Fall webworm is possibly the most well known among its relatives. This caterpillar does not create a nest. When the caterpillar stops feeding, it gathers on the tree to form an unsightly mass. The larvae feed on foliage within the nest. Hosts are a variety of deciduous trees. It is often seen on the trunks of trees, sometimes forming huge masses. When multiple groups are present, the trees can be defoliated. Common hosts include hawthorn and many more.

Considerations for Control

Examples of gregarious caterpillars are presented below. Many of these pests have potential to be serious, especially because of their large masses. However, moderate to severe damage on a young nursery tree may reduce the value of the plant but may not be severe enough to warrant control. Fortunately, healthy, well-established trees are more susceptible to gregarious caterpillars. Large masses of caterpillars are often quite impressive, especially those that gather in groups, rather than alone. Large masses of caterpillars may reduce the value of the plant but may not be severe enough to warrant control.

Eastern Tent Caterpillar

Consider using Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki (strain) is specific to caterpillars and will not harm the beneficial insects in the nursery. See the Kentucky Nursery Listserv for more information.

Eastern tent caterpillar is a highly susceptible pest to nearly every insecticide. The larvae are relatively fast growing, and many pest control products are effective in killing the larvae. Eastern tent caterpillar does not create a nest. When the caterpillar stops feeding, it gathers on the tree to form an unsightly mass. It may be defoliated throughout the winter. The larvae are typically found in the early spring, and the majority of the damage is caused by the second generation in July and August.

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Brown spider mites attack a wide variety of plants, including deciduous trees and shrubs. The mites feed on the leaves, causing the leaves to curl and drop. They also produce a fine web, which may be visible on the underside of the leaves. The mites are small, red, and can be difficult to see. They are often found in protected areas, such as under rocks or in crevices. They can also be found in soil. Brown spider mites are most common in the spring and summer.

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Pink bollworm is a major pest of cotton, attacking the fruit and stems. The larvae feed on the leaves, causing them to curl and drop. They also produce a fine web, which may be visible on the underside of the leaves. The mites are small, red, and can be difficult to see. They are often found in protected areas, such as under rocks or in crevices. They can also be found in soil. Pink bollworm is most common in the spring and summer.

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Striped Oakworm

Striped oakworm larvae are striped, black, but all individuals have heavy white speckling. The head and thorax are typically darker with reddish brown hair. The majority of damage is caused by the second generation in July and August. Striped oakworm larvae are striped, black, but all individuals have heavy white speckling. The head and thorax are typically darker with reddish brown hair.

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Walnut Caterpillar

Walnut caterpillars feed in groups of 100 or more and can defoliate much of an entire tree limb or even a small tree. These caterpillars vary greatly in appearance (see photos through September). They are located in crotches between two or more branches and can become unsightly. The larvae feed on a wide variety of trees and shrubs, including apple, cherry, elm, hickory, maple, walnut, and many others.

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