

TREE PEST OF THE MARIANAS

Larval mines in citrus leaves



Photo by Donald Nafus

Common Name: Citrus leafminer

Scientific Name: *Phyllocnistis citrella* (Stnt.) (Lepidoptera: Phyllocnistidae)

Biology: The moth lays 2-3 flattened, oval eggs under a citrus leaf near the midrib. Eggs hatch in 3-5 days into tiny caterpillars which burrow into the leaf. The caterpillars feed inside the leaf and leave a distinctive whitish track with a trail of black debris down the center. Larval development usually takes 16-18 days and the mature larvae are about 3.5 mm long. Larvae leave the mine to pupate and go to the edge of the leaf. The edge of the leaf is folded over and the larvae pupates inside. Adults are tiny, 2-3 mm in body length, with 4 black stripes on the wings. Hind wings are feathery. The general color of the moth is gray.

Crops Affected: Lemon, lime, tangerine, and other citrus

Distribution: Present throughout the Marianas, SE Asia, Philippines and south into Australia.

Damage: Larvae create tracks in citrus leaves and reduce photosynthetic capability of plant. Heavily infested leaves may dry up. Once a serious pest on Guam but now relatively unimportant.

Control: The moth is under good control by an unknown natural enemy. Treatment is rarely necessary. Consult your Cooperative Extension Service for information if emergency control measures are necessary or for information on chemical controls.

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