

BAGWORMS

What to Look For

The bagworm is native to the United States and is quite active in Eastern Nebraska. Bagworms feed on many species of trees and shrubs and are a serious problem on evergreens. The characteristic brown cocoons are made out of the foliage or needles of the the plant, providing a camouflage. They are often seen attached to twigs, may be up to 2" long, and sometimes mistaken for cones.

Damage

Bagworms are most common on evergreen trees and shrubs. Juniper, pine, spruce, and arborvitae may be killed if bagworms completely defoliate them. Less serious attacks will retard growth. The bagworm will feed on shade and ornamental trees of any kind, but damage to these varieties is not usually as serious because those plants set new leaves in the spring from all buds along a branch. In the case of a conifer, the new growth is initiated only from the terminal bud and does not re-develop on inner bud points from previous seasons. The damage on evergreens can be quite distracting for a number of years until enough new growth helps balance the visual appearance on the plant.

Description

Newly hatched larvae are very small and begin to spin bags shortly after hatching. The first evidence of an infestation is small bags about ¼ inch long, standing almost on end. As larvae grow, leaf and needle fragments are added to the bag. The adult female bagworm is wingless and never leaves the bag. Adult male bagworms pupate into small gray moths with clear wings. Bagworms spend winter in the egg stage inside female bags fastened to twigs. Eggs hatch in late May or early June, and



young begin to feed immediately. Bagworms can feed on a plant until late August to early September.

Cultural Control

Picking off the bags before the eggs hatch can control infestations. Bags should be destroyed by dropping them in a bucket of soapy water, or thrown in a fire pit. If the bags containing larvae are discarded on the ground, the larvae will return to the host plant.

Chemical Control

Controls are very effective if applied early in the season. Apply chemical sprays June 15th, June 30th, July 15th, and July 30th. Limited control can still be achieved as late as early September. Effective chemicals available are: Bonide Liquid Systemic Insecticide, Bonide Eight, Fertilome's Broad Spectrum Insecticide. Once the bag becomes 2" or more in length, then Hi-Yield 38 Plus is the only effective insecticide.

Biological Control

An organic, biological agent called Bt is available for bagworm control, and it works best on small bagworms in June. Our Garden Center carries Natural Guard Spinosad and Natural Guard Caterpillar Killer spray as the organic options for control.