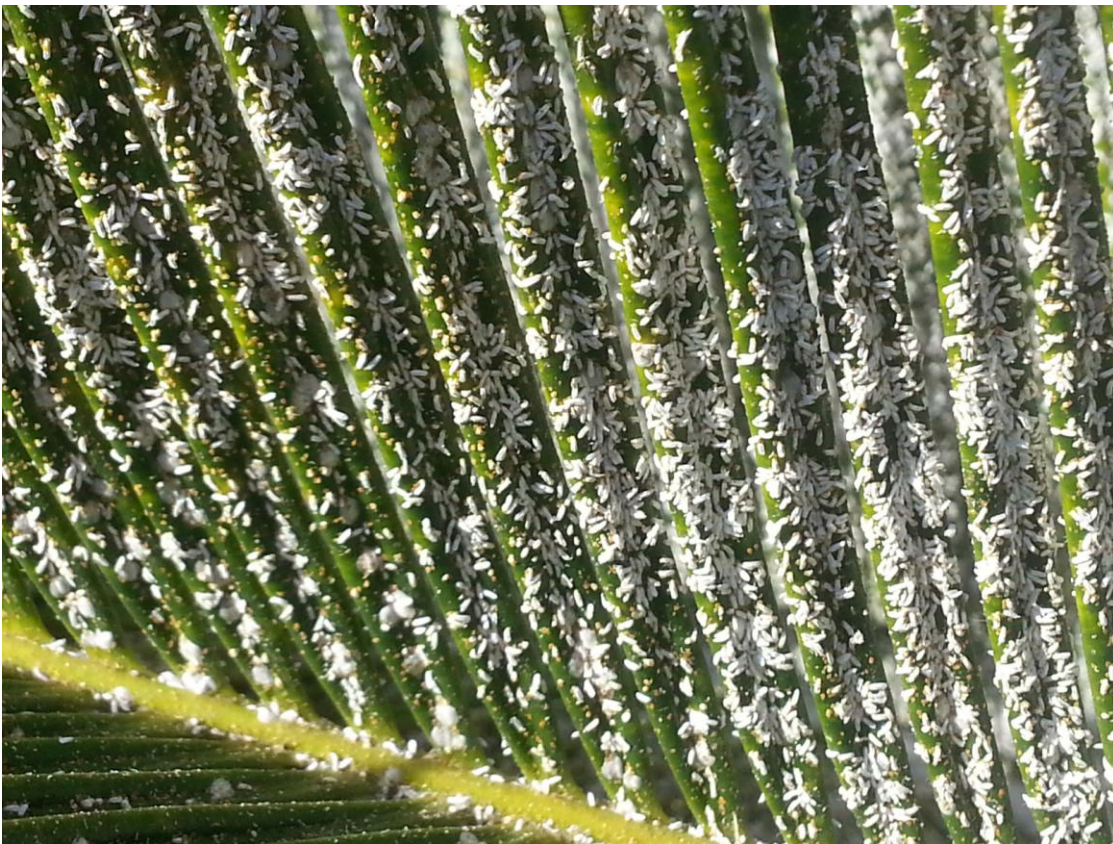


Cycad Scale

The cycad scale is a little known pest in Texas that can cause major problems for cycad lovers. It has been identified in South Texas up to Central Texas. Heavy infestations of this scale insect can quickly cause mortality.

Mature females are about 1-1.5 mm long (~1/16") and are pear-shaped but will conform to the shape of the plant. Adult females have a white cap that when flipped over reveal an orange insect. Males are smaller than females, 0.5 mm long, but also create a white cap.



Females lay over 100 orange eggs that hatch usually in 8-12 days depending on environmental conditions. Cycad scales have overlapping generations, so populations can build very quickly.



Damage first appears as chlorotic spots, but left untreated the fronds will turn brown from desiccation. Cycads with large populations often appear white from the covering of scales. Dead scales do not readily drop off the plant, so the scales must physically be removed by using high pressure water sprays.

Check all plant material before purchasing/ trading to make sure it is not infested. Look over the whole plant and especially the underside of fronds as the scales like to settle there to feed. You may need to use a hand lens since the insects are very small. High population levels of cycad scale will cover the entire surface of the plant, including the roots.

If an infestation is found, dispose of heavily infested plants by double bagging. If plants do not yet have high numbers of insects, prune heavily infested areas and discard in sealed bags. Pruning tools should be thoroughly cleaned before pruning other plants.

Treatments of cycad scale include horticultural oils, insecticidal soap, systemic pesticides or contact pesticides. Oils and soaps should have multiple applications. Oils should be applied in the morning or evening when temperatures are cooler. Systemic pesticides, active ingredients such as acephate or dimethoate, should be applied as a soil drench so the chemical is taken into the plant from the root

system. Contact pesticides include active ingredients such as carbaryl or pyrethrin. When using contacts, care must be taken to thoroughly cover the plant so that all insects are treated.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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