Helpline Happening: April 2024

Bagworm Moths - *Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*

Presented by: Jacqueline Spadaccini

What is it? Bagworms are an insect pest which affects many ornamental shrubs and trees in the eastern US. There are other species differing in appearance common to the southeast.



What are the targeted plants? Bagworms target conifers especially Arborvitae, cedar, juniper, spruce and pine although some deciduous trees and shrubs can be damaged also. If in large numbers and left untreated, bagworms can defoliate and eventually kill the host plant.



Appearance: Bagworms are insects inside crescent shaped cocoons, often mistaken for pinecones because they hang on the branches and are constructed using the same plant material as the host plant. Bags are well camouflaged, making them easily missed in the home landscape, especially when they are still small and not in large numbers. The bags enclose the larval stage of a moth. A homeowner may not notice anything until the browning foliage is apparent late in the summer season.



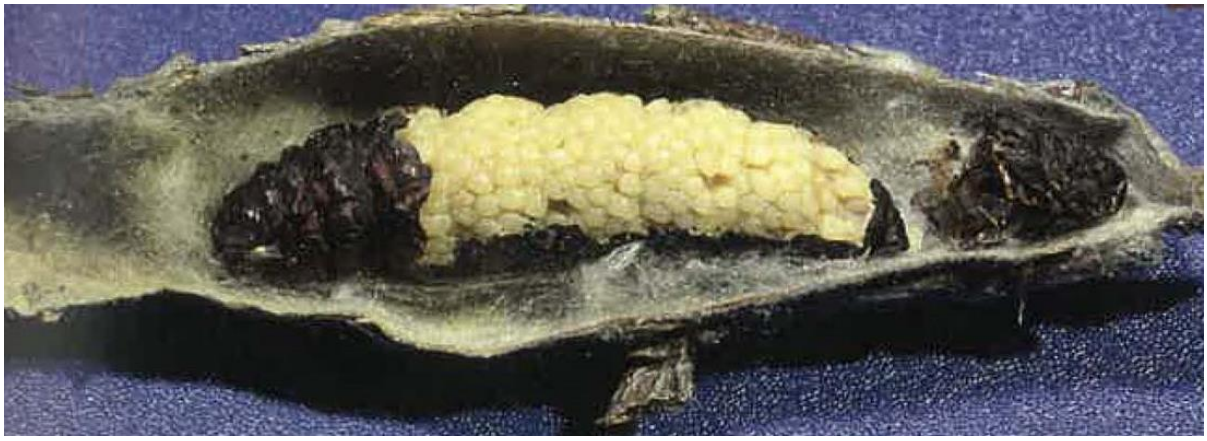
Life-cycle: Bagworms undergo a complete metamorphosis. After eggs hatch in mid to late spring, the small caterpillars spin a 1/8” long cocoon using the leaves or needles of the host plant to feed on. The bag serves as their house and moves with them as they continue to feed and grow throughout the season. They complete the cycle in mid fall (late September) by attaching the bags permanently to a twig by a tough silken thread. Inside, the caterpillars pupate into moths but only the males have wings. The males fly to find females still inside their

bags. After mating, the females lay 200-1000 eggs before she dies. The eggs remain inside the bag until the following spring. Cycle repeats.









Treatment: The most recommended treatment is the monitoring (IPM) of trees and shrubs, looking closely at bagworm's favorable plants and any present damage. As already stated, bags can be easily overlooked. The best practice is to manually clip bags off the plants in the dormant season before the eggs hatch, disposing of them in a plastic bag in the trash.

If there are too many bags not within reach, spraying insecticide may be necessary. Be sure that “bagworms’ are listed and follow all instructions on the label. Apply after the young caterpillar emergence and throughout the feeding period. (mid-summer)

Fun fact: Bagworms travel by spinning a long web, like a spider, and letting the wind propel them to a nearby tree or shrub.

Source: ‘bagworms on trees and shrubs/extension.umd.edu