

# SOUTH AMERICAN PALM WEEVIL

## Did you know?

Native to Mexico and Central and South America, the South American palm weevil (SAPW) is also known as; the giant palm weevil, palm marrow weevil and the American palm weevil. It was first discovered in a Canary Island date palm in San Ysidro, and is making its way throughout Southern California.

## An Enormous Threat

This weevil presents an enormous threat to the ornamental and edible date palm industries in California. The urban landscape in California is defined by palms, especially the ubiquitous Canary Islands date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) and edible date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*).

Damage to palm trees results primarily from larval feeding that is concentrated in the apical meristem or the palm heart. Heavy larval infestations in this region can result in crown collapse and palm mortality. Highly damaged areas take on a characteristic appearance as the crown tilts, collapses, and dies.

Palms in the advanced stages of attack and mortality have a flattened top, and as the remaining halo of fronds that ring the top of the trunk dry down, the palm looks like a giant brown umbrella or mushroom.



South American Palm Weevil, *Rhynchophorus palmarum* [UC Riverside]



Dead palm tree infected by South American palm weevil. [M. Hoddle]



Examples of advanced weevil attack characterized by flattened tops and complete frond death. [UC Riverside]

## How to Reduce Attacks

Removal of infested, dying, or dead palms is expensive, potentially dangerous and should be undertaken by professional arborists. It is recommended that infested palm material (i.e., fronds and the bulbous top of the palm) be chipped. All transported material should be covered with a tarp and disposed of at a certified landfill that buries within 24 hours (or sooner) of dumping to reduce risks of spreading adult weevils into new areas either enroute to or around the disposal site.