

Palm Aphids (*Cerataphis* spp.)

Introduced: Native to Asia but are now common on palms throughout the humid tropical regions of the world.

Current Infestation: The palm aphid is found in the following Florida counties: Brevard, Broward, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Orange, Palm Beach, Pinellas, Polk, St. Lucie, and Seminole.

Description/Biology: Two species of palm aphids attack palms: *Cerataphis brasiliensis* (= *C. palmae*, *C. variabilis* and *C. fransseni*) and *C. lataniae*. In its native range, the palm aphid alternates between palms and a broadleaf tree where colonies form galls but it is not a problem in Florida where it can survive exclusively on palms.

Palm aphids do not look like a “typical” aphid but actually look more like a scale insect. They are oval, slightly convex with a white, waxy fringe. These aphids are mostly sedentary (limited mobility) and found on the undersides of young palm leaflets.

The nymphs are oval, slightly convex, light green to olive in color and have functional legs hidden under their body. Adult palm aphids are small, approximately 1/16 inch (1 to 2 mm) long, wingless with functional legs.



The adult looks like a shiny, dark brown bump with a ring of white threads.

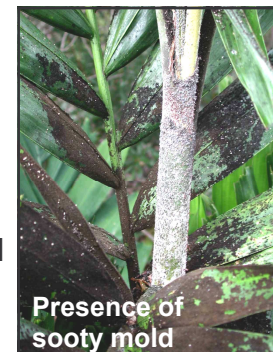
Seasonality: In south Florida, palm aphids develop several generations per year. Populations are highest during the warmer months.



Hosts: In South Florida the palm aphid infests coconut palm (especially ‘Malayan Dwarf’), date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*), Chinese fan palm, washingtonia palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), and Alexander palm (*Ptychosperma elegans*). They usually occur on the unopened frond, the younger fronds, and sometimes on the flowers and young palm fruits.

Importance: Palm aphid populations sometimes become quite severe on plants in the nursery and landscape.

Damage: Palm aphids reduce plant vigor by sucking out the plant juices and causing yellowing around the feeding location. Sooty mold grows on the honeydew produced by the nymphs and adults. Severe sooty mold production can reduce photosynthesis. Once the aphids are under control, the sooty mold will weather off.



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Palm aphids on palms

Management: When purchasing palms carefully check the new growth for palm aphids. Palm aphids have limited mobility on plants and are therefore easy targets for natural enemies. Lady beetle and syrphid fly larvae commonly feed on palm aphids.



Lady beetle larva



Syrphid larva

Homeowner - Check palms monthly for sooty mold. If the palm aphid is present look to see if any of the natural enemies such as lady beetle larvae are also present. If the palm aphid population is high and there are few or no natural enemies present, spray with horticultural oil or try to wash the aphids off with water.

Professional and Grower - If populations are low, the use of a horticultural oil or insecticidal soap spray may be sufficient. However, if populations are high, an insecticide may be necessary. There are

numerous insecticides labeled for aphid control, but it is not known which products may provide the best control for this particular aphid. Using a systemic insecticide such as acephate (i.e. Orthene), acetamiprid (TriStar), dinotefuran (Safari), imidacloprid (Marathon, Discus, Merit, Allectus), or thiomethoxam (Flagship) may provide longer lasting results. Pyrethroids such as bifenthrin (Talstar), cyfluthrin (Decathlon), fenpropathrin (Tame) can also be used. Other products such as flonicamid (Aria), malathion, a pymetrozine (Endeavor) may also be useful. Be aware that some of these products may also be harmful to the natural enemies. Be sure to check the label about the appropriate site for use (i.e. nursery, landscape, etc).

Websites:

<http://doacs> Information from DPI
Entomology Circular number 41

<http://www.fcla.edu/FlaEnt/fe81p552.pdf>

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August 2006