 1/2 tsp per quart of the soap but learned that cuttings and small plants do not react well to that much of the soap. Hence the 1/2 tsp per quart.

Do not use a detergent since these are deleterious to plants. The myclobutanil in Immunox is the same ingredient as in Eagle fungicide though at a lower concentration and a lower price. Myclobutanil is purported to have low acute toxicity but contact with eyes, skin and lungs must be avoided.

Spectracide makes a premix of Immunox and permethrin so I know the two are compatible. I have assumed the soap to be compatible and have noted no ill effects of the full mix which is what I used all summer. Use the usual spray precautions-- paint spray mask to avoid breathing the spray in, latex or similar gloves, long sleeves and long pants. If Immunox is used make sure the eyes are protected as well.

