



Ficus Whitefly Strategy Meeting (Minutes)

Tuesday 14th April 2015: 2:00 -3:30 pm.

Ocotillo Room, Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Office, 4341 E. Broadway Rd. Phoenix 85040.

Minutes & meeting handouts posted at <http://cals.arizona.edu/apmc/ficuswhitefly.html>

Present:

Peter Ellsworth (UA)
Rebecca Senior (UA)
Kai Umeda (UA)
Shaku Nair (UA)
Kelly Young (UA)
Worku Burayu (UA)

Cheryl Goar (Arizona Nursery Association)
John Caravetta (Arizona Department of Agriculture)
Bonnie Ervine (Arizona Community Tree Council)
John Eisenhower (Integrity Tree Services)
Ray Lopez (Scottsdale Weed Control and Fertilization)
Matt Lopez (Commercial Weed and Fertilizer)
Vince Aguiar (Dow AgroSciences)

Attending through conference call: Ursula Schuch (UA), Gene Hall (UA), Dawn Gouge (UA), Al Fournier (UA)

ACTION ITEMS

- 1. All participants will distribute and encourage participation in the Ficus Whitefly Survey** (<http://goo.gl/forms/TZE12dDRm5>) so that we can gather solid information on pest distribution & response.
- 2. Participants may route information, requests, and questions through the UA's Dr. Shaku Nair at any time** (Email: nairs@email.arizona.edu, Phone: 520-374-6299).
- 3. Until new Arizona work is done, participants are encouraged to distribute and refer stakeholders to the UF factsheet on Ficus Whitefly** (http://cirs.ucr.edu/pdf/ficus_whitefly_feb2010_fact_sheet.pdf).
- 4. Dr. Shaku Nair (UA) will work with group in developing ideas & content on the Ficus Whitefly as 1-page IPM Shorts that can be distributed widely. Topics of interest include:**
 - Biology & Identification of Ficus Whitefly
 - Standards of Practice for Management of Ficus Whitefly in FL
 - Plant Health Care Options for Infested Trees
- 5. Participants will fill out Doodle Form to indicate availability for follow-up meeting in May** (<http://doodle.com/98m3nxttf57yvdaa>).

NOTES

All attendees explained their interests and concerns regarding the new pest. Peter Ellsworth outlined the role of the APMC (Arizona Pest Management Center), UA, and how the APMC is equipped to respond to the situation. John Caravetta outlined the role of the AZ Dept. of Ag. and the Department's stand, because this is not a regulated pest.

The University's Role: Through the APMC, we respond with problem-solving research and organized outreach and education through Extension IPM programs. Our numbers of staff and funding are low; however, we are happy to respond to stakeholder needs and re-allocate staff time and limited resources to assist in any way possible. A pest problem of this type is considered a "Community IPM" issue and we have a Leadership Team of research and Extension faculty who address these priorities regularly. **Dr. Shaku Nair** (Asst. in Extension) is the point person for this effort and everyone should feel free to route requests and other information through Shaku.

She can make sure all appropriate parties are in the loop. Stakeholders continue to be invited to interact with the University through any of their usual contacts as well.

ADA's Role: ADA has an important regulatory and surveillance role and regularly liaises with USDA-APHIS. Even though this pest is of exotic origin, there are no current quarantines or other regulatory actions in force for it at this time. That said, the agency welcomes opportunities to assist stakeholders and industry groups should there be a role that is feasible for the agency.

Arizona Plant Diagnostic Network (AzPDN): This hybrid organization links local, state, and federal surveillance and regulatory infrastructure with the University and Cooperative Extension. Drs. Judy Brown and Barry Pryor (both in the School of Plant Sciences) are current co-directors of this group, which meets regularly to discuss tactics for surveillance and exclusion of quarantine and other pests of regulatory significance to Arizona.

