



The gall of it



Now is the time to inspect your citrus and reach for the secateurs if you notice these swellings!

The distinctive swellings, called “galls”, are caused by the tiny, 2.5 mm long, citrus gall wasp (*Bruchophagus fellis*) (CGW), an Australian native insect from northern NSW and QLD. Its natural host is the Australian finger lime, but it attacks all types of citrus trees, reducing the amount of fruit produced and in severe cases, can cause tree branch dieback.

At present, CGW has a limited distribution in WA, mostly restricted to the inner suburbs of the Perth Metro, but there are spot occurrences outside this region. To track the spread and keep gardeners and the WA Citrus industry informed, reports of this pest in the Perth Hills, citrus growing regions and outside the Perth Metro area are encouraged.

Life cycle

The tiny adult wasps are rarely seen, and only one generation of CGW is produced each year. Adult wasps live for only 3-14 days depending on the

temperature, so they spend the other 350+ days developing in the tree branch.

Adult wasps emerge from their galls in spring (~September to November) which is closely associated with the spring growth flush. Egg laying starts immediately. Each female lays about 100 eggs, which she deposits under the bark of young spring shoots. The eggs hatch in 2-4 weeks and the larvae burrow into the branch where they reside for 9-10 months. Woody tissue forms around the larvae causing the distinctive swelling of the gall. By April/May these galls become obvious in the branches.

Control and timing

Prune now: June is an optimum time to prune out any new galls as they are large enough to be easily spotted. Once the gall is detached from the tree the wasps inside will die. Ignore any old ‘woody’ galls with little holes in them, as those belong to previous generations and the wasps are now long gone! Dispose of these as you would any green waste.

Note: Pruning after June (July onwards) runs the risk of spreading these pests, because pupating wasps can survive in the detached branches. Galls/branches should then be shredded, solarised, burnt or deep buried.

Monitor: Monitor the tree for any missed galls. Dispose of these galls as suggested above.

Sprays: If galls cannot be removed, monitor carefully. Horticultural oils (e.g. white oil) sprayed on fresh growth during Spring can be used as an egg-laying deterrent. Apply 10-14 days from the first signs of CGW emergence.

Chemical control options are severely limited for home gardeners, are difficult to time correctly and can disrupt other beneficial insects. With little effect, save your money for other things.

Further information can be found on our website www.agric.wa.gov.au , search ‘Citrus gall wasp’

Report suspect pests



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Pest and Disease Information Service
(08) 9368 3080
padis@dpird.wa.gov.au