

Leaf Katydid (*Orophus tesselatus*)

By Curtis Lakin

Background

This species is relatively new in culture (since 2011), it has the classic form of the tropical Phaneroptinae being a leaf mimic with sickle shaped ovipositor and is found in a number of South American countries including Panama, Ecuador, Colombia and Costa Rica. The original stock came from Costa Rica. The species is sometimes referred to as a dead leaf katydid due to the fact that one form of this species can resemble dried brown leaves.

Description and life History

This is a small/medium species with a body length of up to 25mm (40mm including wing length). Females have a classic sickle shaped ovipositor which becomes noticeable 2 to 3 instars before adulthood is reached. The males do have an audible call song but it is not very noisy. The eggs which resemble melons seeds are inserted into the leaves of plants between the upper dermis and lower epidermis of the leaf. The nymphs hatch after about 2-3 months and are usually apple green in all instars however there is some variability in adults. Adult colouration is often green, however sometimes translucent, yellow or brown and often marked with brown speckling or striping. Humidity levels, regional variations and diet may be contributory factors determining the colour form of adults. The species take about 3 months to mature and as adults live for 6 months or more. The whole life cycle takes only 6-8 months.

Culture Instructions

This species is an easy bush cricket species to keep. It is straight forward in its needs yet a very endearing and rewarding creature to rear. I have found that the species tolerates a range of temperatures from room temp (15C) to very warm (28C) but that humidity with reasonable ventilation is important at all times.

The species appears to enjoy communal living at all stages without any signs of cannibalism. Feeding is straight forward since the katydid will take bramble, raspberry, rose and *Ligustrum* (privet) leaves as a staple diet item at all stages.

Egg laying occurs in many different plant species but leaves with a reasonable fleshiness are preferred. Eggs are laid singly and best incubated in a humid but ventilated environment. The individual leaves or sprigs can be removed and held over damp substrate, avoiding conditions which encourage mould. A tray of moist peat or vermiculite works well. Sprigs of plant inserted into the substrate may root, and the leaves remain alive, otherwise they will be shed and start to decay. Leaf decay does not affect the eggs when the leaves breakdown so long as conditions for the incubating eggs are not conducive to mould growth.

