

Fall Webworm

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FIG. 1

Type Pest: chewing insect (*Hyphantria cunea* Drury)

Type Metamorphous: complete (egg, larva, pupa, adult stages)

Period of Primary Occurrence: late April through fall

Plants Affected

- Mulberry (a favorite host plant in Galveston County)
- Peach and other fruit trees, poplar, redbud, sweetgum, willow, maple, persimmon, Arizona hickory (very few hickory trees are grown in Galveston County) and a wide variety of other deciduous-type trees
- Does not attack conifers



FIG. 2

Identifying Characteristics of Insect Pest

LARVAE / EGG STAGE

- Moths lay hundreds of eggs in a hairy cluster on the underside of leaves in early spring
- Very slender, approximately 1/2" length when full size (Fig. 6)
- Caterpillars feed in their web
- Caterpillars start congregating in large numbers in April, eating by skeletonizing leaves inside the web
- Caterpillars feed and travel from one feeding site to another as a 'family'
- In six weeks, the caterpillars drop to the ground and pupate in thin cocoons beneath leaf litter
- Cycle may occur up to six times in our long summers
- Our long growing season allows for four generations, causing heavy defoliation
- On occasion, untreated infestations and repeated seasons of this insect can cause extensive plant damage



FIG. 3

ADULT STAGE

- Adult stage is a moth
- Small, with a 1" wingspan



FIG. 4

WEBS

- Gray, silken webs are spun enclosing leaves and entire branches on the outer limbs of trees
- Webs continue to expand as larvae feed and increase in size
- When caterpillars are young, webs may cover several branches and when caterpillars are larger, webs may cover several feet

Damage on Plants

- Any infestation may stress young trees
- A light infestation is not damaging to a mature tree
- A heavy infestation that occurs in a single growing period is rarely fatal to otherwise healthy mature trees (Fig. 1, 3, 7 & 8)
- Heavy infestations occurring repeatedly over several years can stress trees and make them more susceptible to drought, disease or other insect pests

Pest Management Practices (BMP)

- The damage to most trees is usually not significant because the webs are usually concentrated in a single area and happen late in the season

NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL

- Small webs can be pruned out; bag and place in garbage
- Make holes in existing webbing to allow predators to enter
- Predators include: social wasps (yellow jackets and paper wasps), birds, predatory stinkbugs, and parasitic wasps

CHEMICAL CONTROL

- *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) with UV protectants applied all over the leaves stops new nest of young larvae
- Other standard insecticides can also be ingested by young larvae sprayed on adjacent leaves or are transported into the leaves after being absorbed systemically from the soil



FIG. 5



FIG. 6



FIG. 7



FIG. 8

The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is implied.

Use pesticides only according to the directions on the label. Individuals who use chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. If the information does not agree with current labeling, follow the label instructions. The label is the law.

Always remember to read and heed six of the most important words on the label: "KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN"

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