



Frequently Asked Questions

White Fly

City of Pompano Beach Urban Forestry Division

Q: What is White Fly?

A: In 2007, a whitefly (*Singhiella simplex* aka Ficus Whitefly) was reported attacking ficus trees and hedges in Miami and can currently be found in 16 counties. Whiteflies are not flies or even related to flies. They are small winged insects much like aphids, scales and mealybugs. These insects typically feed on the underside of leaves with their needle-like mouthparts. Whiteflies can seriously injure host plants by sucking nutrients from the plants causing wilting, yellowing, stunting, leaf drop or even death. There are more than 75 different whitefly species reported in Florida.

In 2009, another white fly (*Aleurodicus rugioperculatus*, aka Rugose Spiraling Whitefly previously known as Gumbo Limbo Whitefly) was collected again in Miami from a Gumbo Limbo tree. This is not the same whitefly that is causing damage to the Ficus.

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Q: Can I trim my tree to get rid of the pest?

A: While trimming trees that hang over roofs, porches, pools, etc. is a reasonable approach because it would reduce the amount of honeydew falling directly on these targets, such pruning must conform to the county's tree trimming standards as set forth in Chapter 27 of the Broward County Administrative Code, and Chapter 155 of the City of Pompano Beach Zoning Code.

It is also important to consider that trees already under stress from the whitefly could be further weakened and potentially become hazardous, if they are over pruned (e.g. hat-racked or subjected to other forms of tree abuse).

Q: Are there any initiatives to relax tree trimming standards so I can really cut my tree back hard?

A: No. Tree pruning must conform to the county's tree trimming standards as set forth in Chapter 27 of the Broward County Administrative Code, and Chapter 155 of the City of Pompano Beach Zoning Code.

It is also important to consider that trees already under stress from the whitefly could be further weakened and potentially become hazardous, if they are over pruned (e.g. hat-racked or subjected to other forms of tree abuse).

Q: What is the city doing to treat the white fly on city properties?

A: The City is currently treating its public trees for this pest. If you do see an area where public trees are infested please let Public Works know so we can treat before the white fly spreads further into adjacent neighborhoods.

Q: Are there any natural remedies to treat for whitefly instead of pesticides?

A: Yes! There are a few predatory insects that can be purchased online and released on your property to combat the whitefly. These include: encarsia wasp, lacewings and delphastus ladybird beetles. You

may search online to purchase beneficial insects such as http://www.shop.gyostuff.com/Beneficial-Predator-Insects_c291.htm

Washing plants off with water can be an effective tool to help manage whiteflies for small infestations or small plants. But for it to be effective, you must remove the immature stages and eggs from the leaves when washing.

Q: How do I treat my property for whitefly?

A: Using a horticultural oil or insecticidal soap can help control the pest. These types of products are strictly contact so thorough coverage of the infested leaves is required. Typically, several applications are required 7-10 days apart. Be careful about using certain products in high temperatures because they may cause damage to plants.

If the infestation is large, an insecticide may be needed to control the whitefly populations. It is extremely important to use the appropriate insecticides, methods and timing in order to get the best control with the least amount of detriment to the natural enemies or the environment. There are several insecticide options recommended for both professional use and homeowner use.

Contact insecticides are typically sprayed on the foliage or other infested parts of the plant or in the soil. Coverage must be thorough to get the best results. In general, foliar sprays are active for a few weeks and usually require more than one application. Note that some of these products can be very useful for a quick response which can be very important with bad infestation.

A systemic insecticide can be applied directly to the infested plant on or into the soil. These include drenching the soil, spreading granular forms on the ground, or burying a pellet. Some products can also be applied as a basal trunk spray or injected into the trunk. Some can be sprayed onto the leaves, but perform better when applied to the trunk or the soil.

Always follow the label directions.

Q: Is there any funding available to help with the cost of treatments?

A: There are no city, county or state programs currently available to offer cost-share or financial assistance for treating whitefly on private property at this time. Note that there has been marketable success in the treatment of this pest throughout South Florida.

Q: What if I cannot afford to treat for whitefly?

A: On the bright side, we are seeing a significant increase in the activity of natural enemies/predators at a number of locations across the county. The general belief of UF-IFAS entomologists is that these beneficial insects will play a critical role in resolving our whitefly problem and we should take steps to conserve them.

Q: Where can I find further information about whitefly?

A: The University of Florida/IFAS and Broward County Extension Education Offices have several publications available as well as recommended products for treatment. You may contact them at <http://www.broward.org/parks/extension/pages/default.aspx> or by phone 954-357-5270. They are located at 3245 College Ave., Davie, FL 33314-7719.