

THE SCENTLESS PLANT BUG

By Ralph E. Mitchell, *Director/Horticulture Agent of Charlotte County Extension Service*

What is red and black and leaves a red stain when squashed? That's right, the Jadera bugs are back! I recently received an e-mail concerning this interesting insect called the scentless plant bug or Jadera bug. When one bug shows up it is often a curiosity, but when colonies of hundreds and sometimes thousands appear, people get a little concerned! This insect is known to occur in huge numbers in yards where the Golden Rain tree grows. In fact Jadera bugs are sometimes called golden rain tree bugs because of their association with this particular host plant. While they are harmless to people, when these bugs are squashed, they produce a telltale red stain.



Adult Jadera bug, *Jadera haematoloma* (Herrich-Schaeffer). Photo by Paul M. Choate, University of Florida

The scentless plant bug is found in the southeastern states west to Texas and California, several central states, and from Mexico, the West Indies, southward to Central America and Columbia; also Hawaii. This well traveled bug is also found in central and southern Florida. Southern Florida populations tend to be more evenly distributed over the year with no peak times evident from month to month.

Why are Jadera bugs here? For one reason - to feed on the seeds of the goldenrain tree. This common ornamental tree that has yellow flowers in early summer followed by pinkish to brown seed cases that eventually fall to the ground. The bugs will be found feeding on the fallen seeds, but may also congregate on lawns, surrounding plants and structures. The Jadera is a true bug with sucking piercing mouthparts and red and black coloration. The adults and about one-half inch in length. The young or nymphs are smaller, but even more colorful with a bright red body.

As I mentioned earlier, the Jadera bugs are more of a nuisance than a true pest. Control attempts are often not necessary. Try raking up and eliminating the food source, the tree seeds, in the lawn if the bugs are a problem. If you are at your wit's end, an insecticidal soap readily available at any garden center can be used according to label instructions to control these insects. Just remember they are not a serious pest of any particular plant and, of course, don't bite people. They do stain, however, so watch your clothes! Otherwise, can I convince you to ignore them or simply enjoy this natural phenomenon?

For more information on all types of insect pests, please contact our Master Gardeners on the Plant Lifeline at 941.764.4340 from 1:00pm-4:00pm Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Our office is located at 25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3, in Port Charlotte. Our Plant Clinics are available across the county:

- **Demonstration Garden (6900 Florida Street, PG)** Thursdays 9:00am-11:00am.
- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** Thursdays 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Mid-County Regional Library** 1st and 3rd Thursday of month 1:00pm-3:00pm.
- **Edison College Learning Resources Library** 3rd Tuesday of month 1:00pm-4:00pm.
- **South Gulf Cove Learning Garden** 3rd Wednesday of month 9:00am-12:00pm.

Monthly Plant Clinics are Saturdays 9:00am-12:00pm at the following locations:

- **Peachland Promenades Publix** 2nd Saturday of month.
- **Home Depot Murdock & Home Depot Punta Gorda** 3rd Saturday of month.
- **Lowes Garden Center Murdock** 4th Saturday of month.

Ralph Mitchell is the County Extension Director/Horticulture Agent for the Charlotte County Cooperative Extension Service. You may contact him by email (Ralph.Mitchell@charlottefl.com). You may also contact a volunteer Master Gardener 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 941.764.4340 or by email (Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com).

For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Steele, at 941.764.4340. Allison can help educate you about the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program so that you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

Resource:

Mead, F.W. & Fasulo, T. R. (2008), Scented Plant Bugs, UF/IFAS Extension Service.

Caldwell, D. (2008) Jadera Bugs? It Must be Spring! UF/IFAS Extension Service - Collier County.

Gilman, E.F. & Watson, D. G (2007) Koelreuteria paniculata: Goldenraintree. UF/IFAS Extension Service.