



Deadly New Insect!

By Jane Morse, University of Florida/IFAS, Manatee County Extension Agent

A new and deadly insect is found in Florida. It is the Lobate Lac scale. This insect is potentially one of the worst and most devastating pests of trees and shrubs in the state's history. As of October 2002 this insect has been found from Lake Worth (Palm Beach County) to Homestead (Miami-Dade County). It is native to India and Sri Lanka.

It is important to be on the lookout for this new and deadly insect. It has been found mainly on the twigs and small branches of trees and shrubs. It has not been observed on leaves. The insects form a thick mass that appears as a dark, lumpy crust. Sooty-mold (caused by the insect) covers the branches, the insects themselves, and occurs in patches on the foliage. Dense colonies of this insect have caused branch dieback and even death of infested shrubs and trees.

The scale has an x-shape and looks similar to a very small bow-tie, 1.5 to 2 mm long and wide. The scale is hard and brittle and has a dark reddish brown color. It is often a dull black color due to a coating of sooty-mold.

It attacks a wide range of plants. As of October 2002, more than 120 plant species have been attacked by this insect. Certain species of plants appear to be very susceptible to attack, including certain natives, such as wax-myrtle, buttonwood, myrsine, red bay and wild coffee; and exotic ornamentals such as black-olive, benjamin fig, lychee, mango and star-fruit. If you thought the Asian Cycad scale that has attacked the King and Queen sago was bad, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

The Lobate Lac scale insect can be spread by air currents, birds and other animals. Most importantly, humans are key in spreading this scale insect by moving infected plants into new areas. Inspect all new plants thoroughly. Invasion of this plant into natural areas is of critical concern. Already, heavy infestations cover large areas of tropical hardwood hammocks in Broward County.

At this point nothing has been published on the biology or control of this insect. There are probably no natural enemies (beneficial insects) in Florida to help in its control. Horticultural oils and other chemicals are now being tested for possible control of this insect.

For more information about this scale see

http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/orn/scales/lobate_lac.htm.

If you think you have this scale, soak the sample in rubbing alcohol for 10 minutes, let it dry, put it in a plastic bag and bring it to the Manatee County Extension Office at 1303 17th Street West in Palmetto, Monday thru Friday, 9AM - 4PM.

For free information about gardening, fertilizing, insect control and more, call the Manatee County Extension Service/University of Florida/IFAS at (941-722-4524) Monday thru Friday, 9AM - 4PM, and ask to speak to a Master Gardener. We have lots of **free** information to help you have a healthy landscape.

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