

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

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BAGWORMS

Kansas residents are familiar with the bagworm, but many times the damage goes unnoticed until later in the summer. If unnoticed for too long, bagworms may cause substantial damage to red cedar trees and juniper shrubs in landscapes and windbreaks.

Deciduous tree species can also serve as suitable hosts for bagworms, but are often in far less danger of severe damage. The difference is that unlike evergreens, deciduous plants have auxiliary buds that allow them to produce new growth midseason if necessary. Evergreen plants take far longer to recover from feeding damage.

Take time now to closely inspect trees and shrubs for the presence of small bagworms. At this time of year heavy foliar growth can make it a challenge to see bagworms, but with close inspection small bags can be detected. When you find one, it will be easy to find more.

The best time to control bagworms is while they are small and most susceptible to insecticide treatments and have had less time to cause significant damage. There are many insecticides that are labeled for bagworms and will give good control. It is important to use these products correctly and at the right time.

A two-spray schedule is recommended where the previous season's bagworm activities caused serious damage. Any regrowth needs to be protected. Therefore, Spray #1 should be applied during the first three weeks of June for the purpose of eliminating those bagworms which emerged early during the hatching period. It is essential that Spray #2 be applied 3 to 4 weeks later to eliminate those larvae emerging in the latter part of the hatching period.

If the previous year's bagworm population caused minimal damage and there is ample foliage to support populations of small larvae early in the season, a single spray applied during the first week of July should be adequate for controlling bagworms. In other words, with normal populations of bagworms only one treatment is needed. While some of the early-emerging bagworms may be getting larger at this time, they will not have caused noticeable feeding damage, and will be eliminated with the smaller bagworms which emerged late in the hatching period.

Insecticide applications must be thorough. Mist-like applications to the outer foliage of infested plantings eliminate only those bagworms feeding on the periphery. The main portion of the population feeding on inner portions of the plantings go untouched, and eventually move out to attack the entire plant.

Young bagworms can be controlled with a number of insecticides including the organic control BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) which is commonly sold as Dipel or Thuricide. BT is highly active on young caterpillars; however, the material must be ingested to be effective, so thorough coverage of all plant parts is essential.

Other effective insecticides include acephate (Orthene), cyfluthrin (Bayer Advanced Lawn & Garden Multi-Insect Killer), permethrin (Kill-A-Bug II, Bonide Eight, Spectracide Bug Stop) and malathion. Thorough coverage is critical for good control. One application of insecticide in early July is effective in most cases. These insecticides may kill beneficial insects so use them with care and follow the label instructions.