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## Lantana Bug Fact Sheet

Reference : [http://www.nrw.qld.gov.au/pests/research/aconophora\\_faq.html](http://www.nrw.qld.gov.au/pests/research/aconophora_faq.html)

The Lantana bug is now quite well established in our region. The Fiddlewood tree, *Citharexylum spinosum* (pictured below), is perhaps the main victim of this pest.



Close up of flowers

### **How do I know if my plants are affected?**

The first sign will be the insects themselves appearing in large numbers in the shadier parts of the plants canopy. The insect, *Aconophora compressa*, is pictured below.



Other signs include wilting new growth, dieback of shoots and in really severe cases death of entire sections of the plant. Another important sign that you have infection is the presence of a fungus called black sooty mould. *Aconophora* exudes a sugary solution called honeydew in which a black sooty mould may grow. The mould is harmless, but it can mark or blemish surfaces. Cars should not be parked under affected trees. Any cars that do become marked should be hosed down and cleaned as soon as possible.

Plants affected by the honeydew or sooty mould can be hosed down and cleaned if necessary, but this blemish should diminish over time.

### **What plants will support populations of *Aconophora*?**

1. Lantana
2. Fiddlewood

*Aconophora* will feed and may lay eggs on the following plants, but they are unlikely to support continuing populations:

- *Duranta* species (including 'Geisha Girl' and 'Sheena's Gold')
- *Eremophila* species
- Jacaranda
- *Clerodendrum ugandense* (Blue butterfly)
- *Myoporum* species
- *Pandorea* species
- Grey Mangrove, River Mangrove
- Groundsel bush

There have previously been reports of *Aconophora* on the following species, however there is no evidence that the insect feeds on or otherwise damages these plants:

- *Grevillea*
- *Ixora*
- Hibiscus
- Jasmine
- *Gardenia*

A range of systemic and contact insecticides with general registration for use on sap sucking bugs can be used on small shrubs and plants affected by Aconophora. These insecticides include Confidor and various oil sprays. When treating small shrubs and plants, people should seek advice from retail garden centres and follow manufacturers label instructions. Some treatments may appear to be ineffective but, depending on the size and source of the infestation, it may be likely that reinfestation has occurred. In this case, continuing treatment based on manufacturer's instructions is recommended.

### **When was Aconophora first released?**

NRW first released *Aconophora compressa* for the control of lantana, in 1995. The last release of *Aconophora* in Queensland occurred on 15 November 2001 at Helidon. It was released as a biological control agent in the same manner as the cane toad was released to help control cane beetles last century.

### **Why was Aconophora released?**

*Aconophora compressa* was introduced for the control lantana, a Weed of National Significance. Lantana infestations have a significant impact throughout Australia and can affect biodiversity, livestock health, recreational use and production costs for agricultural and forestry industries. Total costs incurred by Queensland primary industries in pastoral losses and control of lantana are estimated to be in excess of \$10 million annually.

### **What protocols were followed?**

The release of *Aconophora* met all national protocols involving 21 State and Commonwealth agencies, including the Department of Environment and Heritage and Australian Quarantine Inspection Service. It seems however that the number of species tested did not include a great number of common garden plants.

With the benefit of hindsight it could be argued that these protocols were inadequate.



Duranta 'Geisha Girl' is prone to infection by Lantana Bug