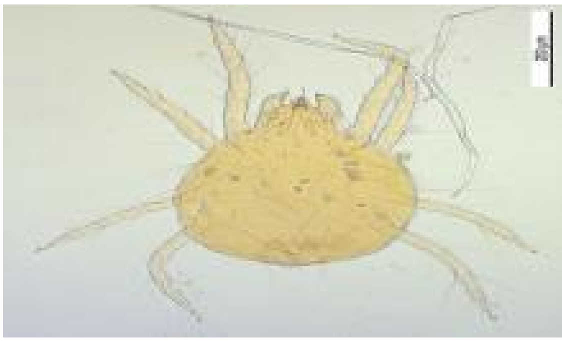
EPPO Datasheet: *Tetranychus mexicanus*

Last updated: 2026-09-04

IDENTITY



[more photos...]

Preferred name: *Tetranychus mexicanus*
Authority: (McGregor)
Taxonomic position: Animalia: Arthropoda: Chelicerata: Arachnida: Acarida: Tetranychidae
Common names: Mexican spider mite
[view more common names online...]
EPPO Categorization: A1 list
[view more categorizations online...]
EPPO Code: TETRME

Notes on taxonomy and nomenclature

The genus *Tetranychus* contains over 150 described species worldwide (Migeon & Dorkeld, 2026). *Tetranychus mexicanus* was first described on citrus plants in Mexico (McGregor, 1950). In the literature, it is commonly referred to as ‘spider mite’ or ‘red spider mite’ in English and as ‘ácaro-vermelho’ in Portuguese (Brazil); however, these common names are also widely used for other species within the family Tetranychidae (EPPO, 2023).

