

# Fig wax scale (*Ceroplastes rusci*)

## Pest Fact Sheet



**Introduction:** The fig wax scale was found outdoors on a small fig orchard (*Ficus carica* L., Moraceae) in Fallbrook, San Diego County, in May 2024. Even though the infestation was considerable, it was not causing significant damage, and the scales were being attacked by coccinellid insect predators. No infestations were detected in surrounding areas, and the infestation is currently being treated.

**Distribution:** Native to Africa, it has been introduced to parts of the Caribbean, Europe, SW Asia, Vietnam, South America and the USA (Florida).

**Description:** Body of adult female is encased in a thick protective wax case that can vary from grayish white with a red tinge to white, pink, or purplish. In the *rusci* group, this case is composed of a single large dorsal plate and eight smaller lateral plates, each with a well-defined center spot; in other wax scale species present in California the case of adult females comprises seven plates instead of nine. Microscopically, the antenna has six antennomeres, well developed tibio-tarsal articulation, claws with a minute subapical notch, amongst other distinctive characteristics, readily identify this species from other wax scales species in California.

**Biology:** In Europe it develops one (in colder climates) or two (in warmer areas) generations per year. Each female lays about 1200 eggs on its host in the spring, and in late summer if there are two generations. The lifespan of egg, nymphs, and adult females is of 5-8, 66-78 and 27-34 days respectively in the first generation, and 22-25, 87-211, and 50-160 days in the second generation.

**Hosts and economic importance:** A well-known pest of figs, it also feeds on numerous other plants including almond, avocado, citrus, cotton, grape, pistachio, palms, and many ornamentals. It is considered a serious pest of fruit trees in several countries. It feeds on phloem sap and eliminates large amounts of honeydew that cover the plant surfaces, blocking light and air from the leaves and impeding photosynthesis, reducing the vigor of the tree and disfiguring fruit.

### References:

- García Morales, M., B.D. Denno, D.R. Miller, G.L. Miller, Y. Ben-Dov & N.B. Hardy. 2016. ScaleNet database: A literature-based model of scale insect biology and systematics. Available from <http://scalenet.info> (accessed 1 July 2024). DOI: 10.1093/database/bav118
- Peronti, A.L.B.G. & T. Kondo. 2022. *Ceroplastes*, pp. 230-248. In: T. Kondo & G.W. Watson (Eds.), Encyclopedia of Scale Insect Pests. CABI, Wallingford, xxvi + 608 pp.

