

Pacific Pests, Pathogens and Weeds - Online edition

Taro planthopper (041)

Summary

- Narrow distribution. Southeast Asia, Oceania. Three types. On taro. An important pest.
- The planthoppers damage taro by sucking the sap from the leaves. In dry times, when numbers are high, the leaves bend down. They spread several viruses.
- Winged adults arrive first in new gardens, laying eggs in the base of leaf stalks, producing wingless adults.
- Natural enemies: egg-sucking bug.
- Cultural control: avoid planting new crops next to old; remove outer leaves with eggs before planting 'tops'. Note that rains drown the young nymphs.
- Chemical control: PDPs: neem, pyrethrum, or derris; or use synthetic pyrethroids, but they are likely to kill natural enemies.

Common Name

Taro planthopper

Scientific Name

Tarophagus spp. Previously, only one species was recognised, *Tarophagus proserpina*. In 1989, a study found there were three: *Tarophagus colocasiae*, *Tarophagus persephone* and *Tarophagus proserpina*.



Photo 1. Different stages of *Tarophagus* species. Note some of the mature forms have wings.



Photo 2. Mature, wingless, forms of *Tarophagus* species.



Photo 4. Winged form of *Tarophagus* species.



Photo 3. *Tarophagus* planthoppers prefer sites on the plant where humidity is highest, either within the rolled leaf, on the petioles beneath the leaf blade or between the petioles at the base of the plant.



Photo 5. Large numbers of *Tarophagus* sp. on taro in the field.



Photo 6. The Philippines egg-sucking bug, *Cyrtorhinus fulvus*.



Photo 7. Mature forms of *Tarophagus* species and ants; the latter are attracted to the honeydew produced by the planthoppers.

AUTHORS Helen Tsatsia & Grahame Jackson

Information from CABI (2019) *Tarophagus proserpina* (taro planthopper. Invasive Species Compendium, (<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/52788>); and Tasi A, Dale A (2021) Taro planthopper. Featured Creatures, UF/IFAS. (http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/orn/tarophagus_colocasiae.html#:~:text=The%20taro%20planthopper%2C%20Tarophagus%20colocasiae,tibia%2C%20or%20fourth%20leg%20segment.); and Carmichael A, et al. (2008) Taro Pest: an illustrated guide to pests and diseases of taro in the South Pacific. ACIAR Monograph No. 132, 76 pp. (<https://lrd.spc.int/about-lrd/lrd-project-partners/taropest>); and from Pest Alert (2015) The taro planthopper, *Tarophagus colocasiae* (Matsumura), a new delphacid planthopper in Florida. FDACS. (<https://www.fdacs.gov/ezs3download/download/61789/1413015/Media/Files/Plant-Industry-Files/Pest-Alerts/PEST%20ALERT%20Tarophagus%20colocasiae%20%28Matsumura%29.pdf>). Photo 4 Graham Teakle, Canberra.

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