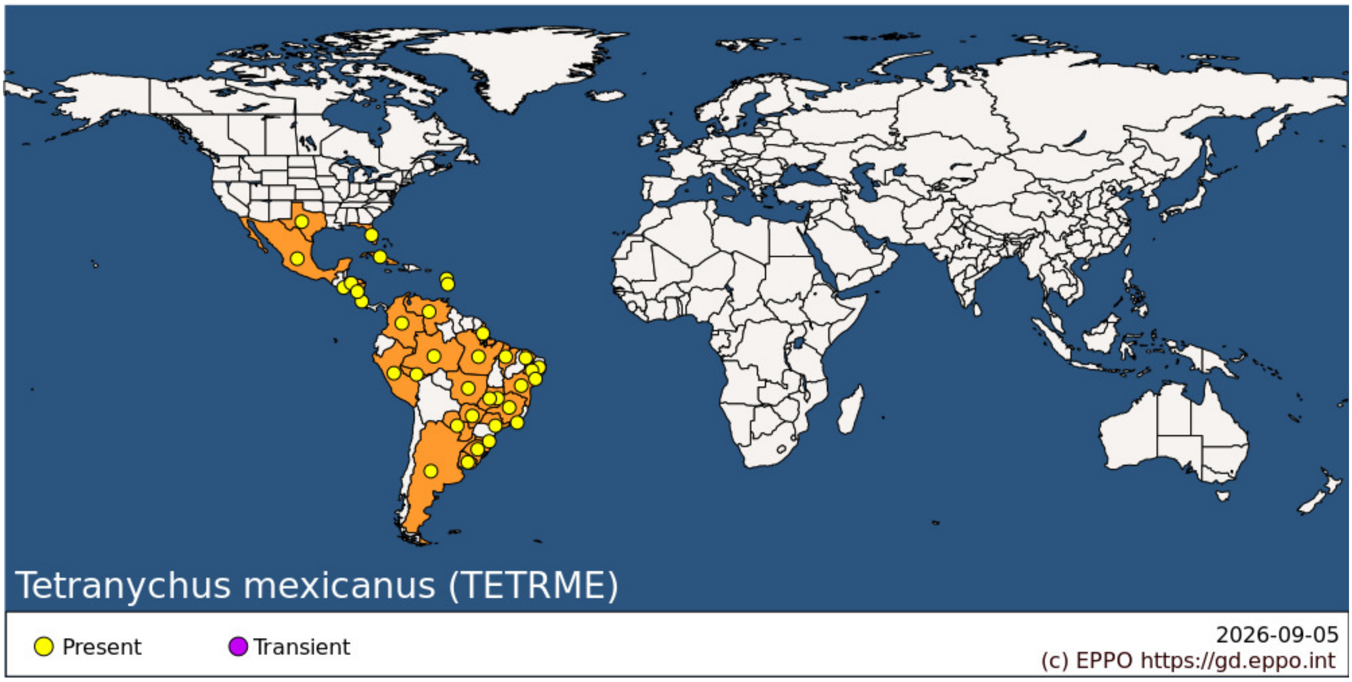
HOSTS

Tetranychus mexicanus is a polyphagous spider mite recorded on more than 100 plant species (EPPO, 2023; Migeon & Dorkeld, 2026). However, the host status of many plants remains uncertain (EPPO, 2023). Among cultivated plants, *Citrus* spp. are major hosts, but the mite also occurs on cultivated plants, such as papaya (*Carica papaya*), passion fruit (*Passiflora* spp.), *Annona* spp., palms and various ornamental species (EPPO, 2023; Migeon & Dorkeld, 2026). The list below includes hosts and likely hosts, that is plant species on which *T. mexicanus* can complete its life cycle, or is reported as a pest, or for which field evidence (e.g. multiple life stages or sufficient numbers of individuals) indicates the presence of a breeding population (EPPO, 2023). On many other plants, these factors could not be verified, and these plants are therefore considered uncertain hosts (EPPO, 2023). Uncertain hosts include cultivated plants, such as *Annona reticulata*, *Averrhoa carambola*, *Codiaeum*, *Hovenia dulcis* and *Rosa*. A complete list is available in EPPO (2023) and [EPPO Global Database].

Host list: *Abelmoschus esculentus*, *Acalypha diversifolia*, *Acrocomia aculeata*, *Alchornea glandulosa*, *Annona coriacea*, *Annona crassiflora*, *Annona muricata*, *Annona reticulata*, *Annona squamosa*, *Annona x atemoya*, *Annona*, *Araceae*, *Arachis hypogaea*, *Attalea speciosa*, *Averrhoa carambola*, *Bactris gasipaes*, *Beaucarnea recurvata*, *Bougainvillea sp.*, *Canavalia ensiformis*, *Carica papaya*, *Carya illinoinensis*, *Catasetum macrocarpum*, *Cedrela fissilis*, *Cedrela odorata*, *Celtis iguanaea*, *Celtis sp.*, *Centrosema pubescens*, *Citrus reticulata*, *Citrus sunki*, *Citrus trifoliata*, *Citrus x aurantiifolia*, *Citrus x aurantium var. paradisi*, *Citrus x aurantium var. sinensis*, *Citrus x latifolia*, *Citrus x limon var. limetta*, *Citrus x limon*, *Citrus*, *Cocos nucifera*, *Codiaeum variegatum*, *Codiaeum*, *Cordiera sessilis*, *Couroupita guianensis*, *Cucumis melo*, *Cupressus*, *Cymbopogon schoenanthus*, *Elaeis guineensis*, *Erythrina poeppigiana*, *Erythrina variegata*, *Euterpe edulis*, *Fortunella sp.*, *Fragaria chiloensis*, *Fragaria x ananassa*, *Gossypium hirsutum*, *Gossypium*, *Guettarda uruguensis*, *Hancornia speciosa*, *Hevea brasiliensis*, *Hovenia dulcis*, *Ilex paraguariensis*, *Litchi chinensis*, *Malpighia*, *Manihot esculenta*, *Murraya paniculata*, *Musa*, *Orchidaceae*, *Passiflora edulis*, *Passiflora ligularis*, *Passiflora membranacea*, *Paullinia cupana*, *Persea americana*, *Phaseolus vulgaris*, *Phyllanthus*, *Prunus persica*, *Prunus salicina*, *Pyrus communis*, *Ricinus communis*, *Rollinia mucosa*, *Rosa*, *Syagrus romanzoffiana*, *Tecoma stans*, *Thaumatophyllum bipinnatifidum*, *Theobroma cacao*, *Theobroma grandiflorum*, *Trichilia casarettoi*, *Vitis labrusca*, *Vitis vinifera*, *Xylopia aromatica*, *Zanthoxylum coco*, *Zanthoxylum monogynum*, *Zingiber zerumbet*

