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Scout Now for Bagworms on Evergreens

Early to Mid-May is the time to be looking for bagworms crawling and feeding on your landscape plants. You are most likely to find bagworms feeding on junipers, cedars, arborvitae, and white pine, but it can also be found feeding on shade trees and other shrubs. Their feeding is most devastating to evergreens as the defoliation alters the shape and beauty of the plant. The damage to evergreens often requires them to be replaced.

They are controlled easily early in the season before they have the protection of their bag. The bagworm builds its bag from pieces of material from the plant upon which it is feeding. The worm drags the bag wherever it goes, retreating into the bag when disturbed. As the bag becomes well developed, the worm is very well protected from insecticides, making control difficult. Feeding continues until August when the female prepares for mating and winter. After mating, the female drops to the ground and dies. The eggs overwinter in the bag until they hatch in early to mid May. Fortunately, there is only one generation per year.

When possible, you can remove the bags from the tree and destroy them. You must kill all of the bagworms on the plant. One bag can contain several hundred eggs and infest an entire plant. This is most applicable to smaller plants that can be accessed while standing around the plant.

If insecticides are used, they must be applied when bagworms are small and without the protection of their bag. Make sure you read the label to insure that your plant of concern is listed. The rate of application may vary depending on the plant. Recommended insecticides include carbaryl, Bt, malathion, acephate, trichlorfon, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, spinosad, and lambda-cyhalothrin. These are the active ingredients in each of the insecticides.

The bagworm also has natural enemies that feed on the larvae and eggs helping to keep it under control.

Remember insecticides only work when sprayed on juvenile larvae before they get their bag formed. Secondly, when possible, consider handpicking and destroying all of the bagworms to prevent further damage.