

Plant Health Care Recommendations for Pieris

Pieris, formerly named Andromeda, is a group of three species. The most common is Japanese pieris (*Pieris japonica*) and it's many associated cultivars. Mountain pieris (*Pieris floribunda*) is native to North America and is more pest-resistant but somewhat less showy. Himalaya pieris (*Pieris formosa*) has larger leaves and good shape but needs an even, cool climate as found mainly in the Pacific Northwest and England.



Pieris are evergreen shrubs growing to a height of 12 feet with branch spread to eight feet. New foliage in the spring is red to bronze depending on the cultivar. Young leaf color is one of the most dramatic aspects of pieris. As the leaves mature they become a glossy dark green. White, pink or red flowers are formed in March or April on long dangling chains. Each flower is small, about 1/4 inch and matures to become a small capsule that persists through the winter.

Pieris is adapted to partial shade, but grow well in full sun in cooler climates. Japanese pieris are adapted to climate zones 5 to 8, mountain pieris from zone 4 to 6. They do not tolerate windy areas. Preferred soils are rich, moist, well-drained, and acidic with a pH of 5 to 6. Nutrient deficiencies and root disease commonly occur on soils that are alkaline and poorly drained.



There are a number of pests that damage pieris. Leaf feeding insects including lacebugs and mites, which not only weaken the plant but also reduce the attractiveness of the foliage. Either of these pests can cause a yellowing of the foliage and premature defoliation. Mountain pieris is resistant to lacebug. Scale and borers can attack branches and stems drawing off nutrients or cutting off the movement of water in the plant.

Phytophthora root rot is the most destructive disease affecting this plant group causing the wilting and death of the plant. Root disease commonly occurs on plants subjected to soil moisture extremes (too wet or too dry). Canker disease fungi can cause dieback of stems and branches especially following periods of low temperatures or drought. Leaf spot fungi cause damage especially when there is a rainy spring. Soil borne, root-feeding nematodes will also damage the root system leading to a decline in the condition of the plant or predispose to winter injury.

Since pieris are evergreen they can be a food sources for deer. Rodents may feed on bark tissues below the snow or mulch line resulting in girdling and death.

Recommended Monitoring for Pieris

Timing	Treatment
Winter	Inspect plants for deer and rodent damage. Apply deer repellents as necessary to reduce browse. Wrap trunks to prevent rodent damage.
Late Winter	Sample soil for nutrient and pH levels especially if deficiency symptoms are evident. If plants exhibit decline, sample roots or root collar for <i>Phytophthora</i> root rot and nematodes. Apply horticultural oil for overwintering pests (lacebug and scale). Prune out any winter injured (dead) stems. Excavate mulch from root collars. Add additional mulch to root zone as needed.
Early Spring	Apply first fungicide soil treatment on plants with <i>Phytophthora</i> root rot. Apply fungicide spray treatment to suppress leafspot. Inspect for lacebug, mites and foliage feeding caterpillars. Treat as needed.
Mid Spring	Monitor for lacebugs, mites, borers and foliage feeding caterpillars. Treat as needed. Apply preventative fungicide treatment for leafspots as necessary. Apply fertilizers and soil treatments to adjust pH as needed based on soil test results.
Late Spring	Monitor for lacebugs, mites, scale crawlers, nematodes and foliage-feeding caterpillars. Treat as needed. Apply preventative fungicide treatment for leafspots as necessary. Prune flower stalks after flowering is complete to produce better leaf development. Inspect irrigation and soil moisture levels to reduce moisture stress and prevent root disease. Inspect mulch levels and adjust as necessary.
Early Summer	Monitor for lacebugs, mites, and scale crawlers. Treat as needed. Inspect irrigation and soil moisture levels to reduce moisture stress and prevent root disease.
Mid Summer	Monitor for lacebugs, nematodes and mites. Inspect irrigation and soil moisture levels to minimize moisture stress and prevent root disease. Apply second fungicide soil treatment on plants with <i>Phytophthora</i> root rot.
Late Summer	Monitor for lacebugs, and mites. Treat as needed. Inspect irrigation and soil moisture levels to minimize moisture stress and prevent root disease.
Fall	Apply fertilizer and soil treatments to adjust pH as needed. Apply repellents as necessary to reduce browse. Soil-apply insecticide and nematicides to protect against lacebug, scale and nematodes.

Important Varieties of *Pieris japonica*

Brouwer's Beauty - lace bug resistant hybrid, new foliage yellow green

Crystal - resistant to heat and *Phytophthora*

Christmas Cheer - pink flowering, fast growing

Mountain Fire - new growth exceptional red color, white flowers

Red Mill - good pest resistance, dense growth, long lasting flowers, new growth bright red

Valley Valentine - long lasting pink flowers dense, upright, fast growing