

# Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel



Department of Entomology  
123 West Waters Hall  
K-State Research and Extension  
Manhattan, Kansas 66506  
785-532-5891  
<http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/extension>

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## Bagworms ---- Where Are They Now?

The flippant response would be, “In their bags?” But the real question is, “Is it too late to spray for bagworms?” This response has been recorded in the last couple weeks of Ward Upham’s Compilations of Hot Topics and Pests. While up until now bagworms may have gone unobserved due to their small size and incapability of causing noticeable feeding damage, unchecked populations of (currently) larger bagworms are inflicting feeding damage that is hard-to-miss. Junipers in landscape plantings and eastern red cedars in windbreaks have taken on definite “yellowed-to-burnt” appearances. Now drawn to closely inspect “suffering hosts”, people encounter quite large and hard-to-miss bags, and the caterpillars residing within. Currently, **it is not too late to spray!** Notwithstanding their size, as long as larvae are exposed, they will be killed if actively foraging and directly hit by an insecticide spray, or (if withdrawn into their bag at the time of the spray application) after consuming insecticide-treated foliage when they resume feeding.

Based on the current size of the largest bags that I have observed, bagworms will be feeding into mid-August (possibly longer for currently smaller bags). In addition to size, “active bags” can be identified by newly-clipped greenery at the bag opening. Also, with a bit of patience, simply watch for a bagworm to reopen its bag, poke out its head, and resume feeding.



In Kansas, there are 446 products registered for use against bagworms. Active ingredients currently contained in insecticides available for purchase and use by homeowners include **acephate**, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, **bifenthrin**, **carbaryl**, cyfluthrin, **cyhalothrin** (gamma and **lambda**), deltamethrin, **malathion**, **permethrin** and **spinosad**. In various trials, I have used the **bolded AIs** and found them all to be effective against bagworms, even those considered large and close to the end of their feeding cycle. Some homeowners may still be in possession of discontinued products with the active ingredients **chlorpyrifos**, **dimethoate** and/or **diazinon**. All were effective against bagworms in trials. Although it does not appear to have been written into any legalized directive (per personal communication with the KDA), discontinued products may still be used if done in

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accordance with the instructions appearing on the product label. **Residents may not share or give partial containers to neighbors as this would be considered distribution.** Regardless of which product/AI is used, the critical factor for a successful bagworm population reduction is **THOROUGH COVERAGE!** Hastily applied light/misty sprays will lead to disappointing results.

When is it too late to spray for bagworms? That is easily determined. When a bagworm completes its feeding cycle, it anchors its bag to the host plant with a distinct, highly visible white silken “tie”, after which it permanently closes the “front door”. Spraying at this point-in-time is futile because the thick leathery bag shields/protects the bagworm within.



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Another often asked question is with regard to recovery. Several factors come into play, such as type of host, severity of damage, and diligence to bagworm control programs. Deciduous hosts are most forgiving given their ability to rapidly produce new foliage as illustrated in the following sequence. Bagworms had pretty much defoliated the pyracantha bush. Having completed their feeding, newly produced foliage remained intact, and thus a month later, regained a fairly full green appearance. Followed by properly timed spray treatments in 2008, one would never have known of the previous year's encounter with bagworms.



Even “less forgiving” evergreens can recover if proper bagworm control is implemented. Depending on the severity of bagworm damage, recovery sometimes happens quickly .....



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and other times more slowly.



But then, there are times that (when ignored) bagworms have a devastating impact on landscape plantings. Last year, there were distinct differences in bagworm activities between and within adjacent Juniper beds (August 7). It would appear that removal of the “burnt” Junipers was deemed the remedy to the situation (August 29). Whether an insecticide treatment was applied to the remaining Juniper and those in the adjacent bed is not known.

