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## Citrus Gall Wasps in the home garden Fact Sheet

Citrus gall wasps are a real problem for many home gardeners wanting to produce healthy citrus. The rarely seen small wasp lays eggs just under the epidermis (skin) of young citrus shoots that hatch and develop inside the stem forming a gall in the process. The insects actually are quite clever. They secrete a chemical that induces the plant to produce the gall on their behalf. I came across some really good information on the Sustainable Gardening Australia website which I have used for the basis of this fact sheet. This is a great website and well worth a browse. This article is based on this reference <http://www.sgaonline.org.au/citrus-gall-wasp/>

The citrus gall wasp is actually an Australian insect that in nature lives on the native finger lime. It has now become widespread in most warmer parts of Australia quite happily making use of home garden citrus and in particular lemons and grapefruits.



*Adult gall wasp about to lay some eggs..- Photo WA Dept Ag.*

The adult wasp lays eggs in late spring or early summer. The galls begin to form in autumn and winter and become quite noticeable in early spring. As the larvae take about 9 months to develop if you can remove the galls early in spring (or earlier) season you can help to break the cycle. You can tell if you are too late as the gall will have exit holes where the wasps will have escaped to find mates and breed. The adults are poor flyers but can be windblown from other citrus trees nearby. The adult wasps mate in early to late spring when the female implants her eggs in the citrus tree that she herself emerged from just days before. Each female can lay up to 100 eggs, usually under the bark of new shoots, and the larvae hatch after 2 – 4 weeks.



*Citrus galls caused by Citrus gall wasp – photo ABC*



*Inside the gall – wasp larvae and young adults ready to emerge – Photo WA Dept Ag*

## Control Methods

Controlling citrus gall wasp can be difficult. There are not really any effective chemical controls (and of course many people don't want to use systemic chemicals on their citrus – me included!) but damage can be minimised by:

- Removing all newly formed galls that don't show signs of exit holes before the end of winter. Old galls have already been exited. Prune only a maximum of 1/3 of the tree to avoid stressing it too much.
- From mid-August, hanging yellow sticky traps with a chemical attractant inside to trap emerging adult wasps. The yellow is an attractant and the sticky coating makes it impossible for the wasp to escape. Remember to twist the top so that the chemical is released. Since beneficial insects may also be attracted to this trap, do not leave on after November as the wasps are no longer about.
- Destroying infected stems by burning or bagging.



*Yellow sticky traps might help – Photo Amazon*