

## Editorial: Thanks to local expert, we're wary of whitefly

Staff Reports

Monday, September 28, 2009

A word to wise homeowners and landscapers: Be on the lookout for a new-to-our-area species of whitefly that can defoliate typically hale and hardy ficus.

That spells potential trouble for an area that depends so heavily on ficus hedges for beauty as well as privacy. They are everywhere and, after arriving in Collier in January, so are the whiteflies.

Daily News gardening columnist Doug Caldwell, of the University of Florida/Collier County Extension Service, tips us off to look at the underside of leaves for telltale white, black and gray markings left behind by empty casings, or skins, of these voracious little critters.

Ficus whitefly work and eat quickly, Caldwell says. So please, he continues, take action at the first trace of an infestation. He says ficus owners, who can shake branches to see if any tiny flies take flight, can get more information online at [http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/Pests\\_HT.shtml](http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/Pests_HT.shtml).

He welcomes questions via e-mail, [dougbug@ufl.edu](mailto:dougbug@ufl.edu), or by phone, 353-4244.

Our thanks are extended to Caldwell and all the other garden/landscape experts who contribute mightily to our newspaper and the community. They have green-thumb know-how to spare — and to share.