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Tetranychus mexicanus is restricted to the Americas, with confirmed records from the southern United States in North America, to Uruguay and northern Argentina in South America (EPPO, 2023; Migeon & Dorkeld, 2026). There is no evidence of establishment outside this region: reports from China are unsubstantiated, and a single incursion in the Netherlands was successfully eradicated in 2019 (EPPO, 2023; Migeon & Dorkeld, 2026; NVWA, 2019).



North America: Mexico, United States of America (Florida, Texas)
Central America and Caribbean: Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guadeloupe, Honduras, Martinique, Nicaragua
South America: Argentina, Brazil (Acre, Amapa, Amazonas, Bahia, Ceara, Distrito Federal, Goias, Maranhao, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, Para, Paraiba, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Sao Paulo, Sergipe), Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

BIOLOGY

Tetranychus mexicanus develops through five stages: egg, larva, protonymph, deutonymph and adult. The three active immature stages (larva, protonymph and deutonymph) are each followed by a brief quiescent, non-feeding phase before moulting to the next stage. These resting phases are termed protochrysalid (before the protonymph), deutochrysalid (before the deutonymph) and teliochrysalid (before the adult) (EPPO, 2023; Sousa et al., 2010). This mite reproduces both sexually and via arrhenotokous parthenogenesis, in which, respectively, fertilized eggs develop into females and unfertilized eggs into males (Paschoal, 1968). As a result, a single female can establish a new population: upon colonizing a host plant, she may initially produce male offspring and subsequently mate with them, enabling the production of female progeny and rapid population growth. Eggs are laid on leaf surfaces or within protective silk webbing produced by the mites. The life cycle is generally completed on the leaves of the host, on which immature stages and adults feed. Colonies are generally formed on the lower leaf surface. On *Citrus*, the mite is also occasionally found on twigs and fruits (Bobot et al., 2011; EPPO, 2023; Flechtmann & Baker, 1975). At a local scale, *T. mexicanus*, as with other mites in the family Tetranychidae, disperses mainly by crawling between adjacent plant tissues and nearby plants, and through passive aerial dispersal (Kennedy & Smitley, 1985). This is particularly important in nurseries, greenhouses and orchards where host plants are closely spaced. Once established, the mite can rapidly colonize neighbouring plants because all life stages occur on leaves, and populations may build up quickly under suitable conditions.

To date, *T. mexicanus* has been found only in tropical and subtropical climates. Its upper and lower temperature thresholds are not known, nor its adaptability to a wider range of temperatures. The biology of *T. mexicanus* has been studied in the laboratory on leaves of *Citrus aurantifolia* (Paschoal, 1968), *Annona muricata*, *Annona squamosa* and *Annona coriacea* (Sousa et al., 2010), *Bactris gasipaes* (Stein & Daólio, 2012) and *Carica papaya* and *Passiflora edulis* (Barroncas et al., 2022). Under favourable conditions (around 25°C), development from egg to adult generally takes 10–13?days, although it extended to 18–20?days on*C. aurantifolia* under less controlled temperature conditions (19–25°C). The duration of immature stages also varies among hosts; for example, egg development ranges from about 2–4?days on*A. coriacea* to 6.5?days on*C. aurantifolia*. Similarly, total immature development is faster on *A. muricata* and *A. coriacea*, and slower on *B. gasipaes*. Reproductive parameters also show substantial variation. Fecundity ranges from as few as 9 eggs per female on *B. gasipaes* to over 100 eggs per female on *C. papaya*. The oviposition period is longest on *Annona* spp. (approximately 17–23?days) and shorter on*B. gasipaes* (about 12?days). Adult longevity likewise differs among hosts, with females generally living between 17 and 25? days. Generation time ranges from approximately 16–24?days and sex ratio is strongly female-biased. Consistent with other tetranychid mites,*T. mexicanus* exhibits a high reproductive potential.

