

# Asiatic and African citrus psyllids

## What are Asiatic and African citrus psyllids?

The Asiatic citrus psyllid (*Diaphorina citri*) and African citrus psyllid (*Trioza erythrae*) are sap-sucking bugs that are serious pests of citrus. Their feeding causes direct damage to citrus plants, however it is their ability to transmit the bacterial disease Huanglongbing (yellow dragon disease), previously known as citrus greening disease that is most damaging. All commercially grown citrus are hosts, as well as some Australian native citrus and citrus relatives that are distributed widely in native or naturalised vegetation, home gardens and parks (e.g. *Murraya* – native and ornamental varieties of orange jasmine and curry tree). Neither of these psyllids nor Huanglongbing are present in Australia; however, they would present a major economic threat to citrus growers if they became established.

The Asiatic citrus psyllid has previously entered Australia and was eradicated.

## What do they look like?

### Adults

- Adults are small (3 – 4 mm), brownish, sap-sucking insects.
- The forewings are distinctively patterned with mottled brown patches.
- The abdomen has a pointed shape when viewed from above.
- Adults have a distinctive feeding posture, with the head down, almost touching the plant surface, and the body lifted at 45°.

### Nymphs

- Nymphs are dull orange with red eyes.
- They can secrete white, string-like honeydew that may melt to form droplets at temperatures above 36°C.
- They can be difficult to see because they are small, flat, and close to the surface of twigs and leaves.
- They are mainly found on buds, leaves and stems of young flushing growth less than 50mm long.

### Eggs

- Eggs are bright yellow-orange and almond-shaped.
- They are laid in groups on buds and young flush tips less than 10mm long.



Adult - Asian Citrus Psyllid  
Photo by David Hall, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org.



Nymphs - Asian Citrus Psyllid  
Photo by Michael Rogers, University of Florida.



Eggs - Asian Citrus Psyllid  
Photo by David Hall, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org.

## What can they be confused with?

Psyllids can be confused with aphids; however, psyllids are more active and jump at the slightest disturbance compared to aphids, which are more sluggish. Psyllid nymphs (immature stages) can also be confused with soft scale insects, such as soft brown scale (*Coccus hesperidum*), a common pest of citrus throughout Australia, although on close examination the psyllid nymphs have clear body parts compared with scale.

## How do the psyllids spread?

Long distance spread most commonly occurs via the movement of plant material infested with the psyllids. Ornamentals and food plants such as mock orange/ orange jasmine (*Murraya*) and curry leaf (*Berbera koenigii*), respectively, have been known to spread psyllids. Tropical storms and cyclones may also lead to long distance spread.

## What can I do?

Growers can put on-farm biosecurity measures in place to reduce the chance of pests and disease getting onto their properties.

These include:

- using pest-free propagation material and seedlings, sourced from a reputable supplier
- putting up farm biosecurity signs on gates and fences to manage visitors coming onto your property
- avoiding sharing equipment
- keeping equipment and vehicles clean and free of plant matter
- wearing clean clothing before visiting other growers' properties
- teaching farm workers on-farm hygiene practices, what to look for and how to report unusual pests and diseases
- report suspect symptoms to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline.

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE**  
**1800 084 881**