

LEAFLET

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ROOTED IN KNOWLEDGE

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Red Gum Lerp Psyllid



Welcome to the first issue of “The Leaflet!” Researched for you by Peter Green, Four Seasons Tree Care’s Tree Health Specialist! Our goal is for each Leaflet to be concise, yet highly informative, as we explore the various tree issues you may encounter here in San Diego.

The Tree: Red Gum Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*)

The Problem: Red Gum Lerp Psyllid (*Glycaspis brimblecombei*)

The Treatment: Injections with Imidacloprid

Psyllids are less than 1/8th of an inch in length and suck carbohydrate-rich liquid out of leaves with their straw-like mouthparts. “Lerp” is an Australian Aboriginal word for “house.” A “Lerp Psyllid” is a miniscule, stationary insect that builds a protective little white house around itself with a mixture of sugar and waxy secretions.



Millions of these tiny pests infest their favorite Red Gum Eucalyptus trees, dropping a fine rain of sticky honeydew below. These psyllids came from Australia, and were first seen in San Diego County in 1998 (it seems they like our weather!). Unfortunately, they can have three or four life cycles in a year, and are very good at killing our lovely large Red Gum Eucalyptus trees.

How, you might wonder? When they feed on leaves it causes the leaves to fall off the tree. Trees use up a lot of stored energy when they produce a full canopy of leaves, so if they have to grow a new canopy of leaves multiple times in a season, this can quickly deplete their energy reserves, which in turn lowers their defenses against diseases and other insects like the deadly Eucalyptus Longhorn Borers.

What can be done? In spring and early summer, inject your Red Gums with Imidacloprid – a systemic pesticide that does a great job of killing leaf-sucking insects including Longhorn Borers, stays active in injected trees for about a year, and is less harmful to beneficial insects than spraying. Keep your trees healthy! Water your trees once a month, apply an appropriate layer of mulch, avoid fertilizing as this causes the tree to produce new tender growth that the psyllids are attracted to, and try not to harm your beneficial insects (lady beetles, parasitic wasps, spiders, and dragonflies).

Don’t wait for the infestation to become severe; removing big, dead trees is costly, and very sad – especially when it can be prevented! If you suspect your Red Gum Eucalyptus trees have Lerp Psyllids, Four Seasons Tree Care offers comprehensive tree health care services. Please call us with any questions about how to best handle your tree health care needs. - Peter Green, Tree Health Care Manager LIC. #126210

