

Cycad Blue Butterfly (*Theclinesstes onycha*) : Facts and Notes | Damage | Management

Facts and Notes

Cycad blue butterflies have 2.5 cm wingspan: medium-sized. Butterfly appearance varies by gender, subspecies, and season. Usually dull to bright violet, the upper side of wings may reach the base of both fore and hind wings. Not often, female hindwings feature white rings around black dots.

Most eggs are white but can be pale greenish-blue, disc-shaped, and coarsely pitted. In contrast to caterpillars, larvae look different. They hatch at 2 mm and reach 10-15 mm before pupation. Most larvae are dark purplish-brown with subtle white streaks and darker bands. Larvae might be light, deep, or bluish green. Flat base, dome-shaped cross section. About 1 cm long, pupae are pale brown to purplish-brown with dark brown spots.

Cycad Blue Butterfly Commonly Found in KAUST



Cycad Blue Butterfly



Caterpillar



Small white eggs



Damage to the plants

Damage

- Fronds can become burned, sticky, and unsightly.
- Larvae exclusively eat soft, fresh growth. This reduces photosynthetic area and makes young leaves look sickly and can cause significant cosmetic damage.
- High numbers can kill leaves almost completely. High numbers of larvae can burrow into a plant's main stem, which may then die.
- Once damaged, plants will not regenerate foliage until the following flush. With repeated severe damage, it is likely that plant health will decline.

Management

1. Provide optimal nutrition and water. This helps Cycas tolerate damage and may increase growth flushes. Cycads require high nitrogen fertilizers with trace elements.
2. Monitor susceptible plants regularly for signs of new growth, particularly in spring and summer. At the first sign of growing flushes, if there is a severe infestation, begin to administer insecticides in a highly diluted mixture to the affected area in accordance with the instructions provided by the manufacturer until new growth has hardened off.
3. Chemical Control - If other methods fail, administer insecticides in a highly diluted mixture to the affected area in accordance with the instructions provided by the manufacturer, such as Abamectin 18EC or Decis100EC (Deltamethrin).

Conclusion

Cycad blue butterfly can be managed proactively, by providing ideal nutrition and water and applying pesticides when plants are flushing.