

# The Scoop

on horticulture



## A New Scale for Florida



Over the past couple of years, we have seen several new pests introduced into the state of Florida. Now a new exotic soft scale insect attacking Crotons has been identified. The mystery scale does not have a name yet, as it cannot be placed into a particular genus. According to Dr. Chris Hodgson of the National Museum of Wales, this scale is most likely an unknown species in an undescribed genus of unknown origin. The soft scale was first discovered at a nursery in Marathon, Florida on April 9, 2008 and has now been identified in Broward, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Brevard, Collier, Duval, Hernando, Highlands, Hillsborough, Indian River, Lake, Lee, Marion, Orange, Osceola, Pinellas, Putnam, St. Lucie, Sarasota, and Seminole counties.

### Identification

This particular scale can be easily confused with the common South Florida scale, the green shield scale, or the urbicola scale, but the mystery scale does not produce an ovisac (an egg containing capsule) like the aforementioned scale insects. Adult females are approximately 3.5 mm to 7 mm long by 2 mm wide and greenish-yellow in color. Adult males are small, 3 mm by 0.6 mm, orange gnat-like insects with white tail filaments. Immature males and females

resemble adult females but are smaller and more clearly colored.

### Reproduction:

Each adult female lays an average of 388 eggs. This scale does not produce an ovisac. There is little else known about the reproduction of this insect.

### Hosts:

There are over 50 known hosts in the state of Florida. Some of these include: Croton, Guava, Strangler Fig, Mango, Wild Coffee, Ficus, Gumbo Limbo, and Firebush.

### Damage:

According to UF IFAS, this new soft scale is not accompanied by much black, sooty mold like most scale insects. However, severe infestations will cause Crotons to drop leaves and decline. The actual economic repercussions are unknown at this time.

### Control:

Because there is little known about the biology of this insect, there is also little information regarding the control of it. However, the University of Florida IFAS recommends both a foliar and root drench application of an insecticide such as imidacloprid. They also say that products containing acephate, like Orthene, could speed along the results.

### Sources:

Hodges, Greg. *Pest Alert: A New Exotic Soft Scale Insect on Croton in South Florida*. Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry, May 22, 2008. Web.  
Mannion, Catharine. *Another New Scale in Florida*. University of Florida Tropical Research and Education Center. n.d. Web ppt.



Adult and immatures of this new scale insect on croton. (Photograph credit: Lyle Buss, University of Florida)



Adult female, adult male and immatures of this new scale insect on croton. (Photograph credit: Lyle Buss, University of Florida)



Adult Female with eggs on croton stem (Photograph credit: H. Glenn and K. Amarsakare, UF IFAS)

