Planthopper

Several species
Order Hemiptera, Family Acanalonidae,
Family Flatiidae; planthoppers
Native pests

Host plants: Flatid planthoppers feed on numerous trees, vines, and ornamental herbs.

Description: The most common flatid species is the citrus flatid planthopper. It has red eyes and is dark bluish-black with a white, waxy bloom that makes the insect appear whitish or bluish-white. Its length is about 5 mm long. Other common related planthoppers are about the same size but are pastel green. They are pale green with red eyes and covered by a thick, fluffy, white, waxy secretion that also covers the stem in a sort of nest. Nymphs are wide and flat. They jump 38 cm (15 inches) when disturbed.

Acanalonia conica is our most common planthopper in the Family Acanalonidae. It is pastel green and 13 mm long. The egg is an elongate shape with a tiny curly projection. Immature acanalonids are peculiar, gray insects that have wide thoraxes and very small abdomens.

Life history: In spring and summer, nymphs hatch from eggs located under bark and suck sap through needlelike mouthparts inserted in the bark or leaf. As the nymph feeds, it secretes a white, fluffy wax which covers its body and the twig or leaf around it. Nymphs also excrete honeydew, a sweet, sticky liquid on which sooty mold fungi grows. Adults appear during the summer. Females deposit eggs by inserting them into the bark. There is only one generation per year.

Overwintering: Eggs under bark.

Damage symptoms: Flatid planthoppers are usually not abundant enough to cause damage to plant health. Their waxy secretions and honeydew disfigure plants and make them unpleasant to touch. Sooty mold may grow in the honeydew, which further disfigures infested plants. Rarely are planthoppers abundant enough to kill twigs through their egg deposition under the bark.

Monitoring: Look for honeydew and sooty mold on leaves.

Physical control: These pests can be dispersed by spraying them with a strong stream of water from a garden hose.

Chemical control: Usually not necessary to control nymphs and adults.

Biological control: No reports of natural enemies

Plant mortality risk: Low

Planthopper adult. (204)
Photo: John Davidson

Biorational pesticides: azadirachtin, insecticidal soap, pyrethrins

Conventional pesticides: acephate, bifenthrin, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos (nursery only), cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, fluvalinate, imidacloprid, lambda-cyhalothrin, malathion, permethrin