



LOBATE LAC SCALE ALERT

(*Paratachardina lobata lobata*)

We ran this alert August 2003, but now that it has officially arrived and because this is a serious threat category, that is, a plant killing scale, that this information should be repeated. A new scale has arrived in southwest Florida. Lobate lac scale is from India and Sri Lanka and was discovered in Broward County in 1999. Our first report of it on this side of Florida came in early August (2003) from Sanibel. It was found on wild coffee, cocoplum and wax myrtle. On January 8, 2004, an infestation in north Naples, near Tamiami Trail and Immokalee Rd. was confirmed. It was found on a wax myrtle hedge that had been planted at least two years ago.

This species may very well become one of the most devastating pests of trees and shrubs in the state's history because it attacks so many plant species. It has been reported on over 120 hosts, such as Benjamin fig, cocoplum, hibiscus, buttonwood, black-olive, gumbo-limbo, Australian-pine, live oak, mango, melaleuca, grapefruit, etc. (for the complete host list see: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN471>).

These are small scales for this soft scale group, about one-sixteenth of an inch long. They are dark reddish brown, but are typically covered by a black coating of fungus growth, called sooty mold. Many species in the soft scale group (wax scale, green scale, pyriform scale) produce **honey-dew**, a sugary waste product, that the **sooty mold** grows on. This scale produces copious amounts of honey-dew and the sooty mold makes plants look like black shadows, which helps one spot an infestation blocks away. This insect looks like it is stamped with an X on top and there are some variations, but typically it looks like four of those "pop-n-fresh buns" cooked too close together, hence the "lobate" part of the name.

Lobate lac scale encrusts twigs and branches under one inch in diameter, with all of the insects sucking the plant's sap, the hosts are soon starved and start to wither and branch dieback occurs. This insect attacks not only residential landscape plants, but many native plant species and invasion of natural areas will make it difficult to contain.

What to do: The only hope is the release of insect parasites and predators of lac scale to prevent large losses of natural plant communities. Researchers at the United States Department of Agriculture and University of Florida are searching for these good bugs in the scale's home countries of India and Thailand. Several parasites have been selected and these may be available by late 2004. If a small landscape area is infested repeated applications of horticultural mineral oil may help. Applications of imidacloprid (Merit or Bayer Advanced Garden Tree & Shrub Insect Control) a systemic insecticide, applied as a root drench are the most promising.

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