

## TREE PEST OF THE MARIANAS

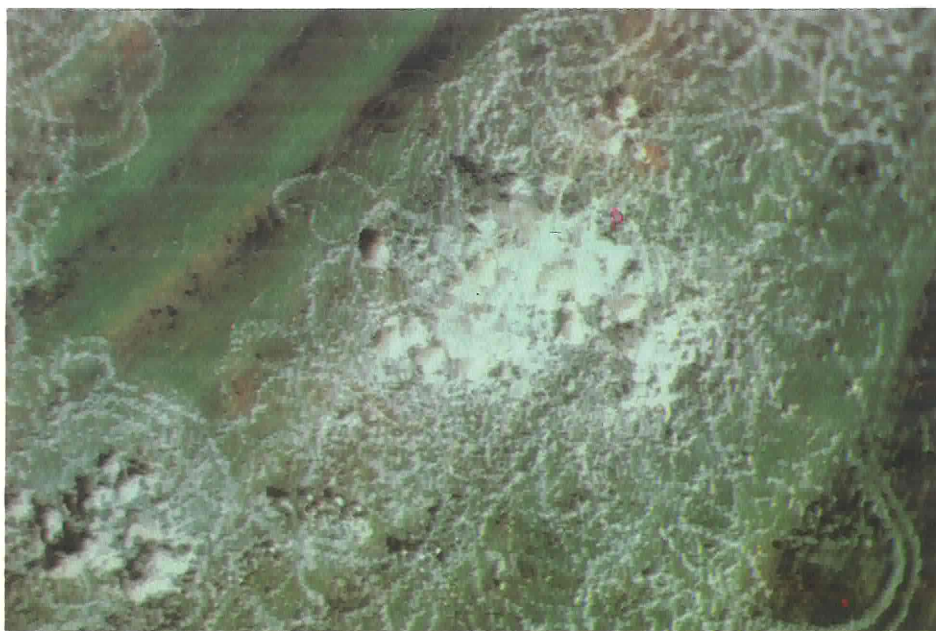


Photo by Donald Nafus

**Common Name:** Spiraling whitefly

**Scientific Name:** *Aleurodicus dispersus* Russell (Homoptera: Aleyrodidae)

**Biology:** The whitefly is a small, dusty-white insect which resembles a tiny moth. It goes through three stages in its life cycle, egg, nymph and adult, and needs about 1 month to complete its life cycle. The eggs are laid on the lower side of leaves in a characteristic spiral pattern which gives the whitefly its name. The nymphs are covered with a waxy, white substance, and secrete a sticky juice called honeydew. Whiteflies can be extremely abundant and can cover the entire lower surface of leaves.

**Damage:** The whiteflies reduce the vigor of heavily infested plants, make ornamentals unsightly, and secrete honeydew on which sooty mold grows. Heavy infestations can reduce yields in fruit trees.

**Crops affected:** The spiraling whitefly is a pest of over 100 plants including many fruit trees and ornamentals. Some of its favorite plants are plumeria, guava, sea grape, and coconut.

**Distribution:** The insect was accidentally brought to Guam from Hawaii. It has also spread to most islands in the Northern Marianas, and to Belau and Pohnpei. It originally came from Central America.

**Control:** Two natural enemies have been introduced to Guam and provide control of the whitefly. One is a ladybird beetle named *Nephaspis amnicola*. The second is a tiny wasp called *Encarsia haitiensis*. Homeowners can reduce damage from the whitefly by keeping their plants healthy (fertilizing and watering as needed) and pruning out areas where foliage is very dense to lessen the amount of shelter for the whiteflies. If insecticides seem necessary, there are some chemicals cleared for use on some of the plant species attacked. Consult with an agricultural extension agent for up-to-date information.

To prevent further spread of this insect, do not transport infested plants from one island to another.

Prepared by: Ilse Schreiner  
Cooperative Extension Service  
University of Guam

Forestry & Soil Resources Division  
Department of Agriculture  
Government of Guam

Division of Plant Industry & Extension Services  
Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas