

Pink Hibiscus Mealybug

(*Maconellicoccus hirsutus*)

Pink Hibiscus Mealybug (PHM) is a serious pest for ornamental and nursery plants. PHM has been detected in the environment in California in the past and is commonly intercepted on plant shipments from out of state. However, it is not known to occur in San Diego County.



Photos: PHM adults (left), PHM infestation (right). Credit: Lance Osborne, University of Florida

Pink Hibiscus Mealybug (PHM) is a soft-bodied insect that feeds on plants using sucking, straw-like mouthparts. Adult female PHM are approximately 3mm (1/10 in.) long, lack wings, and are pinkish in color but often covered by a white, waxy exudate. Males are small, winged, and less frequently seen than females. Immature PHMs are small, pinkish-red, and mobile. PHM is most often found in masses covered in bundles of cottony wax filaments on buds and stems of infested plants, but they can infest almost any plant part, including roots. One female PHM may lay 300-600 eggs at a time and up to 15 generations per year.

Host Plants

Pink Hibiscus Mealybug can feed on over 300 plant species. However, it largely prefers *Hibiscus* spp. plants. Other common hosts include citrus, avocado, fig, tomato, *Prunus* spp., grapes, and various ornamentals.

Potential Impact

Pink Hibiscus Mealybug causes significant plant damage through its feeding and its excretions. PHM's piercing and sucking feeding damage can lead to wilting, sap oozing from wounds, stem dieback, and even plant death. Like other Hemipterans, PHM leaves behind a sugary honeydew as excrement. This sticky substance often lands on parts of plants below the infestation, creating a prime location for sooty mold to grow. Sooty mold can then interrupt plant functions such as photosynthesis, which can lead to further stunted growth and decline. Due to its potential to establish and damage a variety of plants in the region, PHM is a pest of concern.

If you suspect PHM, please contact San Diego County's Plant Pest Diagnostics Lab below.



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
AGRICULTURE, WEIGHTS & MEASURES

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