



Bag worms attack Leyland Cypress trees by O'neal Bridge in Florence.

Bagworms

Bagworms are a serious pest to ornamental evergreens in Alabama and heavy damage has been seen on several ornamentals lately, specially the Leyland Cypress. Their spindle-shaped bags made of silk and portions of the foliage and twigs may go unnoticed until serious damage occurs to the plant.

Large populations of bagworms can strip plants of their foliage and eventually cause them to die. Bagworms are the caterpillar stage of a moth that is rarely seen. Only the males develop into typical moths capable of flight. The adult female is grub-like and remains inside the bag until just before she dies.

Bagworms pass the winter as eggs inside the bag that contained the previous year's female. Females lay a mass of 500 to 1000 eggs in their bags and then die. In mid-May to early June the eggs will hatch and the new females will begin building a new bag. There is only one generation per year.

Because bagworms have the protective nest they are difficult to control. During the fall, winter and early spring it is best to hand pick the bags and dispose of them by burning them. The best time to apply an insecticide is while the larvae are still small

(less than a half-inch long). The best time would be from mid-May to mid-June. Repeat applications maybe necessary.

Bacillus thuringiensis (BT) provides satisfactory results on the small larvae. The bacterial insecticide is available under the trade name of DIPEL. If large bagworm larvae are present (more than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long), a conventional insecticide probably will provide better results. Some examples would be acephate, permethrin, or cyfluthrin.

For more information on bagworm control contact the County Extension office at 766-6223 or visit the state website at www.aces.edu and do a search on bagworms.