

CUBAN-LAUREL THRIPS, GYNAIKOTHRIPS FICORUM, IN FLORIDA¹

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INTRODUCTION: WATSON (1923) RECORDED THE CUBAN-LAUREL THRIPS IN FLORIDA AS GYNAIKOTHRIPS UZELI (ZIMMERMAN, 1900). SINCE PRIESNER (1939) FOUND THAT G. UZELI AND G. FICORUM (MARCHAL, 1908) ARE DISTINCT SPECIES, MOST SPECIALISTS ACCEPT FICORUM AS THE NAME OF THE CUBAN-LAUREL THRIPS. SPECIMENS SUPPOSEDLY COLLECTED IN FLORIDA IN 1887 ARE IN THE U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM. G. FICORUM APPEARS IN THE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA'S COMMON NAME LIST AND IS THE NAME USED IN THIS PAPER.

DISTRIBUTION: GYNAIKOTHRIPS IS ORIENTAL; HOWEVER, SPECIES IN THIS GENUS HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED FROM AFRICA. G. FICORUM IS PANTROPICAL, APPEARING WHEREVER FICUS RETUSA IS PLANTED. IT IS RECORDED FROM ALGERIA, CANARY ISLANDS, COLOMBIA, CUBA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, GUAM, FORMOSA, ECUADOR, INDIA, JAVA, MEXICO, NASSAU, NICARAGUA, PALESTINE, PANAMA, PUERTO RICO, SALVADOR, THAILAND, SPAIN, SICILY, AND THE UNITED STATES. IT IS RECORDED FROM CALIFORNIA, FLORIDA, HAWAII, AND TEXAS. IT IS FOUND IN THE FOLLOWING COUNTIES IN FLORIDA: BREVARD, BROWARD, COLLIER, DADE, HILLSBOROUGH, LAKE, LEE, MANATEE, PALM BEACH, POLK, ST. LUCIE, SARASOTA, AND VOLUSIA.

HOSTS: FICUS RETUSA L. IS THE PREFERRED HOST. THIS PLANT HAS BEEN REFERRED TO AS F. RETUSA VAR. NITIDA. WOLCOTT (1953) SAYS THAT MOST SPECIES OF FICUS ARE LARGELY OR ENTIRELY IMMUNE TO INFESTATIONS. WHEN THEY BECOME ABUNDANT, THEY WILL FEED ON OTHER HOSTS. RECORDED HOSTS FROM FLORIDA ARE F. AXILLARIS, F. AUREA, F. BENJAMINA, F. ELASTICA, F. RETUSA, F. SP., CODIAEUM VARIEGATUM, MELICCOCA BIJUGA, NICOTIANA TABACUM, VIBURNUM SUSPENSUM, AND CITRUS SP. ADDITIONAL HOSTS FROM OTHER AREAS ARE EUCALYPTUS IN CUBA, GLIRICIDIA FROM PUERTO RICO, AND CALOCARPUM SP. FROM COLOMBIA.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE: ADULT THRIPS FEED ON THE TENDER, LIGHT-GREEN LEAVES, CAUSING SUNKEN REDDISH SPOTS ALONG THE MIDRIB (FIG. 1). TIGHT CURLING OF THE LEAF IS CAUSED BY THE DEVELOPING COLONIES OF IMMATURE THRIPS. THE CURLED LEAF BECOMES HARD AND TOUGH, THEN GRADUALLY YELLOWER AND BROWNER, AND DROPS DURING WINDY, RAINY WEATHER. MOST OF THE OUTSIDE LEAVES OFTEN WILL DROP CAUSING AN UNSIGHTLY LITTER ON LAWNS AND PAVEMENT. THE THRIPS CAN BE VERY ANNOYING AND OFTEN INADVERTENTLY BITE WHEN THEY DROP ONTO PEOPLE.



FIG. 1. LEAVES OF FICUS RETUSA DAMAGED BY CUBAN-LAUREL THRIPS.

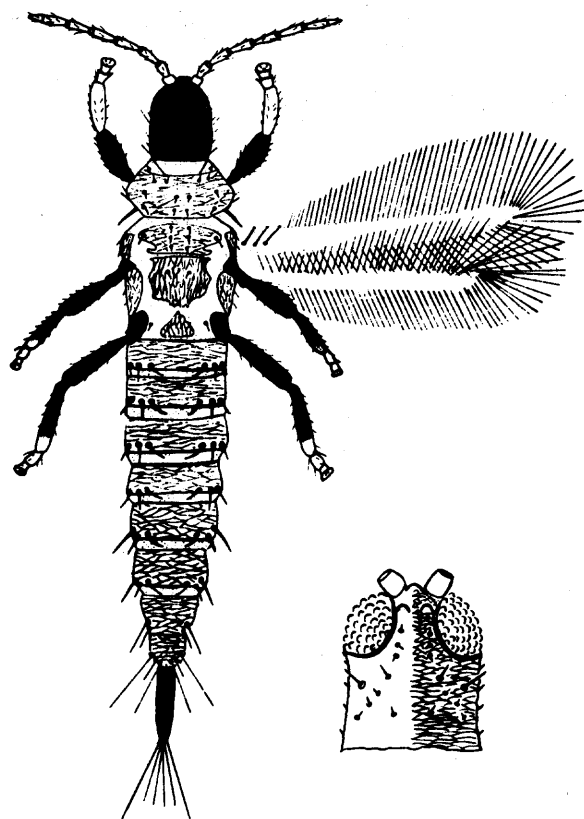


FIG. 2. CUBAN-LAUREL THRIPS, GYNAIKOTHRIPS FICORUM (MARCHAL).

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CONTROLS: WOLCOTT (1953) FOUND ALDRIN AND DIELDRIN AT THE RATE OF 0.25 PER CENT WAS AN EFFECTIVE CONTROL. HOWEVER, HE FOUND THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO SPRAY APPROXIMATELY ONCE A MONTH TO PREVENT RE-INFESTATION. DOZIER (1926) REPORTED TWO SPECIES OF ANTHOCORIDAE, MACROTRACHELIELLA LAEVIS CHAMPION AND CARDIASTETHUS RUGICOLLIS CHAMPION, TO BE PREDACEOUS ON THESE THRIPS IN PUERTO RICO.

MONTANDONIOLA MORAGUESI (PUTON) WAS INTRODUCED FROM THE PHILIPPINES INTO HAWAII IN 1964 TO CONTROL THIS THRIPS (FUNASAKI, 1966). ORIU INSIDIOSUS (SAY) IS A COMMON PREDATOR OF THIS THRIPS IN FLORIDA.

REPLACING F. RETUSA WITH A RESISTANT SPECIES OF FICUS PROBABLY WOULD BE THE BEST AND MOST LASTING CONTROL OF THIS PEST.

DESCRIPTION: THE IMMATURE STAGES ARE LIGHT YELLOW AND THE ADULTS ARE DARK BROWN TO BLACK. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE LEGS AND LAST ABDOMINAL SEGMENT, DORSAL STRIATIONS ARE SHOWN ON THE ADULT AND ENLARGED HEAD INSERT (FIG. 2). THE ADULTS VARY FROM ABOUT 2.6 MM TO 3.6 MM IN LENGTH. THEY MOVE RAPIDLY WHEN DISTURBED. ALTHOUGH THE ADULTS FLY RAPIDLY, THEY REMAIN ON OR CLOSE TO THE LEAVES MOST OF THE TIME. CANIZO (1945) GIVES DETAILED MEASUREMENTS OF THE BODY AND ANTENNA.

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