

Pest Alert

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Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner of Agriculture

A new exotic spider mite in Florida *Eutetranychus* sp.

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INTRODUCTION: On March 1, 2001, a new exotic spider mite was identified in Florida from specimens collected from a palm (*Ptychosperma* sp.) in Ft. Lauderdale (Broward Co.). This mite has since been found on at least two *Ptychosperma* palms and two crotons (*Codiaeum variegatum*) in the same vicinity. It is an exotic species and should be treated as a potentially serious plant pest.

The adult mite is broad, oval and flattened. Females vary in color from pale brown through brownish-green to almost orange. The legs are about as long as the body and yellowish-brown. Average size is 0.5mm. Adult males are smaller than the females. They are elongate and triangular with very long legs.

In general, this mite feeds on the upper side of the leaf primarily along the midrib, then spreads to the lateral veins, causing the leaves to become chlorotic. Pale yellow to white streaks develop along the midrib and veins. Little webbing is produced. In heavier infestations, the mites feed and oviposit over the whole upper surface of the leaf. The feeding damage on *Ptychosperma* leaves appears as white blotches on the upper surface of the leaflets.

All stages were found primarily along the leaflet midrib; on crotons, mites were found only on the upper leaf surface along the mid rib. The eggs are oval or circular and flattened, coming to a point dorsally. Newly laid eggs are hyaline, but later they take on a yellow, parchment-like color.

This mite is easily mistaken for the Texas citrus mite (*Eutetranychus banksi*) which occurs on citrus and a variety of other plants in Florida. *Ptychosperma* palms and crotons (*C. variegatum*) should be carefully inspected and any spider mites sent to Gainesville for identification.

Please remember that many spider mite species can only be identified by the adult male, so when sampling please collect as many mites as possible.



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner



Fig. 1. *Ptychosperma* sp. showing white blotches on the upper surface of the leaflet.
Photo credit: Jeffrey Lotz, FDACS/DPI



Fig. 2. *Ptychosperma* sp. showing damage to the leaflets.
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