A small parasitic insect, *Toumeyella parvicornis*, also known as the pine tortoise scale, has spread to the Caicos Island Group in the Turks and Caicos, where it infects a pine species endemic to the Bahamas, *Pinus caribaea* var. *bahamensis*.

The pine tortoise scale is native to the eastern United States and Southern Canada. Within its native range, it is known to live on various pine species including *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots Pine) and *P. banksiana* (Jack Pine).

In the Turks and Caicos Islands, the pine tortoise scale has been found to reduce the vigour of *P. caribaea* var. *bahamensis*, cause dieback, reduce seed production, often leading to mortality of the tree. The pine tortoise scale also secretes sugary honeydew which encourages growth of a sooty mould that covers most of the understory in the *P. caribaea* var. *bahamensis* pine yards of further inhibiting tree growth. The introduction of the pine tortoise scale has seen a 90% mortality rate of *P. caribaea* var. *bahamensis* (Hamilton, 2007).

*P. caribaea* var. *bahamensis* is now threatened within its home range, having not just ecological impacts but also cultural as it is considered the national tree of the Turks and Caicos Islands (Hamilton, 2007).

Public awareness campaigns using posters and other tools have been initiated in an effort to raise knowledge of the problem amongst the general public and in schools. Efforts are also being made to propagate *P. caribaea* var. *bahamensis* individuals that are immune to the scale. Dormant oil sprays are effective in reducing overwintering populations. Summer rate of horticultural oil or insecticidal soap sprays may be used in late June to kill crawlers. If infestations are very heavy, a contact insecticide may be used in April to mid-May (Malinoski & Clements, 2003). Scheffer & Williams (1987) also mention that the use of insecticides has the potential to increase scale populations due to the reduction of predators, reduction of intraspecific competition for food and increased plant growth leading to increased nutritional value of the host plant.

**Reference:**


Kew, undated. The Caicos Pine: Road to Extinction? Schools poster about pine scale insect [link]

Malinoski, Mary Kay and David L. Clement, Regional Specialists, Home & Garden Information Center, Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland at College Park. Rev. 10/2003