

Thorn bugs

University of Florida / IFAS

Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service

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INTRODUCTION ~ Thorn bugs (*Umboia crassicornis*) were noted in high frequency in April 2012. This insect can be found at all times of the year, but is more common in the cooler months of late winter and early spring.

HOSTS ~ Thorn bugs are frequently found on powder puff trees (*Calliandra* spp.). They can also be found on tamarind, wild tamarind, bottlebrush citrus, jacaranda, royal poinciana, and acacia trees.

IDENTIFICATION ~ Thorn bugs blend in with a plant's foliage and often go undetected. The sample in the photo to the left was examined for a few minutes before this insect was noticed. The color is green or yellow with brown or reddish markings. This insect can be identified by the adult's pronounced thorn-like or claw-like horn. Juvenile versions of this pest look quite similar but will be smaller in size and have three less-prominent horns. Generally, one will find various stages of the thorn bug's life cycle on one branch.



Figure 2. Thorn bug and Sri Lanka weevil damage on powderpuff. Photo: UF Laura Sanagorski



Figure 1. Thorn bug. Photo: UF Laura Sanagorski

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT ~ The population of this insect will drop on its own as warmer months approach. Thorn bugs, like whiteflies and thrips, have piercing / sucking mouthparts that allow them to feed on the nutrients of a plant. They also produce honeydew, which can support the growth of sooty mold. Serious damage is not generally associated with this insect, making treatment generally unnecessary. Horticultural professionals who determine that treatment is required will be able to manage this insect with horticultural soaps and oils, or other insecticides (such as those in the neonicotinoid family) labeled for use on the plant of concern. Physical removal, such as with a heavy spray from a hose, will also greatly reduce this insect's population.

~ References and Further Reading ~

Culbert, D. (2004). *Powderpuffs and thorns*. UF / IFAS Okeechobee County Extension Service. Available at: <http://okeechobee.ifas.ufl.edu/News%20columns/Powderpuffs%20&%20Thornbugs.htm>

Mead, F.W., & Fasulo, T.R. (2004). *Featured Creature: thorn bug*. Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry. Available at: http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/orn/thorn_bug.htm

Remember, the label is the law; be sure to use products only in a manner consistent with the manufacturer directions on the labels. Please use pesticides safely.

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