

A NEW LEAF-NOTCHER IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

By Ralph E. Mitchell

There is a new leaf-notcher in the neighborhood and its name is the Sri Lanka Weevil. This small whitish-gray, ¼-inch beetle is beginning to show up in Charlotte County. Although small, this weevil can cause damage to the foliage of numerous plants in our landscapes.

First found in 2000 in Broward County, this new invasive beetle is native to Sri Lanka and, as of May 2006, was found in surrounding counties including Sarasota, Lee, Collier, and Hendry. The adult beetle is very evident with its powdery white appearance. This appearance, coupled with the classic weevil leaf notching damage, is easily spotted in the landscape. Plant foliage looks like somebody has ripped pieces off the leaf margin in an irregular pattern. These weevils may even feed deeper into the leaf along the veins. Most of the time, mature, well-established plants can take an attack from this beetle as this leaf-notching is merely an eyesore and does no permanent damage. Young plants, however, may need some protection.

Sri Lanka weevils like new foliage and spring is a good time to begin monitoring for this pest. What are their favorite food plants? Unfortunately, the Sri Lanka Weevil likes to eat as many as 68 different host plants. These plants include the Areca palm, Black Olive, Buttonwood, Bottlebrush, Ficus, Citrus, Laurel Oak, Live, Loquat, Mahogany, Red Maple, Pygmy Date, Golden Dewdrop - just to name a few. We have had several homeowners bring in Sri Lanka Weevil samples to our office that were found feeding on their backyard citrus trees.

There are some management suggestions to help suppress this weevil. The bad news is that there are presently NO pesticides registered for use against Sri Lanka Weevils on residential fruit trees. Keep in mind that

mature, established trees can tolerate the normal damage associated with these beetles. On the other hand, young trees can be physically protected by covering the tree top with fiberglass window screening. This will act as a barrier to keep out the adult beetles.



Sri Lanka Weevil (*Myloccerus undatus*)

The good news is that there are several insecticides that can be used on ornamental (non-edible) trees that will effectively control the Sri Lanka Weevil. Making sure to always read and follow the label instructions - it is the law - you can try carbaryl, acephate or an insecticide that contains a pyrethroid labeled for leaf-feeding insects. Always make sure that both the pest and the host plant are listed on the label.

One additional mechanical control method involves (believe it or not) the use of an open, up-side down umbrella! Shake a branch infested with weevils while holding the umbrella under the branch. The weevils will fall into the umbrella for easy disposal. Natural enemies to control these beetles seem absent other than one identified fungal disease.

One final note involves the Sri Lanka Weevil larvae. Although the larvae feed on plant

roots underground, the exact damage that they do is not known. Accordingly, this is not a life cycle stage that we can attempt to control.

It is not uncommon for Florida to receive a new insect pest from time to time. The Sri

Lanka Weevil is just another in a series of pests that we will have to deal with. If you find this beetle, you can bring it into our office for identification. Until then, monitor your landscapes regularly and deal with pest problems while they are small.

For information on all types of insects, 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:

- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** every Thursday 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Demonstration Garden** (6900 Florida Street, PG) every Thursday 9:00am-11:00am.
- **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.

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

- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** 1st Saturday of month.
- **Peachland Promenades Publix** - 2nd Saturday of month.
- **Home Depot Murdock & Home Depot Punta Gorda** - 3rd 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:

Mannion, C., Hunsberger, A., Gabel, K., Buss, E. & Buss, L. (2006) Sri Lanka Weevil (Myloccerus undatus). The University of Florida Extension Service, IFAS.

Thomas, M.C. (2005) Pest Alert - Myloccerus undatus Marshal, a weevil new to the Western hemisphere. FDACS, DIP.