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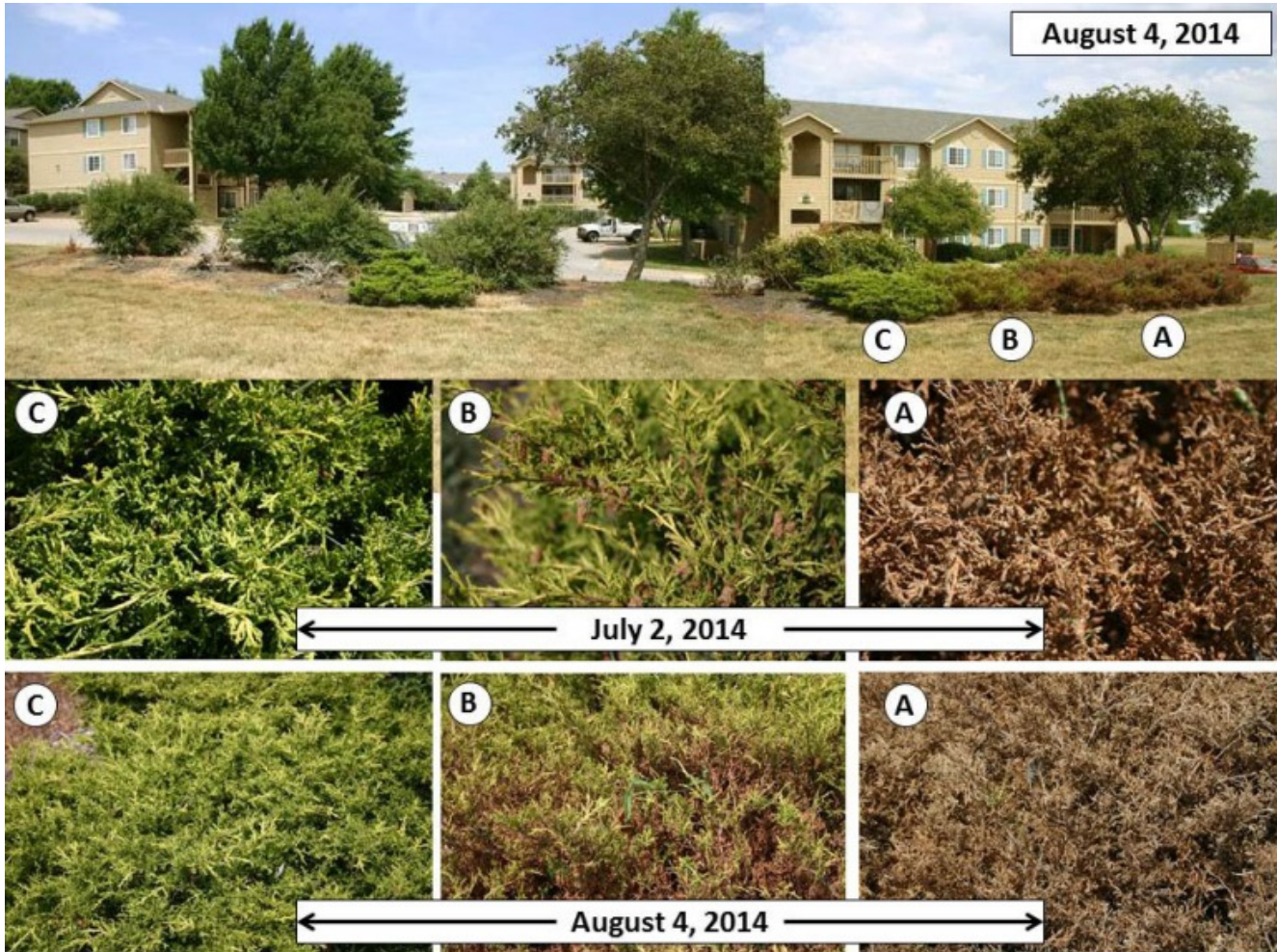
What is certain is that little heed was given to the remaining Junipers. On July 2 of this year, the previously mentioned “apparently clean” bed had been well-ravaged by bagworms.



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The progression of bagworms seeking a “fresh green” food source was apparent in close-up images ---- none in the burnt A, concentrated in B, and none in C. The overall current (August 4) appearance is unchanged. An insecticide treatment was applied. This is borne out by the absence of any active bagworms (especially in Section B) and the detection of a faint “chemical odor”.



One could say, “Better late than never”. However, although the bagworms have been eliminated, it was not before they were responsible for ruining the aesthetic appearance of those particular landscape plantings.

## What’s The Buzz? Green June Beetles!

Just like Old Faithful erupts “on schedule” (well, on average, every 91 minutes), green June beetle flights predictably erupt in Kansas. So why are they worthy of comment? Because of their dark appearance, large size and the very audible buzz created by their wing beats, people often times automatically become leery of their presence ---- the thinking being that these are bumble bees. Also, their rapid and erratic flights may result in

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accidental collisions, causing people to flee the area fearing that they will be stung. **However, green June beetles are harmless** ---- neither capable of biting nor delivering a sting. Rather than reacting “in fear of”, take the opportunity to capture a few beetles and admire them for their beauty from top to bottom.



Japanese Beetle

Bronzish/coppery wing covers

White dorsal tufts

White Lateral tufts

Green June Beetle

Green June beetles sometimes are victims of mistaken identity ---- that of being Japanese beetles.

Size-wise, green June beetles are “Goliaths” compared to Japanese beetle “Davids”.

There are distinct differences in color/color patterns as well as the presence or absence of white setal tufts.

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Lastly, green June beetles do not damage flowers or foliage as do Japanese beetles. Probably the only legitimate complaint against green June beetles is that they may cluster on ripened (especially overly-ripe) fruit, notably peaches and grapes. Timely picking/harvesting of those commodities will help to avoid this situation.

Bob Bauernfeind

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## Insect Diagnostic Laboratory Report

<http://entomology.k-state.edu/extension/diagnostician/recent-samples.html>

Eva Zurek

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**Sincerely,**

Robert J. Bauernfeind  
Extension Specialist  
Horticultural Entomology  
phone: 785/532-4752  
e-mail: [rbauernf@ksu.edu](mailto:rbauernf@ksu.edu)

Eva Zurek  
Insect Diagnostician  
Phone: (785) 532-4710  
e-mail: [ezurek@ksu.edu](mailto:ezurek@ksu.edu)



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