Industry Perspectives

Ray Lopez reported the treatment regime they (and most other applicators) are following, which is soil drench with Safari + topical foliar spray with imidacloprid at the same time, repeated bi-weekly. Most of their treatment requests have been from larger (upscale) properties. In almost all the treated locations, infestation was noticed only after severe defoliation. In these situations, although they realize the importance of biological control, they cannot afford to wait for beneficials to take over, especially when clients are in a hurry (for example, one property is up for sale). However, they have tried using insecticidal soap on the suggestion of Kai Umeda, instead of the topical foliar spray, along with soil drenching with Safari. Peter Ellsworth noted that the standard of practice in Florida is a single soil drench annually with either imidacloprid or dinotefuran (Safari), and that this was sufficient to give season long management of the problem and that many beneficials contribute to the long-lasting control. He also noted that these treatments are made well in advance of any defoliation. Under outbreak conditions where defoliation is already occurring, there are no easy answers. New observations and research in AZ are needed to adopt or adapt solutions from Florida.

Discussion

Question from Ray Lopez: Can UA or any other organization help (financially) with treatment costs, especially for smaller scale properties?

Peter Ellsworth: Unfortunately no, but we can help with educating these property owners as well as all other concerned stakeholders. We must emphasize the importance of monitoring. We have just missed the critical stage in the pest's seasonal timeline (which likely occurred in February or earlier), and if we could have intervened then, we could have achieved significant control for a longer period of time. Presently, a large number of red-eye nymphs are being noticed, which are the non-feeding stage, and are therefore not as affected by pesticide applications. In the coming months, an ongoing monitoring effort is very much needed, so that we do not miss any more critical stages.

Kai Umeda and Rebecca Senior reported the levels of infestation they have come across. In almost all locations, infestation and defoliation are moderate to severe, and the group was concerned that this could lead to sunburn of branches if re-foliation was not quick. Resistant cultivars are present and insensitive or tolerant *Ficus spp.* are available based on the Florida survey (see Mannion PPT and factsheet). However plant replacement may not be an option in many of these large, specimen type installations of Ficus. It may be of interest to the landscape community that the edible fig is resistant.

John Eisenhower reported the severity of sunburn in Ficus, and how badly the plants can be hit, even though they are adapted to tropical conditions.

Vince Aguiar reported on the new product XXpire (a premix of sulfoxaflor and spinetoram), which may offer an additional control option. Currently it is only for foliar applications and it is not labeled for drenching or for any use in homeowner situations (commercial applications only). UF has done some tests with this product, and the results look promising out 8 weeks. As a different mode of action from the neonicotinoids, this product in the future may be helpful in managing any resistances that develop.

Rebecca Senior demonstrated the use of the **Ficus Whitefly Survey** (<http://goo.gl/forms/TZE12dDRm5>) that she has developed, and shared some results. As of now, the pest seems to be restricted to the Phoenix area, but more results are awaited.

The email blurb developed by UA has links to the survey as well as the UF factsheet (http://cirsr.ucr.edu/pdf/ficus_whitefly_feb2010_fact_sheet.pdf), which contains the most comprehensive information on the pest currently. The blurb also mentions effective management practices that are successful in Florida. However, further research is needed to verify the FL results in AZ conditions. The email blurb will be circulated by all attendees of this meeting, in their respective networks.

The group did not arrive at a specific recommendation/treatment for the pest that can be easily relayed to the public. However, Shaku Nair will take the lead on developing a Ficus Whitefly IPM Short, with inputs from the group, to serve Arizona. It will contain concise information on what to look for, how to manage the pest, and most importantly, what to do after an infestation.

We should consider hosting Dr. Catharine Mannion, UF, who is the current authority on the pest. Potential venues are the Desert Hort Conference, Tucson (June 5th), the SHADE conference (August 7th) – which will be a very good venue, because of its location at the Arizona Biltmore, or the Arizona Tree Council Conference, Prescott (September 18th, 19th). Peter Ellsworth will contact Dr. Mannion about her availability. Her experiences and new research results will be extremely valuable.

Shaku Nair will follow up with this group of attendees in today's meeting and share any new information. The group will **reconvene in a month** (tentatively the week before Memorial Day, **May 18-22**) to discuss any new developments.

Note: John Caravetta has received confirmation on 4/16/2015 from the Federal Systematic Entomology Lab that the specimens submitted were indeed fig whitefly as Peter Ellsworth and other entomologists had determined.