

### ***Tachardiella mexicana* on Wild Tamarind**

Another exotic insect is damaging ornamental trees in Lee County. *Tachardiella mexicana* is a scale insect in the lac scale family, Kerriidae. Lac scales produce a thick resin that covers their bodies. In India, the resin from another species of lac scale is used to make shellac and varnishes. The lobate lac scale, *Paratachardina pseudolobata*, is the only other species of lac scale known to occur in Florida. It is an exotic species also.

The scales attach to twigs and branches, and use their straw-like mouthparts to suck plant sap. They are not found on leaves. Individual females of *T. mexicana* are somewhat rounded and 3-5 mm in diameter, but in heavy infestations they coalesce to create an irregular mass covering twigs. They are maroon to black in color, and produce white strands of wax. They also produce a copious amount of honeydew, a medium for the growth of a black fungus commonly called sooty mold. Sooty mold is an opportunistic, ever-present, airborne fungus.

In August, 2010, *T. mexicana* was found defoliating several *Lysiloma latisiliqua* (wild tamarind) trees and a *L. sabicu* (sabicu) tree in Cape Coral. This was the first record of *T. mexicana* feeding on both trees. Previously in Lee County, the scale was discovered on *Acacia cornigera* (bullhorn acacia) and *A. pinetorum* (pineland acacia). Wild tamarind and pineland acacia are two Florida native plants. In 2011 the scale was confirmed on *Pithecellobium dulce* in Lee County. The scale has also been recorded on *Myrica cerifera* (wax myrtle) and *Ebenopsis ebano* (Texas ebony) in Orange County, Florida, in 2009.



Three wild tamarind trees badly infected with *T. mexicana*. The outer two are completely defoliated. Cape Coral, FL , early August 2010.

Monitor highly susceptible plants on a regular basis. The use of horticultural oil applied to the branches and twigs can effectively control light infestations. Depending on the level of infestation, oil application may need to be applied every 7 to 10 days for 4 to 6 weeks. However, this may be a difficult scale to control as Lee County Department of Transportation reports minimal success in controlling the scales on the roadway trees, pictured on page one. Due to defoliation, twig dieback and heavy sooty mold concentration, two medium-sized wild tamarind trees were removed from the roadway since identification of *T. mexicana*.



Heavy concentration of *T. mexicana* on wild tamarind stem



Two flies feeding on honeydew



Females *T. mexicana* feeding on wild tamarind stem





Lyle Buss

Females *T. mexicana* feeding on sabicu stem



Lyle Buss

Heavy infestation causes individual scales to coalesce into an irregular mass

### References

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Click here for more on scale Insects and their control <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg005>

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