

Lethal Palm Yellowing

Candidatus Phytoplasma palmae

Not known to be present in Hawai'i

Phytoplasma that kills a large variety of palms.



N. A. Harrison



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Dead palms where the crown has fallen off



Impacts

- Affects coconuts and other palms
- Has a long asymptomatic phase, it can take 3-9 months before symptoms can be seen.
- Leads to eventual crown death



High-risk Commodities

- Planthopper (*Myndus crudus*) is a vector of the lethal yellowing phytoplasma. Spreads the bacteria as it feeds and moves from plant to plant.
- Planthoppers can hitchhike on imported live plants



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Planthopper (*Myndus crudus*)



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Distribution

- Africa, Caribbean, Mexico, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Cuba, Belize, Florida



Identification

- Premature drop of most/all fruits. In coconuts, the calyx end of the nut will develop a brown/black, water soaked appearance
- Flower necrosis
- Leaves turn yellow, starting with the oldest leaves first. As the yellowing advances the youngest leaves (spear), collapses and hangs from the crown.
- Death of the apical meristem when 1/2-2/3 of the crown is yellow. Eventually, the entire crown dies and leaves a standing trunk.
- Crown dies 3-5 months after symptoms show.



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Crown turning yellow



Best Management Practices

- Do not import live palm materials from areas known to have the disease
- Report suspected trees to 643pest.org, or by phone to 643-PEST (7378).



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Coconut with black calyx damage.

Selected References:

- <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/38647>
- <https://www.apsnet.org/edcenter/disandpath/prokaryote/pdlessons/Pages/LethalYellowing.aspx>
- <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/pp146>



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