

## Green Scale, *Coccus viridis*

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The sooty mold on these grapefruit tree leaves indicates an insect infestation. A close look reveals that it is severely infested with green scale.



Note the crawler stages with the adult female scales

This is a member of the soft scale insect group and one that is easily overlooked because it is a transparent pale green and flat. Because this is one of those honeydew excreting insects, the associated black sooty mold growing on the honeydew will catch your attention and should cause you to take a closer look. Ants moving up and down the twigs is another clue there is a problem. The ants aggressively feed on the sweet honeydew. Green scale attacks coffee, citrus, gardenia and many other ornamentals.

Green scale causes premature defoliation by robbing the plant of nutrients from the leaves and petioles. They tend to congregate on the underside of the leaves along the mid-vein. There are repeating generations, every 50 to 70 days, which means one has to inspect plants on a monthly basis for this pest.

**What to do:** Use a 2% horticultural (paraffinic mineral) oil solution when the smaller stages are present. Applications should be repeated 3 times, every 7 to 10 days. The oil will also dry up the sooty mold and it will flake off. A soil drench systemic insecticide (root absorbed and translocated to the leaves) with the active ingredient, imidacloprid is very effective. This systemic has a nice toxicology (in regard to human safety) and a nice (low) environmental impact, compared to older systemic insecticides. It also gives prolonged protection, maybe 4 to 12 months depending on how much organic matter is in the soil. However, read the product to make sure it is labeled for use on citrus and other fruit bearing crops if you need to treat them.

Also, get rid of the ants! Use ant bait stations on the soil to keep the ants from moving up the trunk and moving the scales to new plants. The ants also protect any honeydew producing pest from predator and parasites.