

## Asiatic Cycad Scale



Sago Palm



Scale infestation on frond

Cycads are all ancient seed plants of the family Cycadaceae, and belong to the botanical group known as the gymnosperms. Most are now extinct, but of the gymnosperms we still have in existence today, you will recognize as conifers. This group includes pine trees, spruces, firs and hemlocks, and the Ginkgo or Maiden Hair tree. Some Cycads resemble palms or tree-ferns and are commonly called Sago palms, which are addressed here.

Of all the tropical and subtropical landscape plants, the Cycads are one of the most popular. With growth patterns similar to palms, they do have differences from standard palms in their reproduction as well as anatomically.

Asiatic or Asian cycad scale insects are native to Southern China and Thailand that hitched a ride in or on plants destined for nurseries. They feed on the actual fronds of the Sago, causing the plant to appear to turn white, caused by their bodies. The infestation provides entry for the fungal infection fusarium, which enters the interior of the plant through weakened roots damaged by the scale insects. This sadly results in the demise of the top fronds of the sago palm very rapidly.

In the United States, this scale does not have any natural predators, which of course results in large populations of infestation. The plant is stunted in growth, and then begins to die off.

Natural controls have only been marginally effective, and researchers are continuing to look for additional effective natural controls. Monitor the plants for white, cottony scales that run along the veins, stems and leaves of the plant. If the infestation is not heavy, the infested fronds may be clipped and removed from the landscape. If the plant is suffering from a very heavy infestation, one solution is to replace it with another cycad, like a Coontie, Mexican cycad or Bamboo cycad.

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