

# PALM MEALYBUG

Scientific name: *Palmicultor palmarum* (Maskell),  
Order: Hemiptera Family: Pseudococcidae  
Common Name: Palm mealybug



Palm mealybugs on rhaps palm

**HOST PLANTS**  
Palm mealybugs are known to infest ornamentals and fruit trees, including:

avocado	kentia palm
banana	lady palm
Chamaedorea	orchids
citrus	parlor palm
Dracaena	potato
gardenia	pygmy palm
ginger	queen palm
grape	Rhapis palm
Heliconia	sago palm
hibiscus	



— actual size

## DESCRIPTION

Palm mealybugs are soft-bodied, oval, and pink, measuring 0.5mm as immature nymphs and growing to 8.0 mm when mature. Their bodies are covered by white, waxy material, with short filaments radiating from the margins of the body. Adult male mealybugs are tiny two-winged fly-like insects.



Waxy filaments of mealybugs are visible on unopened fronds of a rhaps palm

## DAMAGE



- Mealybugs weaken plants by feeding on plant juices then excreting honeydew upon which sooty mold grows.
- Black sooty mold growth reduces photosynthesis, causes defoliation, and occasionally death of a young plant.
- Honeydew also attracts ants that can farm and protect mealybugs from predators and parasitoids.

## LIFE CYCLE/BEHAVIOR Egg to Reproducing Adult: approximately 1-2 months

- **Adult female** mealybugs lay from **300 - 600 eggs** in a compact, cottony, waxy sac protected beneath their posterior ends for 1-2 weeks and die shortly thereafter.
- Within 7 -10 days **eggs** hatch into **nymphs (crawlers)** that move about searching out places to settle and feed on the plant.
- **Male crawlers** will pupate and emerge as **winged adults**. (<http://entoweb.okstate.edu/ddd/insects/mealybugs.htm>)

**References:** Williams, D.J. & Watson, G.W. 1988. *Palmicultor palmarum* In: The Scale Insects of the Tropical South Pacific Region. Pt. 2: The Mealybugs (Pseudococcidae). CAB International Institute of Entomology, London. 260 pp.  
Zimmerman, E. C. 1948. Insects of Hawaii, Homoptera: Sternorrhyncha. Univ. of Hawaii, Honolulu 5 :1-464.

## BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR PALM MEALYBUG

	<b>OPTIONS AVAILABLE</b>
<b>MONITORING TECHNIQUES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scout for white waxy filaments of adult mealybugs on plant meristems and young leaves.</li> <li>▪ Inspect for sooty mold and the source of honeydew.</li> <li>▪ Inspect distorted, stunted and/or yellowed foliage for the presence of mealybugs.</li> </ul>
<b>SELECT BEST CONTROL METHOD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dislodge mealybugs with pressurized water sprays.</li> <li>▪ Carefully select insecticides that will not kill beneficial insects (lady beetles, green lacewings, parasitic wasps).</li> <li>▪ Use horticultural oils and soaps against mealybugs (no residual effect).</li> <li>▪ Use effective systemic insecticides (imidacloprid, dinotefuran, acetamiprid, spirotetramat or IGR pesticides containing buprofezin) in chemical rotations against mealybugs.</li> </ul>
<b>TREATMENT BEFORE MARKET</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hot water treatment of plants at 120 °F for 12 minutes will kill mealybugs prior to shipment.</li> </ul>
<b>FINAL INSPECTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visually inspect for live mealybugs and remove plant from shipment.</li> </ul>

**PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENT / DISCLAIMER:** These recommendations are provided only as a guide. Please read and follow all label directions.