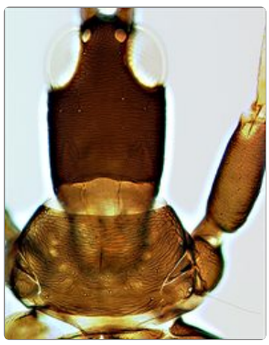
Gynaikothrips ficorum

Distinguishing features

Both sexes fully winged. Body brown, tarsi and apices of tibiae yellow, antennal segments III–VII largely yellow, VIII light brown; fore wings pale. Antennae 8-segmented; segment III with one sense cone, IV with three sense cones. Head longer than wide, slightly constricted behind eyes; postocular setae with apices bluntly pointed, scarcely extending to posterior margin of eye; maxillary stylets retracted almost to postocular setae, about one third of head width apart. Pronotum with major setae variable, anteromarginals minute, anteroangulars commonly well developed, midlaterals and posteroangulars usually much shorter than epimerals; epimeral sutures often not complete; prosternatl basantra absent, mesopresternum broadly boat-shaped. Fore tarsus with small or minute tooth. Metanotum longitudinally reticulate. Fore wing parallel sided, with about 15 duplicated cilia. Pelta broadly triangular; tergites II–VII with two pairs of sigmoid wing-retaining setae; tergite IX setae S1 about 0.8 as long as tube.
Male smaller than female, no fore tarsal tooth; tergite IX setae S2 short and stout; sternite VIII sometimes with a large pore plate.

Male



Head & pronotum

Antenna

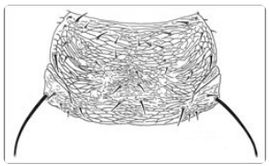
Meso & metanota, pelta & tergite II

Related species

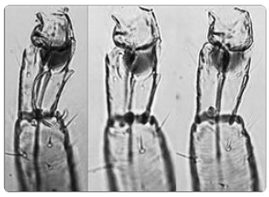
Although 41 species are listed in the genus *Gynaikothrips*, mainly from Southeast Asia, it remains impossible to know how many of these are really distinct from each other, or how many are really congeneric with *ficorum*. Priesner (1939) gave a key to many species, but there are few studies on variation within and between populations. *G. ficorum* is widespread around the world, because its host plant is so widely cultivated. It is usually recognised by the pattern of sculpture on the pronotum, the yellow antennae, and the minute fore tarsal tooth. It differs from *G. uzeli*, another species widely distributed by the horticultural trade in *Ficus* plants, in having the pronotal posteroangular setae scarcely longer than the discal setae, but the distinction between these species remains uncertain. Tree *et al.* (2015) discussed some of the problems of host specificity in these thrips. The suggestion by Mound *et al.* (1996), that *G. ficorum* is possibly a widely distributed form of *G. uzeli* effectively selected by the horticultural trade, requires further testing using molecular markers on multiple populations. In recent years, *G. uzeli* has also been spread around the world in association with trade in *F. benjamina* plants. The discovery of *G. uzeli* in Cyprus in 2014 marks the first appearance of this species in Europe, where it is likely to spread (Collins & Philippou, 2016).

Female segments IX–X (tube)

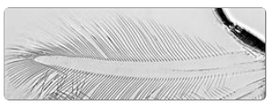
Male segments IX–X (tube)



Pronotum



Variation in fore tarsal tooth



Fore wing

Biological data

Inducing and breeding within leaf-fold and leaf-roll galls on its host plant, *Ficus microcarpa* [Moraceae] (Tree *et al.*, 2015).

Distribution data

Although originally from the Southeast Asian tropics, this thrips has been found in Britain on four occasions, on *Ficus microcarpa* at commercial nurseries in England, the most recent being in 1993 (Collins, 1993). This thrips is widely recorded around the world on this popular decorative tree. *Ficus microcarpa* trees are widely planted as amenity ornamentals on the urbanised European Mediterranean coastline, where leaf-rolling caused by the thrips is a familiar sight.

Family name

PHLAEOTHRIPIDAE - PHLAEOTHRIPINAE

Species name

Gynaikothrips ficorum (Marchal)

Original name and synonyms

Phloeothrips ficorum Marchal, 1908: 252
Leptothrips flavicornis Bagnall, 1909: 529
Liothrips bakeri Crawford DL, 1910: 161
Leptothrips reticulatus Karny, 1912: 22
Gynaikothrips flavus Ishida, 1931: 40
Haplothrips blesai Plata, 1973: 165

References

Collins DW (1993) Recent records of *Gynaikothrips ficorum* (Marchal) (Thysanoptera: Thripidae) imported into England on Indian laurel. *Entomologist's Gazette* **44**: 239–240.

Collins DW & Philippou D (2016) The first European records of the invasive thrips *Gynaikothrips uzeli* (Zimmermann) and an associated predator *Androthrips ramachandrai* Karny (Thysanoptera: Phlaeothripidae), in Cyprus. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **152**: 1–9.

Mound LA, Wang C-L & Okajima S (1996) Observations in Taiwan on the identity of the Cuban laurel thrips (Thysanoptera, Phlaeothripidae). *Journal of the New York Entomological Society* **103**: 185–190.

Priesner H (1939) Zur Kenntnis der Gattung *Gynaikothrips* Zimm. (Thysanoptera). *Mitteilungen der Münchner entomologisches Gesellschaft* **29**: 475–487.

Tree DJ, Mound LA & Field AR (2015) Host specificity studies on *Gynaikothrips* (Thysanoptera:Phlaeothripidae) associated with leaf galls of cultivated *Ficus* (Rosales: Moraceae) trees. *Florida Entomologist* **98** (3): 880–883.