

Lobate Lac Scale Alert

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A new insect scale pest was found in the Florida Keys. The Lobate Lac Scale, *Paratachardina lobata lobata*, was found on Cudjoe Key on a wax myrtle brought in from the mainland.

Currently, the Lobate Lac Scale is found in both coastal and inland areas of Broward, Collier, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties and is spreading. This species has the potential of being the most devastating pest to trees and shrubs in the state's history because it attacks so many plant species. More than 120 species in 44 families of woody plants have been determined to be hosts for the Lobate Lac Scale and the plant list is growing. Both native and non-native species are attacked by the scale.

Description - The Lobate Lac Scale is about one-sixteenth of an inch long. The body has two pairs of prominent lobes that look "X"-shaped. The adult has a dark reddish brown color, but often appears dull and black due a coating of sooty mold. The immature scale stage is called a crawler. They are tiny, elongated, red ovals.

What it does - The scale infests woody portions of twigs under one-inch diameter. It attaches to the branch and sucks the plant sap causing the host plant to starve from lack of food and water. The branches start to wither and then branch dieback happens. A black colored fungus called sooty mold grows on the honeydew (waste product) produced by the scale. These secretions often cover infested and uninfested plants. Where sooty mold is thick on the leaf surface, little photosynthesis takes place.

Since the mature females are wingless, the crawler stage is dispersed by wind currents or by walking along the branches and falling off infested plants onto plants nearby. But it can be moved by birds and animals or by planting scale-infested plants in your landscape. Wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) and cocoplum (*Chrysobalanus icaco*) are examples of some of the most susceptible plants. It may be wise not to purchase these two plants, especially if they have come from a county that already has the scale present. Examine ANY plants you buy for the dark, X-shaped scale and alert the nursery owner if any are found.

What to do - Currently, for a small infested landscape area, University of Florida researchers recommend using repeated applications of horticultural oil or products containing

imidacloprid such as Merit or Bayer Advanced Garden Tree & Shrub Insect Control.

Imidacloprid is a systemic insecticide that should be applied as a drench to the root system.

Read and follow all label instructions. Researchers are evaluating biological controls such as parasites and predators that attack the scale.