



FYN Garden Q & A Series

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FYN Topic: Rugose Spiraling Whitefly

Question: I have a coconut palm with whitefly problems. Will that kill the tree? Will the whitefly leave on its own? How can I best treat this and still be able to use the coconuts it produces? Steve D., Cape Coral

Answer: The Rugose Spiraling Whitefly (*Aleurodicus ruguiperculatus*) attacks Coconut Palms. The pest is a fairly new. Introduced from Central America and first collected four years ago in Miami-Dade from gumbo limbo trees, this whitefly feeds on many host plants, palms, woody shrubs and fruit trees. With few natural enemies, this whitefly won't leave your palms anytime soon. However, it's blackening sooty mold covered fronds won't kill healthy, large, coconut palm, gumbo limbo trees, etc. Only small, newly transplanted, cold damaged or unhealthy plants with extremely high infestations could die. Properly water and fertilize to keep your coconut palms healthy. Use a palm fertilizer. 8-2-12-4 or similar. And, dispose of infested, dead fronds with the trash to prevent further spread of this whitefly.

Many insecticides used to control whiteflies will harm beneficial predator insects on your palms. Only treat infected plants using a labeled, systemic insecticide or soil drench containing Imidacloprid (Merit or Bayer Advanced Vegetable or Citrus and Fruit Tree Insect Control). Use only the "Bayer Advanced Vegetable, Citrus and Fruit Tree Insect Control" when planning to eat the coconuts. Imidacloprid gives 10-12 months of control in South Florida. Learn more about reducing use of pesticides at next Saturday's Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Introductory Class, Saturday, January 19 from 9 a.m. to Noon at the Rutenberg Park Eco-Living Center. Pre-register by calling the extension office, 239-533-7504. Cost is \$8 per family.

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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