

## Cycad Aulacaspis Scale on Sago Palm



Cycad aulacaspis scale (*Aulacaspis yasumatsui*) is routinely found in Thailand on cycads, but is not a serious problem because it is kept under control by natural parasites and predators. When an invasive species arrives in a foreign land, like cycad scale in Florida, it does not bring along its natural enemies so the population of the invasive species explodes. Invasive insects, even worse than cycad scale, are coming into Florida at an alarming rate - almost weekly.

King sago (*Cycas revoluta*), is the number one host for cycad scale in Polk County and Florida. The Queen sago (*Cycas circinalis*), a closely related species, is also susceptible to cycad scale, but is not widely grown in Polk County because it is much more cold sensitive than the King sago.

Cycad scale was first found in Miami in 1997 infesting King sago palms which were being grown as ornamentals. It probably came into Florida from somewhere in Asia on infested nursery plants. It is difficult to detect on nursery stock because the scale infests roots in the ground as well as trunks and leaflets. The infestation by cycad scale on sago palms quickly spread northward from Miami and is now present just about everywhere sagos are grown. It is estimated that at least 80 percent or more of the sago palms in south Florida are dead. Currently, it is difficult to find a sago palm in Polk County which is not infested. If left untreated, the sago will eventually die.

The state and federal government are searching for and releasing natural parasites and predators of the cycad scale, but so far these natural controls have only been marginally effective. Researchers are continuing to look for more effective natural controls.

What can a homeowner do to control this pest on his sago palm? The heavily infested fronds should be removed and destroyed which may mean removing all of the fronds. Horticultural oils sprayed on the trunk and all leaflets on a regular basis will keep this pest under control. Effective insecticides are available, but they tend to be quite expensive and may kill parasites and predators. The final option would be to remove the infested sago and replace it with another cycad like a Coontie, Mexican cycad or Bamboo cycad. Call the Extension Office (863) 519-8677 and/or visit my web site <http://polkhort.ifas.ufl.edu> for further information.

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## Images



King Sago infested with cycad scale



Parasitized female cycad (with hole) scale surrounded by male scales