RESEARCH LABORATORY TECHNICAL REPORT

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Predators of Crape Myrtle Bark Scale

Kevin Chase, PhD, Research Scientist

The crape myrtle bark scale (CMBS, *Acanthococcus lagerstroemiae*) is an exotic pest that causes damage to crape myrtles. This insect produces honeydew (a sticky sugary excrement) which can harbor a sooty mold infestation. Although rare, branch dieback can occur.

The Pest

CMBS is native to Asia and was first detected in Texas in 2004. CMBS has rapidly expanded its distribution and can now be found from Texas, east to Florida, and north to Pennsylvania and New Jersey. As its name indicates, CMBS infests crape myrtles—one of the most common ornamental plants in the urban landscape and beloved for its summer flowering. CMBS eggs (Figure 1) and immature crawlers are pink and emerge in spring. During this phase, they migrate to the succulent new growth of the plant and feed. Maturing females settle in bark cracks and crevices.

Figure 1: CMBS eggs in female ovisac

Natural Enemies in the Landscape

Since its arrival, several native predators have been observed feeding on CMBS. The most conspicuous predator is the Signate lady beetle (*Hyperaspis signata,* Figure 2). This predator mimics CMBS with its white waxy coating. Although the Signate lady beetle appears alarming, it can help reduce CMBS populations and should be preserved.

Figure 2: Large population of Signate lady beetles feeding on CMBS (L); close-up of the beetles (R)
Photo credit: Kurt Mohr

Other predators observed feeding on CMBS are the twice-stabbed lady beetles (*Chilocorus* spp., Figure 3), Florida predatory stink bug (*Euthyrhynchus floridanus,* Figure 4), and green lacewings (*Chrysoperla* spp., Figure 5).

Augmentation Biological Control

At the Bartlett Tree Research Lab, we are testing which biological control agents can be released as part of an integrated pest management program to augment or supplement natural enemies present in the landscape. For the latest management recommendations, please contact your Bartlett Arborist Representative.

Figure 3: Twice-stabbed lady beetle adult

Figure 4: Florida predatory stinkbug nymph
Photo credit: Patrick Burke

Figure 5: Green lacewing larva feeding on CMBS crawler

Founded in 1926, The Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories is the research wing of Bartlett Tree Experts. Scientists here develop guidelines for all of the Company's services. The Lab also houses a state-of-the-art plant diagnostic clinic and provides vital technical support to Bartlett arborists and field staff for the benefit of our clients.