Kimberly Schofield
Program Specialist-Urban IPM
k-schofield@tamu.edu

New Invader: Chili Thrips, *Scirtothrips dorsalis* Hood

Just as a bowl of chili will warm your body, chili thrips will also make you "heated," if they are found in the landscape. This thrips is commonly found in such areas as South Africa, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaya, Indonesia, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Australia, Taiwan, Japan, Hawaii, and Venezuela. It is also commonly found in the Caribbean. However, they were spotted in south Texas within vegetable transplants this year. Therefore, it will only be a matter of time before they are seen in North Texas.

Adult chili thrips have a pale body with dark colored wings and are less than 2 mm in length. The immature thrips are pale in color. Their lifecycle can be completed in 14-18 days, with the adults living about 11 days.

Chili thrips have a wide host range including many crops. They can be found on over 100 host plants, including beans, chrysanthemums, citrus, corn, cotton, eggplant, grapes, onions, peanuts, pepper, roses and tomatoes. They attack the terminal growing points of plants, mainly feeding on young leaves, buds and fruits. This surface feeding usually appears shiny silver at first and then becomes yellow to greenish-brown in color. Dry conditions can cause population increases, and feeding damage appears more quickly when plants are water stressed.

Chili thrips are also capable of spreading tomato spotted wilt virus, peanut necrosis virus (PBNV), peanut chlorotic fan virus (PCFV) and tobacco streak virus. If large populations exist, total defoliation and potentially heavy crop loss can occur.

Some Control Tactics:

Non-Chemical Control Options: Inspect plant materials to prevent infestations. Preserve natural enemies, which include minute pirate bug, green lacewings, parasitic wasps, predatory mites and nematodes (*Thripinema spp*.).

Some Chemical Control Options: Monitor for thrips and treat at first sign of damage. The use of foliar insecticides is more effective at controlling this thrips, since they are usually feeding on exposed plant surfaces. Some foliar sprays can include such chemicals as azadirachtin, spinosad, novaluron, bifenthrin, permethrin. Systemic insecticides will also provide control, such as those containing imidacloprid.

Picture of adult chili thrips. Photo credit: Dr. Lance Osborne, University of Florida: http://mrec.ifas.ufl.edu/lso/thripslinks.htm

Mention of commercial products is for educational purposes only and does not represent endorsement by Texas Cooperative Extension or The Texas A&M University System. Insecticide label registrations are subject to change, and changes may have occurred since this publication was printed. The pesticide user is always responsible for applying products in accordance with label directions. Always read and carefully follow the instructions on the container label.