



FYN Garden Q & A Series

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Yards & Neighborhoods



FYN Topic: Ficus Whitefly

Question: I am seeking help for a hedge that runs the entire length of our yard. Six weeks ago, we started noticing bare areas. No bugs are visible. The problem is getting worse and spreading. Some branches have died. We hate to lose it. Are nutrients needed like 6-6-6? What can we do to save the hedge?
 Email from Cheryl N.

Answer: The damage to your weeping ficus hedge is caused by a small, winged insect called the ficus whitefly. It feeds on the undersides of leaves causing them to yellow, wilt and drop off. If the insect is still present, damaged leaves will appear dotted with small, silver or white spots. Since the hedge has suffered already from a massive loss of leaves, it is important not to over-water or over-fertilize. Check areas along the hedge that still have leaves. Look for both the whiteflies on the undersides of leaves. Also, look for other insects that are natural enemies for the whitefly. Lady beetle predators, parasitic wasps and lacewings feed on whitefly. If you choose to use an insecticide, look for a product labeled to control whitefly on ficus. Products containing the active ingredient, imidacloprid offer long-term control. A good example of one is “Bayer Advanced Garden™ Tree and Shrub” Insect Control. Products to use that are easier on the environment include insecticidal soap and horticultural oil spray. Follow all labeled instructions for mixing and applying. If no sign of the pest remains and the twigs are still supple and bendable, your hedge may produce new leaves and recover on its own. Learn more from the University of Florida/IFAS fact sheet:

[http://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/mannion/pdfs/Ficus%20Whitefly%20\(Feb2010\)%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf](http://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/mannion/pdfs/Ficus%20Whitefly%20(Feb2010)%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf)



Ficus Whitefly



Metallic Blue Ladybeetle



Hippodamia Ladybeetle



Ficus Whitefly Damage

Useful Links

- <http://www.floridayards.org>
- <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>
- <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>
- <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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