



TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Forest Health: Fall Webworm

Large tent-like webs of the fall webworm (*Hyphantria cunea*) are a common sight in many areas of Texas. Fall webworms feed on many species of broadleaf trees including pecan, sweetgum, persimmon, elm, hickory, maple and other hardwoods. They are also found on cypress. It is not considered an economic forest pest, but is unsightly on ornamental trees and occasionally does considerable damage to pecan orchards.

Identification:

The adult moth has a wingspread of 1" to 1¼" and is usually snowy white. The larvae are about 1¼" long and covered with groups of long silky hairs. Body color varies from pale yellow to gray or brown, with black, orange or yellow spots. Pupae are brown and found inside a gray silken cocoon. Eggs are small, yellow or light green, turning gray before hatching.

Signs of Attack:

The first sign of attack is usually a large unsightly silken web covering the outer leaves on branches in the tree crown, and skeletonized leaves. As the larvae grow, they will consume most of the leaf. Examination of the web will usually reveal large numbers of caterpillars.

Life Cycle:

Moths emerge in spring and, after mating, females lay eggs on undersides of leaves of the host. Eggs hatch in about two weeks and larvae immediately begin to feed and construct tent-like webs. They remain inside the web, enlarging it as they feed for four to eight weeks. Fully-grown larvae exit the web when ready to pupate. The larva spins a cocoon in a sheltered place or in the duff or soil and changes to

a pupa inside the cocoon. Adult female moths of the last generation lay eggs in mid-summer. Larvae complete feeding in late fall and overwinter as pupae. There may be four generations a year in southern areas of Texas. Even though they have the name "fall webworm," they can be present all through the summer and fall.

Control:

Disease, starvation, predators, parasites, and unfavorable weather take a toll on these insects. For shade trees, remove webs and larvae using a long pole or stick to reach high branches. If forest control is necessary due to severe and repeated infestation, spray trees by mixing 3¼ pints of 57% malathion EC with 100 gallons of water (1 tablespoon per gallon) or mix 2½ pounds of 80% sevin WP with 100 gallons of water. Commercial pecan groves have little trouble if a regular spray schedule is followed.

