

NEW FICUS PEST, PARALEYRODES BONDARI, A NESTING WHITEFLY

Doug Caldwell



What next? In addition to the rugose spiraling whitefly (RSWH) which showed up in late 2011, we now have another ficus whitefly! This was first noticed in Collier County by keen-eyed Scott Krueger, our DPI plant inspector. This Brazilian whitefly causes horrendous amounts of sooty mold, much like the RSWH. This newest whitefly, believed to be *Paraleyrodes bondari*, is smaller about 1 mm from head to tail, whereas the RSWF is ***h-u-g-e***, almost 3 mm long. Also the Brazilian whitefly is referred to (by whitefly taxonomists) as a “nesting” whitefly. If you use your imagination, looking at the 2 bottom pictures, it appears there is a whitefly in the middle of a circle of white “feathers” in this case waxy residue and honeydew. And that is what makes it easy to identify, the white “nests” circles on the black sooty mold (pictures, top row, right side).

January 6, 2012

This information is just a brief alert to get people out looking. When I collected specimens in Golden Gate City this week, there were eggs and adults (see pictures, bottom row, on right). It appears this species may be active in the winter when the killer ficus whitefly (*Singhiella simplex*) is not. *Singhiella* whiteflies are about the same size as the new Brazilian whitefly but do not create “nests” nor honeydew and hence no sooty mold. This could be a double-barreled attack for ficus. Time will tell.

Ficus was once a bullet proof plant, the “King of Hedgeroy” with no significant pests. However, surprise, we have had wave after wave of attack! In 2003, **lobate lac scale** arrived. It is the only other insect which will cause copious amounts of sooty mold on *Ficus benjamina*. In 2007 Cuban-laurel hedges were infested with the **blister (banyan) leaf gall wasp** (*Josephiella microcarpae*). In early 2008 or so, **weeping ficus thrips** (*Gynaikothrips uzeli*), became common on weeping ficus hedges and in January 2008 the **eye-spot midge** (*Horidiplosis ficifolii*) was found peppering *Ficus benjamina* and causing some leaf drop. Then the *Singhiella* killer whitefly arrived in January 2009. See Bugs and Shrubs Buzz Newsletter article at: <http://tinyurl.com/72exgpo> . Amazing, really!

Fortunately these are all sucking insects so if one is using the root drench or trunk spray of the systemic neonic insecticides, it you should control all of the above pests.

Distribution: Hawaii, Taiwan, California & Florida, Belize, Brazil, Honduras, Venezuela, Madeira Islands

Hosts: *Ocotea foetens*, avocado (*Persea americana*), *Hibiscus*, Surinam cherry (*Eugenia uniflora*); *Citrus sinensis*, *C. reticulata*, *C. limon* .

Natural enemies in Brazil include Chrysopidae and Coccinellidae

Source:

http://keys.lucidcentral.org/keys/v3/whitefly/key/Aleyrodid%20Pupal%20Key%20to%20the%20Genera/Media/Html/Paraleyrodes_notes.htm

Additional host species---(need to confirm): Coconut, vanilla, banana, guava

Source: <http://old.padil.gov.au/viewPest.aspx?id=275>

Doug Caldwell, Ph.D., is the commercial landscape horticulture extension agent and landscape entomologist with the University of Florida Collier County Extension Service. The Cooperative Extension Service is an off-campus branch of the University of Florida, Institute of the Food and Agricultural Sciences and a department of the Public Services Division of Collier County government. E-mail dougbug@ufl.edu ; phone, 353-4244 x203. Extension programs are open to all persons without regard to race, color, creed, sex, handicap or national origin. For updates on Southwest Florida Horticulture visit: <http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu>