

Warning against the Spindle Bug (*Carvalhoia arecae*-Miller and China) a serious pest of the arecanut palm

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THE Spindle bug (*Carvalhoia arecae* Miller and China) which is a pest of the arecanut crop has assumed serious proportions in certain parts of Kerala State and is causing great deal of damage to the palm. A survey conducted by the Research Officer, Regional Arecanut Research Station, Palode, Trivandrum District has brought out that as many as 88.0 per cent of the gardens in certain tracts in this State are infested by this pest, and about 50.0 per cent of the young and middle-aged plants, and 25.0 per cent of old palms are damaged severely by this pest.

Palms of all ages are susceptible to attack by this pest. The adult bugs are about 6 mm. long, 2.5 mm. wide and are reddish brown or black and red in colour. The nymphs are pale yellowish green in colour. Colonies of the bug, both adults and nymphs, live inside the top-most leaf axils at the base of the central spindle and from there move out to feed on the plant tissues. The adults as well as the nymphs suck the sap of the tender spindle, with the result that such spindles fail to open completely, often get slightly twisted and fail to reach the normal size. An examination of the affected leaves will show large number of linear dark brown streaks which eventually dry and cause shredding of the entire leaf. Due to lack of efficiently functioning leaves, the palms gradually lose condition. When

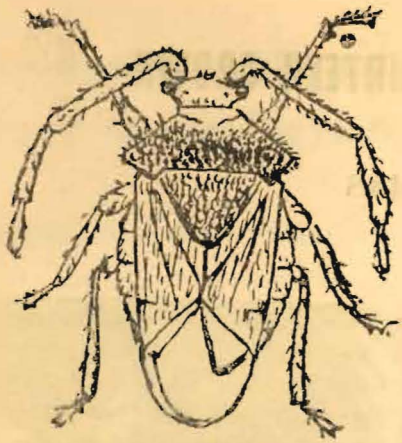
the attack is severe the spindle gets completely damaged and breaks at the base. Sometimes secondary organisms or other insects attack the damaged tissues causing rotting of the tissues. During the humid weather period the rot might extend to the bud and then to the growing point causing the death of the palm. As the rot extends inside, the outer whorl of the leaves of the palm gradually turn yellow, droop down and the palm eventually dies. Palms so damaged are a common feature in most arecanut gardens of Trivandrum, Quilon, Kottayam and Trichur districts.

The pest generally assumes serious proportions with the close of the monsoon and on the onset of the dry weather period.

The insect can be successfully controlled by spraying with any of the following:

1. Fish oil rosin soap .. 1 kg. in 80 litres of water (or 1 lb. in 8 gallons of water).
2. Ekatin .. One c. c. per litre of water.
3. Endrex .. 1 kg. in 700 to 900 litres of water (1 oz. in 5-7 gallons of water)

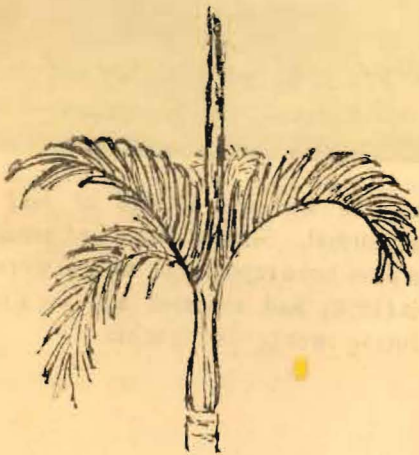
The spray should be directed to the top-most leaf axils where the insects mostly dwell as well as on the spindle on which they feed.



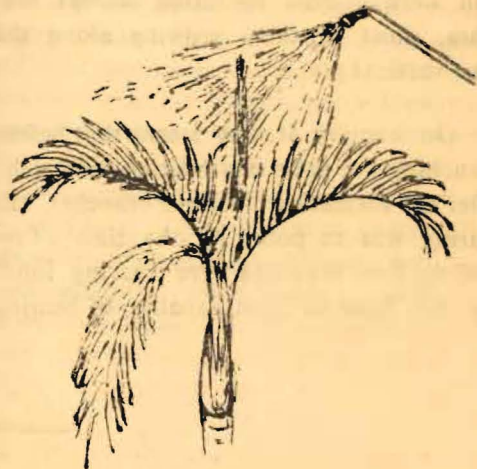
An adult bug *carvalhoia arecae*



A bit of leaf damaged by the pest



Palm with the spindle damaged
by the pest



Spraying against the pest