

Continued Concern about the Lobate Lac Scale

The lobate lac scale continues to threaten many of our introduced and native ornamental trees and shrubs. It has continued to spread and is now in at least 7 southern Florida counties. It is a problem in both the landscape and in production.

Lobate lac scale feeds on the woody tissue of more than 120 species of plants, which include 39 native plants. The scale is found on small branches and twigs. Infestations of this scale can cause branch dieback and when severe, plant death. Dense populations can completely cover branches. Plants infested with the scale often turn black with sooty mold that grows on the honeydew produced by the scale insects.

Many of the plants commonly planted in the south Florida landscapes are highly susceptible to attack by this insect. Cocoplum is an example of this. Many of the cocoplum hedges in Miami-Dade area are infested with this insect. New plantings will also likely be attacked. Until a long-term solution for control of this pest can be established, plants will have to be treated with oils and/or insecticides. Additional plant species that appear to be highly susceptible include wax-myrtle, buttonwood, strangler-fig, myrsine, red bay, wild coffee, black olive, Indian laurel, Benjamin fig, lychee, mango, and star fruit.

In areas of low scale populations, foliar applied horticultural oil can effectively control populations. High populations may require the use of an insecticide. Products that have been evaluated and shown to be effective include imidacloprid (Merit in the landscape, Marathon in the nursery) and thiamethoxam (Flagship in the nursery). Other products labeled for scale control may also be effective but have not been confirmed. It is suggested to monitor the highly susceptible host plants regularly for the presence of this scale so treatment can be made before scale populations are extensive. Lobate lac scale population growth occurs slowly, so regular inspection and the use of foliar applied horticultural oils may be a successful strategy. Using horticulture oil to protect host plants that are in close proximity to plants infested with the scale may also reduce the spread of the scale.

Mature scales are approximately 1/16th inch and shaped like an “x” with four lobes. The outside of the scale is hard and brittle, and a dark reddish brown. The crawlers are elongate-oval, bright red and very small. In bright light, the crawlers can be seen with the naked eye because of the bright color, however, they are more easily seen with a hand lens.

For more information, contact Dr. Catharine Mannion, University of Florida, IFAS, Tropical Research and Education Center, 305-246-7000, cmannion@mail.ifas.ufl.edu or http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/orn/scales/lobate_lac.htm

Adult scales and crawlers

