

## Least-toxic Control of Bagworms

Bagworms are the larval stage of moths. They attach their bags to and feed on ornamental plants such as evergreens, causing defoliation.

Bagworms look like green or brown bags about 1/2 to 3 inches long and hang from branches like ornaments.

The most common species in the East usually attaches to junipers, pine hemlock, cedar, black locust, maple, sycamore, elm, buckeye, box elder and willow trees. In the Southern California region, bagworms are found mainly on ash, pear, sycamore, willow and locust trees.

In Florida and other gulf coast states, look for bagworms on citrus and other subtropical plants.

In temperate climates, the larvae hatch and begin feeding in late spring to early summer.

### Prevention and Monitoring

- Monitor all plants that have been infected with bagworms in the past. Begin searching for bags in the winter, as some will contain eggs that will hatch in the spring. Destroy any that you find.
- In May and early June, closely monitor all plants at least every other week.

### Control

- When there are only a few bagworms, **handpick and crush** them.
- If there are too many bagworms to handpick, consider using *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a low-toxic microbial insecticide. This can be found at most hardware and garden stores. Bt is most effective against young larvae. Make sure to apply to small bags. Apply Bt only to plants infected with bagworms since Bt is toxic to other species of caterpillars as well.

### References

Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP. "Least Toxic Control of Pests In the Home & Garden: A series of pest control & chemical factsheets." Washington, DC.

Olkowski, Helga, Daar, Shiela, and Olkowski, William, *Common-Sense Pest Control*, Newtown: The Taunton Press, Inc., 1991.

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