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Cut flower infesting thrips: A preliminary study

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Damage by thrips to cut flowers in particular makes flowers unmarketable. Hence, there is an urgent need to identify thrips damage to cut flowers and the species causing the damage, at an early stage of cultivation. A preliminary study was carried out to identify and record the thrips species infesting cut flowers and also, to identify the damage caused by them. Six, cut flower farms in Nuwara Eliya, Hakgala, Bandarawela and Peradeniya were selected for the study. At each location, cut flowers in different stages: buds, unopened flowers, fully open flowers as well as leaves and shoots were closely examined for thrips and their damage. In all, a total of 17 different species of cut flowers were examined from the six farms. Thrips infestations were recorded only from 14 cut flower species namely, Rose, Anthurium, Aster, Gladiolus, Super Daisy, Statice, Chrysanthemum, Baberton Daisy, Ox -eyed daisy, Tulip, Agapanthus, Madonna lily, Golden rod and Gerberas

No thrips were recorded from Everlasting, Orchids and *Alstroemeria* flowers during the study period. A total of 11 thrips species in 6 genera (*Frankliniella, Haplothrips Microcephalothrips* ,*Retithrips*, *Scirtothrips and Thrips*) were recorded from the 14 cut flowers and their vegetative parts. Of the thrips recorded, only 9 species were confined to flowers. In anthurium, the same thrips species infested unopened young flowers and leaves. In rose, both flowers and buds were infested with *Thrips hawaiiensis* and the leaves and axillary shoots with *Scitothrips dorsalis* and in addition, leaves were also infested with *Retithrips syriacae.* Roses grown in Hakgala were not infested with thrips while in Banadarawela and Peradeniya heavy infestations were recorded. Damages of varying degree were seen in the cut flowers infested with thrips. Thrips attack in cut flowers resulted in scaring and discolouration of petals and deformation of buds and flowers.

Financial assistance by the National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Grant No. RG/2005/EB/05 is acknowledged.

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