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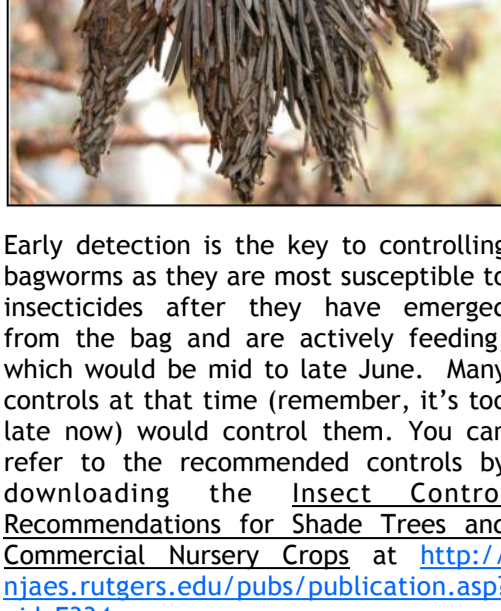
Aug. 15, 2013

Bagworms

By Diane Larson, County Extension Horticulturist

Although homeowners seem to just be noticing bagworms defoliating their evergreens, the worms have been damaging their plants since they hatched in early June. By now, they are about 2 inches long, have been feeding for two months, are mature, and control with chemicals is not effective.

Initial egg hatch usually occurs in late May, however with the cool wet spring and early summer we had, hatching probably was delayed until at least early June, after which the small worms fed while growing and spinning their 'bags' around them out of silken threads and the foliage they fed on. Right about now they have stopped growing, stopped feeding, and have begun to pupate by fully enclosing themselves in the bag. Pupation will last for about another month, when only the male will emerge from the bag as a winged moth and fly to the females to mate, who remain on the plant in her bag. After mating, the female deposits up to 1000 eggs in her case, and both male and female die, leaving all those eggs safely encased in the bag over winter.



Early detection is the key to controlling bagworms as they are most susceptible to insecticides after they have emerged from the bag and are actively feeding, which would be mid to late June. Many controls at that time (remember, it's too late now) would control them. You can refer to the recommended controls by downloading the [Insect Control Recommendations for Shade Trees and Commercial Nursery Crops](http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=E334) at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=E334>.

So you may think that there's no control at this time for bagworms, but the most effective thing you can do now is to simply hand pick the bags. If every bag contains up to 1000 eggs, just think of the plants you'll be saving next summer!

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