

CITRUS PEST SPOTLIGHT

Texas citrus mite

By Michael E. Rogers

IDENTIFICATION

Adults and larvae are yellow-green in appearance and are best observed using a 10x hand lens. Females are broadly oval in shape with short legs. Males are smaller and more triangular in shape with legs that are longer than the body. Eggs are circular in shape and flattened in appearance. Immediately after being laid, eggs are light yellow in color, but gradually turn tan to dark-green just before hatching. As Texas citrus mites develop from egg to adult, they molt, leaving behind cast skins which are white in color and shriveled in appearance.

DAMAGE

Occasionally, Texas citrus mites can be found feeding on fruit, but this is typically not a concern. The primary damage caused by this spider mite is to the leaves. Texas citrus mites are found primarily on the upper surface of leaves. Mite populations initially develop in the center of the leaf with eggs laid adjacent to the leaf mid rib.

Damage occurs as mites insert their mouthparts into the leaf and ingest cell contents. This feeding results in a white stippling of the leaf surface. The visible damage caused by mite feeding expands across the surface of the leaf as mite populations increase and gradually move to the outer edges of the leaf. Ultimately, the entire surface of a leaf may be stippled, resulting in a decline in tree health if a significant portion of the tree canopy is affected. In cases where trees are subjected to additional stress (e.g., drought), leaf drop may occur.

MANAGEMENT

Similar to other species of spider mites, populations of Texas citrus mite increase most rapidly during prolonged dry periods with low relative humidity. Thus, damaging populations are most likely to occur during fall, winter and early spring months in Florida. Use of a miticide for control of Texas citrus mite may be needed when populations reach an average of five to 10 mites per leaf. However, if male spider mites are more abundant than females, then the population may be in decline and chemical control can be withheld pending the outcome of additional scouting efforts. 🍊

Figure 1. Life stages (egg, larvae and adult males and females) of the Texas citrus mite, *Eutetranychus banksi* (McGregor) (Acari: Tetranychidae). White cast skins left behind following molting are also present.



Figure 2. Stippling damage caused by feeding of the Texas citrus mite. Note that mites have moved to the edge of the leaf.

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