Eucalyptus
Psyllid

This is a new pest, arriving here about 1998 and has been identified as the ‘red gum lerp psyllid (RLP) Glycaspis brimblecombei. The pest is from Australia, but is not as much of a problem there because of natural predators.

The Psyllids are small insects that suck sap from plants. Female psyllids lay clusters of eggs on the leaves from which hatch the nymphs, considered the immature stage of the psyllid. The nymphs feed on leaves and produce a watery, sticky waste product called honeydew. From this a protective cap called a ‘lerp’ is produced. The cycle continues with a scale-like cone on the leaves being formed. The nymphs feed and grow to adulthood under this cap of crystalline sugars.

Eucalyptus varieties include rudis, globules, diversicolor, sideroxlyn, nicholii and lehmanii. Other varieties may be affected as more observation continues.

The psyllids secrete copious amounts of honeydew making the leaves and sidewalks sticky. Leaves can turn black as a result of sooty molds forming on honeydew. Extensive defoliation may occur.

Natural enemies including birds, ladybugs and lacewings have been observed eating RLP, however, these insects are probably ineffective at controlling the psyllid. Small non stinging wasps from Australia are currently being studied for long term reduction of the RLP.

For now, the best thing you can do is to be sure the trees have adequate water. Do not over water because excessive water can promote a higher numbers of pests. Fertilizing is not recommended. Pruning is not recommended because this causes new growth on which RLP will colonize and kill.

There are a limited number of pesticides registered for use on eucalyptus and the efficacy against RLP is unknown at this time. Contact sprays applied directly onto leaves may not be effective because of the protective coating produced by the nymphs. Adequate coverage is difficult to achieve on large trees and the spray can drift into residential areas and cause more problems. Systemic insecticides applied to the soil and injected into the plant is being studied, but their effectiveness is not known at this time. For regular updates, check this web site:
http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/biocon/dahlsten/rglp/RLP_Main.htm,