



Invasive termites now feeding on native trees, creating a hazard during storms

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By: Michelle Quesada

Recent afternoon thunderstorms are revealing a big pest problem in Palm Beach County: invasive termites in live trees. The termites are weakening native trees causing them to snap during storms.

Homes in South Florida are already being impacted by the aggressive and invasive Asian subterranean termite species, now so are trees.

"When termites swarm and fly, that's often times how we know they are in a house, but with the colony being out in the tree, they're flying and swarming outside so they're not giving us that sign that they're in the structure," said Paul Sugrue, Technical Director at Nozzle Nolen in West Palm Beach. "So they're even more cryptic which is dangerous."

Sugrue said one of his customers recently had pine trees snap in a storm> Inside he found a colony of subterranean termites.

"When they hollow it out to nest in it, then you've definitely for a threat of a hazard of them falling over," said Sugrue.

Dr. Nan-Yao Su, distinguished professor of Entomology for the University of Florida Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences said termites invading live trees is a new problem.

"In a natural setting, termites do not kill trees. They only eat a dead tree, a dead stump," said Dr. Su.

Dr. Su showed how termites leave "mud tubes" on the exterior of a tree they have infested.

"These species is already spreading from Key West to Palm Beach County," said Dr. Su, who added he's concerned the termites are killing native trees.

If you find out there are termites living in trees around your home there is a safe way to get rid of them without killing the tree.

"If you've got nice big trees you want to protect, there are different termite stations that can be put in the ground around there that feeds them and they take it into the colony and eliminates the entire colony that way," said Sugrue.

Sugrue said the termites are feeding in oak, pine, palm, and avocado trees.