

Fall Webworms

Webworms are now entering their third generation, usually most damaging stage, in Central Texas. Webworms attack over 88 species of trees and shrubs and are often found on pecan. These caterpillars defoliate trees within an unsightly web that they begin to spin immediately after hatching out of the egg. Caterpillars spend all of their larval stage within the webbing, expanding webbing when they need more foliage to eat.

Webworms are greenish-yellow with long tufts of hair extending from their bodies. Eggs are laid in masses on the underside of leaves. Webbing the caterpillars, or larvae, create are on the tips of branches and must be penetrated to manage the caterpillars.

Cultural tips for webworm management:

- Remove egg masses before the eggs hatch
- Prune webs from trees, if feasible
- Use a stick or high pressure water to open the webbing to allow predators access to the caterpillars

Chemical tips for webworm management:

- All chemical treatments **MUST** penetrate the webbing
- Try *Bacillus thuringiensis* variety *kurstaki* or spinosad
 - Both must be ingested by the caterpillars to work properly
 - Must get good coverage of the foliage the caterpillars are consuming
 - Both are fairly selective pesticides
 - Bt var. *kurstaki* targets caterpillars
 - Spinosad target insects that chew foliage (caterpillars, grasshoppers, etc)
 - Both work best when used against smaller caterpillars
- Try contact pesticides on large caterpillar stages
- With all pesticides, read & follow all label instructions

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas Cooperative Extension Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.