My War with Mealybugs
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Mealybugs are a good argument for reincarnation. Just when you think the last one is dead, you find a new fluffy white patch, usually on your favorite plant.

This is a story of one person’s encounter, no, WAR with mealies.

I am fairly new cactophile with a mixed collection grown under lights. I had never had meal bugs, but I certainly heard of them. All the books warned that new plants should be quarantined before introducing them into a collection. A time period was not mentioned so I tried one week. Believe me, that is not enough!

One day I purchased an *Aeonium* species, and after one week, I carefully inspected it and put it on my light table. About two dozen plants became infected, and the *Aeonium* showed signs of damage. I inspected my plants, removing bugs with alcohol soaked Q-tips. After recovering from a light hangover, the mealies were back in force, and many of my previously healthy plants were now infested.

At the point, I reached for the heavy artillery, and got hold of a systemic insecticide containing the chemical Di-Syston. I applied it to the infested plants in addition to repeating the alcohol treatment. This seemed to work for about a month, and then, the little white monsters started reappearing. At this point, in desperation, I treated every single plant with the systemic insecticide and scrubbed by light table with disinfectant and soap. I repeated the treatment twice at two-
week intervals. I have now been free of mealy bugs for about eight month.

This experience taught me several things. I now quarantine all new plants for two months, and anything showing signs of infestation gets three treatments with the Di-Syston before it gets added to my collection. There are many members who may think is over-reacting, but after having 60-70% of my collection affected and loosing several of my favorite plants, I am taking no chances.

Since my collection is mixed, I also learned that mealybugs will attack almost anything. I have even found them attaching a three-inch diameter trunk of a mimosa tree (yes, the tree looked worse for wear), and on the roots of a common carpet-forming spurge which I cannot seem to clear out. They prefer the leafier types of plants, but are not averse to Lithops or almost any other plant which has nooks and crannies in which they can hide.

My cacti were much less effected than my other succulents except the globose Euphorbias which were all unscathed.

I have not expert advice to offer on eradicating mealy bugs, but I hope this story may be useful to others.