

Short Communication

Incidence of *Rutherfordia major* (Cockerell, 1894) (Hemiptera, Diaspididae) on lovi-lovi *Flacourtia inermis* Roxb. (Salicaceae) in Kerala

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Abstract

Rutherfordia major (Cockerell, 1894) (Hemiptera, Diaspididae) has been reported as a pest of lovi-lovi, *Flacourtia inermis* Roxb. (Salicaceae), for the first time in India from Kerala.

Keywords: Armored scale, India, Pest.

Rutherfordia major (Cockerell, 1894) (Hemiptera, Diaspididae), is a polyphagous armored scale distributed in 27 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America, with a host range of 37 plant species in 27 genera under 15 plant families (Morales et al., 2016). This was originally described in *Chionaspis* Signoret, 1868 from Antigua in South America on 'Heliotrope sp.' (sic) by Cockerell in 1894 (Cockerell, 1894). The only record of *R. major* in India is that of Takagi et al. (1989), who reported it on *Vateria indica* L. (Dipterocarpaceae) at Periyar Tiger Reserve on 19 December 1978. *Rutherfordia major* is commonly called large snow-scale or lychee bark scale.

Lovi-lovi, *Flacourtia inermis* Roxb. (Salicaceae), native to the Philippines and Indonesia, is a small tree cultivated in homesteads for its ripe fruits which are eaten raw or pickled or processed into jam, wine or preserves (Lim, 2013).

A massive infestation of *R. major* was observed on 5 February 2022 at Alappuzha (N 9° 29' 46.667" E 76° 19' 29.464") on an eight year old plant. The

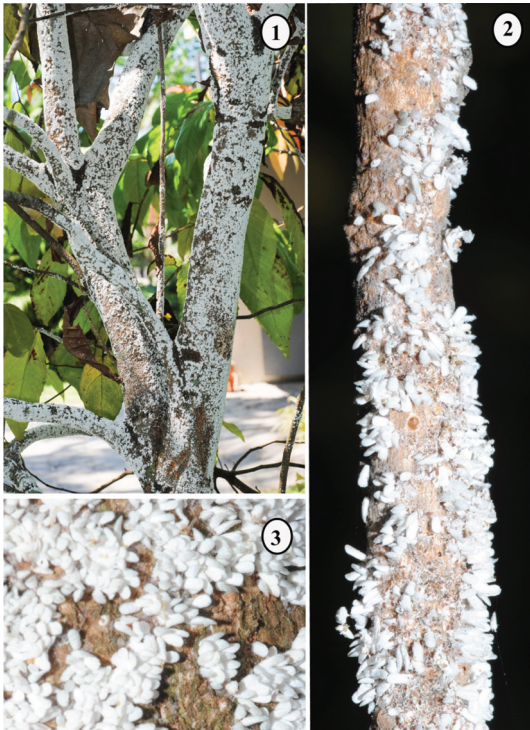
plant was nearly covered with scales on the whole of main stem (Figs 1, 3) and a few pencil thick branches (Fig. 2). The infested plant was completely debilitated and showed signs of wilting and yellowing of leaves. The white fluffy covering of scales on the main stem could be seen from a distance (Fig. 1). The infestation was brought under control by the farmer, who sprayed soap solution followed by dimethoate 0.5% next day.

Rutherfordia major was reported on *F. inermis* in Florida, USA (Butcher, 1959). This is the first report of *R. major* on *F. inermis* in India. Voucher specimens of the scale are deposited in the Indian Council of Agricultural Research - National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources (NBAIR), Bengaluru (Accession nos NBAIR/HEM/DIA/RUTHER/110222-1 and NBAIR/HEM/DIA/RUTHER/110222-2).

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Figures 1 – 3. Infestation of *Rutherfordia major* on *Flacourtia inermis*. 1. Main stem covered with scales, 2. infestation on a pencil thick branch, 3. close-up of infestation on main stem

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