

FALL WEBWORM by Lisa Marie Gee

The fall webworm is a native pest that does not generally cause significant damage in well-established healthy trees. They have been found feeding on more than 200 species of deciduous trees and shrubs. They occur in the summer but more likely in the fall. There is usually only one generation per year and they rarely are on the same tree the next year.

Their web is loosely woven and encloses the branches with leaves and as the larvae eat the leaves they enlarge the tent. Some tents could be 2-3 feet long. Since the



Photo: [Steven Katovich, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org](#)

leaves are nearing their end stage in the fall there is usually no ill effects as the leaves reappear in the spring with no damage.

In June and July adult moths emerge from the soil and the females will lay egg masses in July. By mid-July the eggs will hatch and the feeding begins. The larvae will feed within the web for at least a month and then will crawl down the trees and construct a cocoon and pupate. The full grown larvae are about 1-1/2" long. The larvae may be yellow with dark stripes or spots or dull bluish black without yellow. The bodies are very hairy and the heads are dark. They will pupate over winter in the soil, bark or leaf litter to emerge in summer as adult, nearly white, moths with a wingspan of 1-1/2" and start the process all over again.

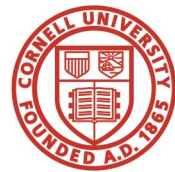
There are several natural predators including birds, small mammals, insect predators, spiders, and parasitic wasps. You can also look for egg masses and destroy them or web nests by pruning them or removing them by hand. There is also a naturally occurring virus and fungus that can affect the caterpillars. Dormant oil can be applied in the early spring while the tree is still dormant. *Bacil-*

lus thuringiensis (Bt) can be applied to the tents when they are first noticed. If the infestation is



Photo: [G. Keith Douce, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org](#)

hard to reach or if the population is very heavy there are pesticides that can be used. As always read the labels and follow the directions.



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