DETECTION AND IDENTIFICATION

Symptoms

Symptoms resemble those caused by other spider mites (Moraes et al., 2024; Moraes & Flechtmann, 2008; Ochoa et al., 1994). These appear on both leaf surfaces but are more evident on the upper side. At low infestation levels, small white spots may occur and are easily overlooked. Typical symptoms include chlorosis that can progress to necrosis, along with leaf deformation (EPPO, 2023). Detailed descriptions for some hosts are summarized in the EPPO PRA (EPPO, 2023). On *Citrus*, infestations cause chlorosis, leaf curling and webbing on the lower surface, with chlorotic areas above that may become necrotic; severe cases can lead to defoliation, especially under stress (Moraes & Flechtmann, 2008; Ochoa et al., 1994; Silva et al., 2017). Additional effects on *Citrus* include slight fruit discoloration (EPPO, 2023). Across other hosts, symptoms generally involve chlorosis, necrosis and leaf deformation. Examples include yellowing, curling and defoliation in *A. muricata* (Silva et al., 2019); chlorosis and leaf death in *C. papaya* (Santos et al., 2018); and leaf discoloration or spotting in *Paullinia cupana* (Vasconcelos et al., 2022). Yellow patches are also reported in ornamentals (Feres et al., 2009), while *Cocos nucifera* shows characteristic leaf bronzing (Teodoro et al., 2015).

Morphology

The morphology of *T. mexicanus* varies across developmental stages but follows the general pattern of tetranychid mites.

Egg*:* Spherical, about 0.15?mm in diameter; initially transparent, turning dark yellow prior to hatching (Paschoal,1968; Stein & Daólio, 2012).

Larva*:* Light yellow, with three pairs of legs, and measuring 0.2–0.3?mm in length. As development proceeds, dark spots appear in the podosoma (part of body bearing legs) (Paschoal,1968; Stein & Daólio, 2012).

Protonymph and deutonymph*:* Possess four pairs of legs, and measuring approximately 0.3–0.45?mm in length, with deutonymphs larger than protonymphs. Colour is variable (light to dark green, yellow-green or red), and dark spots may extend to the opisthosoma (rear portion of the body) (Paschoal,1968; Stein & Daólio, 2012).

Adult*:* Also with four pairs of legs. Females are larger (around 0.5?mm in length), while males are smaller (about 0.25?mm in length) and have a tapered posterior body (Paschoal,1968). Colour is highly variable, ranging from yellowish or green to brown, orange or red, even within the same host plant. Adults typically show dark dorsal spots (Andrade et al., 2007; Stein & Daólio, 2012).

Detection and inspection methods

Detection of *T. mexicanus* is challenging because it shares symptoms and visual characteristics with other spider mites. It is also common to find multiple spider mite species on the same plant, further complicating identification.

Feeding damage is non-specific, and similar symptoms and colouration in other spider mites make field identification unreliable. Colonies of phytophagous mites may be visible to the naked eye, but at low infestation levels, individuals and eggs are easily missed. For reliable detection, especially at early stages, a hand lens (?20× magnification) or a microscope should be used (EPPO, 2023). Colonies are typically located on the underside of leaves, although they may sometimes also occur on the upper surface, and occasionally on twigs or on fruits. Like other spider mites, *T. mexicanus* produces webbing that can contain all life stages (Ochoa et al., 1994; Teodoro et al., 2015). It is reported to produce more abundant webbing than other common citrus spider mites, such as *Panonychus citri* and *Eutetranychus banksi* (EPPO, 2023). Additional detection clues include a thin whitish layer of exuviae and dust debris adhering to the webbing, particularly on the underside of leaves (Teodoro et al., 2015).

