

Controlling Bagworms

*Excerpts from: Kansas Insect Newsletter, Department of Entomology, K-State Research and Extension
Additional information from Parker County Master Gardener*

As often happens, people have been caught off-guard by bagworms. Ideally, spray treatments should have been applied when bagworm larvae were smaller and less damaging.



Currently, evergreens such as eastern red cedar and junipers may have been especially hard hit, and have taken on a yellowish and brownish cast. Upon close inspection, bags are readily evident due to their numbers and size.

A good way to rid the infested plant is to simply pull the bags off and destroy the offenders. This is tedious but should be considered as the first method to consider. If you choose not to do this, you can consider other methods. (Note: a Parker County Master Gardener added this paragraph to the article.)

If the bagworms are actively feeding, it may not be too late to apply insecticide. Evidence of active feeding can be based on the presence of newly applied green foliar adornment on bags. Killing bagworms now would prevent their pupating and the eventual production of over wintering eggs.

If, however, a majority of the bags display a strong silken “tie” of the bag to the twig, sprays will do little to thwart egg production. Simply, the larvae (shielded against the spray treatment within the protective confines of their tough silken bag) will proceed to pupate, with the production of over wintering eggs to follow.

Once larval feeding ceases (whether because they have been killed or they have reached the end of their feeding cycle), cedar and junipers will put out new growth — the results being the return of green and lush foliage. The continued production of new growth throughout the remainder of the year and during the spring of the following year may lull people into forgetting previous ravages of bagworms.

