

Does supplementing flowers affect inter- and intraspecific interactions between *Macrolophus pygmaeus* and *Nesidiocoris tenuis* foraging on an aphid population?

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The combined effect of multiple predators on their shared prey is an important component for biological control programs. Our focus was to investigate possible intra- and inter-specific competition effects on prey consumption of omnivorous predators *Macrolophus pygmaeus* and *Nesidiocoris tenuis* (Hemiptera: Miridae) as affected by prey availability and supplementary resources from plants (eggplant leaves with or without flowers). As prey, 2nd instar *Myzus persicae* nymphs were offered at densities of 4, 12, 20, 24, 32 and 40 in dishes. In treatments with flowers with 2 individuals together of one species, cumulative prey consumption of *M. pygmaeus* was higher over all prey densities above 4 compared to that recorded when a single individual was used, whereas for *N. tenuis* that occurred only at 20 and 24 items. In treatments with the two species together, when a flower was available, predation rate was reduced at the highest densities in comparison to respective treatments without a flower. According to the results, the presence of a flower decreased prey consumption at high densities (>12-20 items) more pronounced for *M. pygmaeus* than for *N. tenuis*. In addition, prey consumption of 2 *M. pygmaeus* in the absence of a flower was similar to that of 1 *M. pygmaeus* and 1 *N. tenuis*.

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