

ALERT ***ALERT*****ALERT**

FICUS WHITE FLY.....IT'S HEEEEERE!

According to the article in Thursday June 18th, 2009's edition in the Ft. Myers News-Press, the Ficus White Fly has finally been confirmed in Lee County. There has been a lot of interest with this pest for close to a year now as we watched it cause considerable damage to Ficus hedges on the East Coast of Florida. It's now confirmed here and there are several things we can do about it.

First off, if it continues to spread, and we have every reason to believe it will, and it's found close by, we should start a program using one of the highly systemic neonicotinoid products currently available. These products tend to be very expensive, but because of their effectiveness and the costs of replacing our landscaping, they are a better choice than just spot treating with only a contact insecticide. We've been to seminars where the research has shown near 100% control for 3 to 12 months depending on who you want to listen to. Right now we are suggesting a 6-month application program with inspections until we have a better idea as to how extensive the white fly problem is going to get.

So far, the pest has pretty much confined its activity to some of the varieties of Ficus with the Benjamina (our most common variety) being the most affected. The Green Isle Ficus has a much lower susceptibility and probably won't need treating unless the pest is really heavy in the immediate area. The Repens Climbing Ficus doesn't seem to be affected at all.

The costs, of course, will depend on how many Ficus are present, their height and so forth. Generally we can look at a cost of \$1 to \$2 per linear foot for a hedge 4' to 6' high and a cost of \$5.00 + for a freestanding tree. It would probably be a good idea to keep this in mind and if they appear in our immediate neighborhoods begin our course of treatment. It has now been discovered in the Iona McGregor area so we should be watching Town & River, Palmetto Point, Gulf Harbor and Iona Road areas.

If you have any concerns or particular questions, please feel free to contact us and we can discuss your particular hedge or trees or we have a circular from the extension service we can mail, fax or e-mail if you would like more information.

Terrence J. McLaughlin

President