

OLEANDER PIT SCALE, *ASTEROLECANIUM PUSTULANS* (COCKERELL)
(HOMOPTERA: COCCOIDEA: ASTEROLECANIIDAE)¹

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INTRODUCTION: Oleander pit scale was described by Cockerell (1892) as *Asterodiaspis pustulans* and was later placed in the genus *Asterolecanium* by Russell (1941). Several species in the genus *Asterolecanium* induce the host to form pits around the scales. Pit production is apparently governed by the susceptibility of the host and is so great in some hosts that the scale will be completely surrounded by host plant tissue.

DESCRIPTION: The adult female (fig. 1) is covered by a glassy, translucent test which is circular to oval. It is flat to convex with marginal and dorsal wax filaments which are whitish to pinkish and are variable in length. The test is greenish yellow to brown. Individual scales may be found in shallow (fig. 2) or deep (fig. 3) pits. Depending on the host, scales are found on stems, leaves, and fruits.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE: A general weakening, loss of vigor, and death can result from heavy infestations. The most obvious damage occurs on oleander where large pits are formed (fig. 4). These pits result in malformed twigs which destroy the esthetics of the plant.

DISTRIBUTION: *A. pustulans* is recorded from several countries in Africa, Central America, South America, Taiwan, and the West Indies. It is also recorded from Hawaii and Louisiana. In Florida it is recorded from Alachua, Baker, Brevard, Broward, Charlotte, Citrus, Collier, Dade, DeSoto, Duval, Hendry, Highlands, Hillsborough, Indian River, Lake, Lee, Manatee, Martin, Monroe, Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Putnam, Sarasota, Seminole, St. Johns, St. Lucie, and Volusia counties.

HOSTS: In Florida the most common hosts are *Nerium* spp., *Ficus* spp., and *Grevillea robusta* A. Cunn.; however, it is recorded from over 100 species of plants.

CONTROL: Control of these scales is difficult because of the wax test which protects the adult female. Chemical control, using a currently recommended insecticide for scales, should be applied when the immature stages are present.

REFERENCES:

- Cockerell, T. D. A. 1892. Coccidae of Jamaica. J. Inst. Jamaica 1:252-256.
Ferris, G. F. 1955. Atlas of the scale insects of North America. Vol. 7. Stanford Univ. Press. iii+233 p.
Russell, L. M. 1941. A classification of the scale insect genus *Asterolecanium*. USDA Misc. Pub. No. 424. 322 p.

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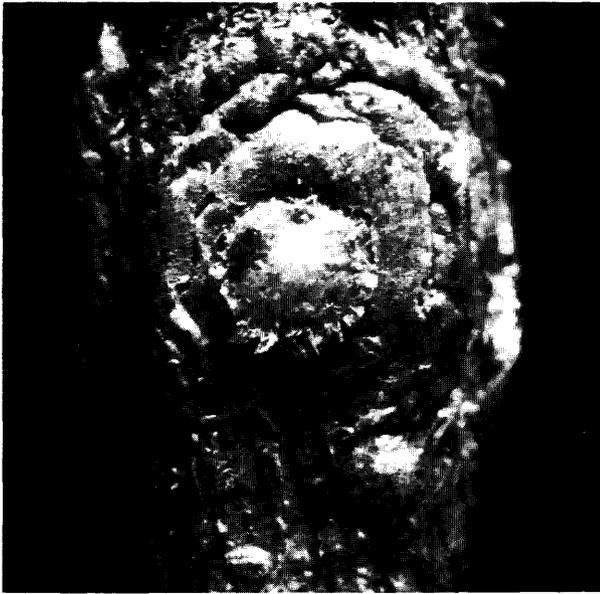


Fig. 1. *Asterolecanium pustulans* (Cockerell), oleander pit scale, adult female (X10)



Fig. 2. Oleander pit scale in a shallow pit (X6)



Fig. 3. Oleander pit scale, in a deep pit (X6)



Fig. 4. Damage caused by oleander pit scale on *Nerium* sp. (life size)