

Asiatic citrus psyllid (*Diaphorina citri*)



The adult Asiatic citrus psyllid resembles a small cicada.



A giveaway clue to citrus psyllid nymph activity is the white waxy filaments. Note the giant swallowtail butterfly egg.

The Asiatic citrus psyllid is a sucking insect that was found in June 1998 and has become widespread throughout Florida. Favorite **hosts** include key lime and orange jessamine and other citrus. The adult resembles a miniature, 1/8 inch long mottled brown cicada. The immature feeding stage, called a nymph, can be found along with the yellow eggs and adults on the new, tender growth. Look for little **white waxy filaments** (see picture) on the tip of the nymph's abdomen, these stand out and are more readily visible than the insect.

Damage: Psyllid feeding causes curled, distorted leaves and premature leaf drop similar to aphid activity. Also, as with aphids, mealybugs and soft scale insects, this insect produces "honeydew", a politically correct name for the excess sap that is imbibed and then filtered through the insect's gut and comes out the back end. This clear honeydew is rich in sugars and makes a great substrate for the black, sooty mold fungus, which can quickly coat leaves. Citrus psyllid reproduces at an incredible pace with each female producing 800 eggs, and with 9 to 10 generations, it doesn't take long for them to become abundant! In India and Asia this insect spreads a bacterium that cause a vascular disease, called "greening" that threatens the citrus industry. At this point, the bacterium has not been discovered in the U.S.

What To Do: Check the new growth on your citrus plants weekly. If the psyllid is there, use a 2% mixture of appropriately labeled horticultural oil on the new growth. The Division of Plant Industry is planning to release some new parasitic wasps in the Naples area in a few weeks that will help reduce numbers of this pest.

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