Identification of *T. mexicanus* is difficult due to its close resemblance to other *Tetranychus* species, and colour is unreliable as a distinguishing characteristic because it varies widely within the genus and even within the species itself. Accurate identification is based on morphological characters and requires specimens to be mounted on microscope slides. Species-level determination relies mainly on the shape of the male aedeagus (Gutierrez, 1985). Female characters, such as pregenital striae and tarsal chaetotaxy, can assist the identification (Santos et al., 2018). In practice, specimens are identified using descriptions and taxonomic keys (McGregor, 1950; Pritchard & Baker, 1955; Seeman & Beard, 2011). Molecular methods are not well established (EPPO, 2023).

PATHWAYS FOR MOVEMENT

The main pathway for long-distance movement is international trade in infested plant material (EPPO, 2023). The most important pathway is host plants for planting with leaves (including plants with roots and cuttings). This pathway is considered the highest risk because mites are primarily associated with foliage of living host plants. A wide range of woody and perennial hosts contribute to this pathway, including frequently traded ornamentals, such as *Beaucarnea recurvata* (with a documented interception in the Netherlands) (NVWA, 2019), as well as multiple fruit tree and shrub genera (EPPO, 2023). *Citrus* and related Rutaceae genera also form part of this host spectrum and are relevant due to their susceptibility. All life stages may be present on foliage, and populations may survive and even reproduce during transport and storage under favourable conditions. A second relevant pathway, associated with a low likelihood of entry, is above-ground fresh cut plant parts of hosts (cut flowers, cut foliage and cut branches, as well as leaf vegetables). These commodities may carry mites on leaves or tender stems. Survival may be possible under cool transport conditions typical of the flower and foliage trade, but transfer is unlikely because these commodities are short-lived and not intended for planting. A third, low risk pathway is host fruit, only if green parts are associated. Although *T. mexicanus* has been occasionally associated with fruit of *Citrus sinensis*, such occurrences are rare and transfer to a host would be difficult. Entry on fruit without green parts was therefore considered unlikely (EPPO, 2023). Other very unlikely pathways include for example non-host plant material or host wood, which are unsuitable for mite survival.

PEST SIGNIFICANCE

Economic impact

Tetranychus mexicanus is generally considered a minor and sporadic pest with low economic impact across its current distribution range. Its importance is limited because it often co-occurs with other spider mites and typically causes damage only under favourable conditions, particularly during dry spells and when natural enemies are disrupted by pesticide use (Sousa et al., 2010; Teodoro et al., 2015). *Citrus* crops are the main economically relevant hosts in its current distribution. Even on citrus, it is usually a secondary pest, accounting for a small proportion of mite populations in Brazil (Bobot et al., 2011; Horn et al., 2011). However, at high infestation levels, it may cause defoliation and reduced plant development, particularly in nurseries or greenhouses, where control measures may be necessary (EPPO, 2023). On other hosts, its importance varies. *T. mexicanus* is a major pest on *P. edulis*, capable of causing severe yield losses (Silva et al., 2020). On *Theobroma cacao*, it can damage seedlings (Sodré, 2017). On *A. muricata* and *C. nucifera* damage is usually occasional (Sousa et al., 2010; Teodoro et al., 2015). Occasional and limited damage has been reported on some other plants of economic importance in the EPPO region, such as *Fragaria × ananassa*, palms or *Gossypium hirsutum* (references in EPPO, 2023).

