



# MIAMIBEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # **153-2011**

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LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: June 17, 2011

SUBJECT: Update: Gumbo Limbo Spiraling Whitefly Infestation

This Letter to Commission is provided to give you an update on the recurring issues relating to whitefly in our City. As we advised you in LTC 289-2010, last October 28, 2010, a new tree pest, the Gumbo Limbo Spiraling Whitefly, has infested trees, palms, and other plants throughout Miami Beach and Miami-Dade County. Infestations are typified by the production of a white waxy substance that discolors leaves and drops onto surfaces near infested trees; sticky "honeydew;" and black sooty mold that grows on the honeydew. Although very messy, this whitefly does not appear to kill the host plants, unlike the Ficus Whitefly which arrived in South Florida a year or two ago.

Now that warm weather has returned, whitefly numbers are again increasing and the City is receiving calls from residents seeking information on the pest. In particular, they are inquiring on the effects of the Whitefly on trees and palms, and what can be done to treat the infestation. A typical sequence with the arrival of new insect pests is a population explosion due to unexploited resources and lack of predators and parasites, followed by the eventual control of the pest as the numbers of predators and parasites increase and a balance is attained. This is the anticipated scenario with the new whitefly. The following information is provided in the event that inquiries come into your offices.

- The city chemically treats many trees on city property but does not have the ability to treat all of the trees. On City property we have been using soil drenches with either Merit or Safari, which are systemic pesticides recommended by the University of Florida. With soil drenches, the tree absorbs the pesticide and distributes it throughout the tree. When the whiteflies feed on the leaves, they ingest the pesticide and die. Pest control is not immediate because it might take a month or longer for the pesticide to spread throughout the tree, but this type of treatment provides protection for a number of months.
- The alternative to a root drench is an aerial spray of pesticide which will kill every insect it contacts, the good along with the bad. With this method, pest control is faster but short term, and whiteflies from neighboring properties soon re-infest the tree. In most situations, the City does not use foliar sprays.
- The name of this whitefly species was recently changed from "gumbo limbo spiraling whitefly" to "rugose spiraling whitefly." However, they are one and the same.
- In an effort to provide our residents additional information, the University of Florida fact sheet on the whitefly has been posted again on the City's web page. Information has also been included in the City's MB magazine.

The Parks and Recreation Department's Greenspace Management Division will continue to monitor this infestation and adjust their control strategies as new information is collected. Additionally, they are networking and sharing their experiences and treatment programs with their colleagues in the industry to ensure we are following a holistic approach that is as effective as possible. Please advise if you have additional questions related to this information.

JMG/HMF/KS/JO/CL

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