

TREE PEST OF THE MARIANAS



Photo by Donald Nafus

Common Name: "Tangantangan psyllid"

Scientific Name: *Heteropsylla cubana* Crawford (Homoptera: Psyllidae)

Biology: The tangantangan psyllid is small, green or yellow insect. It is often found in great numbers on tangantangan, *Leucaena leucocephala*. It is an active insect and hops or flies readily when disturbed. The numerous young are found on the new leaves and buds, and are less active than the adults. Eggs are laid in the new growth or terminals. The young and adult psyllids feed on the sap of the tangantangan and secrete large amounts of honeydew.

Damage: Plants attacked by the psyllid have a stunted, bunched appearance in the terminal branches. Severe attacks lead to loss of leaves and death of the terminal growth, low pod production, and may kill the trees in some areas. Plants often resprout from the base. Damage is severe in many areas but is heaviest in drier spots where the plants are stressed.

Plants affected: Tangantangan, *Leucaena leucocephala*, is the primary host for this insect. The psyllid is found on other plants but cannot develop on them. It has been observed feeding on monkeypod, *Samanea saman*, flame tree, *Delonix regia*, *Desmanthus virgatus* and *Prosopis pallida*.

Distribution: The psyllid originated from South America and recently immigrated to Hawaii. It has now spread to many Pacific islands and is present in the Marianas and the Western Carolines.

Control: Several insects attack and eat the psyllid, although most are not effective at keeping its population below damaging levels. In Hawaii, *Curinus coeruleus*, a predacious lady beetle, is effective in certain areas. This beetle has been recently introduced to Saipan. Where particular plants are considered valuable enough to protect with insecticides, consult with an agricultural extension agent for the latest on recommended materials.

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