Control

According to EPPO (2023), control of *T. mexicanus* relies on preventive and curative measures, as no single method is fully effective. Chemical control is the main strategy during outbreaks, with acaricides generally effective; however, repeated applications are often required due to frequent reinfestation (Andrade et al., 2007). As observed in other *Tetranychus* species, the mite's short life cycle and high fecundity may favour the development of resistance, and reduced pesticide availability in the EU could further limit control options (APRD, 2026; EPPO, 2023; Van Leeuwen et al., 2010). Biological control may contribute to the regulation of pest populations, as natural enemies often keep infestations at low levels. In its native range, a variety of natural enemies contribute to the biological control of spider mites, such as *T. mexicanus*, particularly predatory mites (McMurtry et al., 2013; Moraes et al., 2024), and similar groups are also present in the EPPO region, including in citrus crops (Abad-Moyano et al., 2009). Commercial predatory mites, such as *Amblyseius swirskii*, *Phytoseiulus persimilis* and *Neoseiulus californicus*, are available in the EPPO region, although their effectiveness against *T. mexicanus* remains uncertain (EPPO, 2023).

Phytosanitary risk

The phytosanitary risk of *T. mexicanus* for the EPPO region is primarily driven by its strong association with live host plants for planting, especially those bearing foliage, which represent the main pathway for entry. The pest is highly polyphagous, but particular concern is linked to woody perennials and ornamental hosts and several economically important fruit producing genera, including *Citrus*, *Prunus*, *Pyrus*, *Vitis*, *Fragaria*, *Annona* and *Persea* . These hosts can be traded as plants for planting and can support all life stages, enabling survival and potential population development during transport. The risk of establishment is strongly influenced by climate and production systems. Outdoors, *T. mexicanus* is most likely to establish in the southern part of the EPPO region with mild winters, such as coastal areas of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and southern Portugal, in areas where host plants are widely present year-round (EPPO, 2023). In these regions, establishment in protected conditions (greenhouses and nurseries) is expected to be equally likely as outdoors, particularly where continuous host availability exists. Protected cultivation systems producing citrus seedlings and ornamentals year-round may therefore act as persistent reservoirs and amplification sites. In contrast, in more temperate parts of the EPPO region, outdoor establishment is unlikely due to winter conditions, and greenhouse establishment would only occur where hosts are continuously present. Increasing drought frequency—associated with climate change—may promote population outbreaks (Litskas et al., 2019). The potential impact in the EPPO PRA area is uncertain but could increase under favourable conditions. On cultivated crops, citrus is the main concern: damage is reported on *C. sinensis* in Brazil, although there is uncertainty about its potential impact on citrus varieties grown in the EPPO region. For ornamental plants, the potential impact of *T. mexicanus* may be higher. Its detection on *B. recurvata* in the Netherlands indicates the ability to infest previously unreported hosts, and heavy infestations in greenhouses suggest it could become a significant pest of ornamentals (EPPO, 2023; NVWA, 2019).

PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Phytosanitary measures are recommended for plants for planting with leaves (except tissue cultures) of hosts (EPPO, 2023). The following options were identified: pest free area; pest-free production site or pest free place of production established under physical isolation according to EPPO Standard PM 5/8 (EPPO, 2016); pest free place of production/pest free production site with inspection of the consignment prior to export (no *T. mexicanus* observed); or post-entry quarantine for 4?weeks in conditions suitable for the development of the mite (at 25°C or more) (in the framework of a bilateral agreement). Inspection of the consignment prior to export with no *T. mexicanus* observed, followed by treatment(s) of the consignment which are effective against all life stages of *T. mexicanus* is also an option, which is considered to provide a lower protection.

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Datasheet history

This datasheet was first published in the EPPO Bulletin in 2026. It is maintained in an electronic format in the EPPO

Global Database. The sections on 'Identity', 'Hosts', and 'Geographical distribution' are automatically updated from the database. For other sections, the date of last revision is indicated on the right.

EPPO (2026) Datasheets on pests recommended for regulation. *Tetranychus mexicanus* . *EPPO Bulletin* **56**(2), 244-249. https://doi.org/10.1111/epp.70079