

*Back to [Pest Identification and Diagnosis](#)*



[Introduction to Mealbugs](#) [Citrus Mealbug](#) [Longtailed Mealbug](#) [Me“ican Mealbug](#) [Root Mealbug](#)

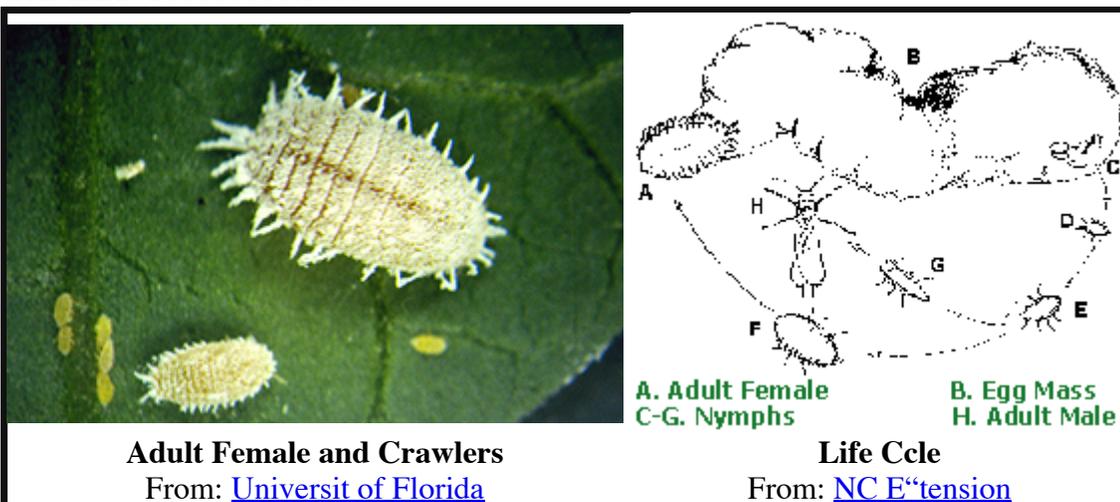
## CITRUS MEALYBUG

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Planococcus citri* (Risso)

**CLASS:** Insecta

**ORDER:** Hemiptera

**FAMILY:** Pseudococcidae



## DESCRIPTION

**Adults:** The female citrus mealybug is wingless and appears to have been rolled in flour (hence the name). It grows to 3 millimeters long and 1.5 millimeters wide. A fringe of small waxy filaments protrude from the peripher. The male is small, but with its wings and tail filaments, it appears to be 4.5 millimeters long.

**Eggs:** The oblong, yellow eggs are enmeshed in a dense, fluffy, white ovisac.

**Crawlers:** The tiny crawler is oval and yellow, with red legs. The antennae are rather distinct.

**Nymphs:** Female nymphs resemble the larger adult females. Male nymphs are narrower and often occur in a loose cocoon.

## BIOLOGY

**Host Plants:** Citrus mealybugs have been collected from at least 27 host plant families. Many ornamental plants grown in greenhouses are susceptible to attack including begonia, coleus, amaranth, cyclamen, and dahlia. Citrus mealybug has been collected on canna, narcissus, and tulip outdoors.

**Damage:** Citrus mealybugs damage hosts by sucking out plant sap, by excreting honeydew in which soot mold can grow, and by causing distorted growth and premature leaf drop with their toxic saliva. The further disfigure

plants by secreting cotton waxes. Infested plants usually die unless the pest is controlled.

**Life Cycle:** The citrus mealbug has been recognized as a pest of citrus and ornamental plants in Europe since 1813 (where it is called the greenhouse mealbug) and in the United States since 1879. Because female citrus mealbugs have no wings, they must be transported to the proximal of the next host plant. They can, however, travel short distances by crawling. The immatures can be blown about. Males are small, winged insects. After mating, each female lays up to hundreds of eggs in a dense, fluffy secretion called the egg sac or ovisac. Within a few days, new mealbugs (crawlers) hatch and begin to squirm out of the ovisac. Light infestations are easily overlooked because the mealbugs tend to wedge into crevices on the host plant. As their numbers increase, mealbugs of all sizes can be seen crawling around or feeding on all exposed plant surfaces.

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Control of citrus mealbugs is amazingly difficult. Some commercial flower growers merely discard infested plants rather than trying to rescue them from citrus mealbugs. Horticultural oils may damage amarillis.

**Biological Control:** The lady beetle *Crptolaemus montrouieri* and parasitic wasps *Leptomastix dactlopii* and *Anagrus pseudococci* attack citrus mealbugs.

[Introduction to Mealbugs](#) [Citrus Mealbug](#) [Longtailed Mealbug](#) [Mexican Mealbug](#) [Root Mealbug](#)

**Back to [Pest Identification and Diagnosis](#)**



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