

Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel



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Green Cloverworms

Green cloverworms (GCW's) are very common and numerous in both alfalfa and soybean fields (see photos). There are also many southern corn rootworm adults (often called 12 spotted cucumber beetles) and a few fall armyworms. All these insects are foliage feeders, for the most part. Because of the sheer numbers that are present in many fields, they are causing considerable concern. However, swathing will control the insects in the alfalfa. The soybeans I sampled did not have populations of any one species, or even a total of all species, approaching treatment thresholds. Probably the most efficient defoliator of those sampled is the green cloverworm. However, even though there are enough to cause concern, the beans are full-canopied, even the double cropped beans, and therefore can withstand the number of pests actually feeding on them. Also, GCW larvae are in all sizes and ages (again, see photos) so they will continue to feed for the next 2-3 weeks but this feeding/defoliation will not occur all at once as it might if all the worms were the same age. The fall armyworms and southern corn rootworms will be of little consequence as they will soon be dying due to cold weather as neither overwinters in KS.



Jeff Whitworth

Holly Davis

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Winged Ants



The insect diagnostic lab has seen multiple samples of winged or reproductive ants over the past few weeks. This is a common occurrence in the spring and fall and, although it often causes concern for homeowners when these ants may suddenly appear in the 100's, it is a short term nuisance and typically does not require treatment. In addition, this swarm from a colony does not mean that infestation levels are going to increase. The winged individuals are going to disperse and leave the colony permanently. If you find a few of these winged ants in your home, the best treatment is to vacuum them up and then throw the vacuum bag into an outdoor trash can. These ants probably wandered in by chance and are not likely to begin a colony inside your home. Finding a significant swarm inside of a home may mean that the colony is located somewhere inside the house or very near your home. In this case, one may want to have the ants identified to make sure they are not carpenter ants or possibly termites, both of which may eventually cause significant damage to a dwelling. For more information on ants, please visit:

<http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/entml2/mf2887.pdf>

Holly Davis

Of Passing Interest ---- Spiders, Webbing and Victims

Over the years (especially in late summer and early fall), I have received inquires about the appearance of webbing especially on evergreen landscape plantings, and concerns regarding the necessity of spraying to kill the “webmakers” in order to preserve the plantings (the assumption being that the webbing has been made by caterpillars of some sort that would cause feeding damage). In these instances, I have told callers to closely

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check the webbing ---- that most likely the webbing was that of spiders. And follow-up responses have always been, “Yes. Spiders”. If people object to the presence of webs, the webbing can simply and easily removed.

The usual spider involved is commonly referred to as a funnel weaver ----- so named for the protective funnel in which the spider rests and waits. There is a silken “front-porch” web mass which completes the spider’s “home”. Vibrations alert the spider as to the presence of an ensnared victim. The spider then dashes out to capture its prey.

So, back to 2110 Londondery Drive for this example of “a good thing”. We have an inter-mix of Mugo and Juniper plantings in our front yard (Figure 1). Note the white arrows which pinpoint webbing.



Figure 1

While the webbing might look slight (Figure 2A), upon closer examination, it is more dense and complex than first appeared (Figure 2B & C). Ensnared is a moth (Figure 2D) which is a male bagworm moth (inset) ---- this is the time of year that male bagworm moths locate and mate with females who then produce/deposit overwintering eggs.

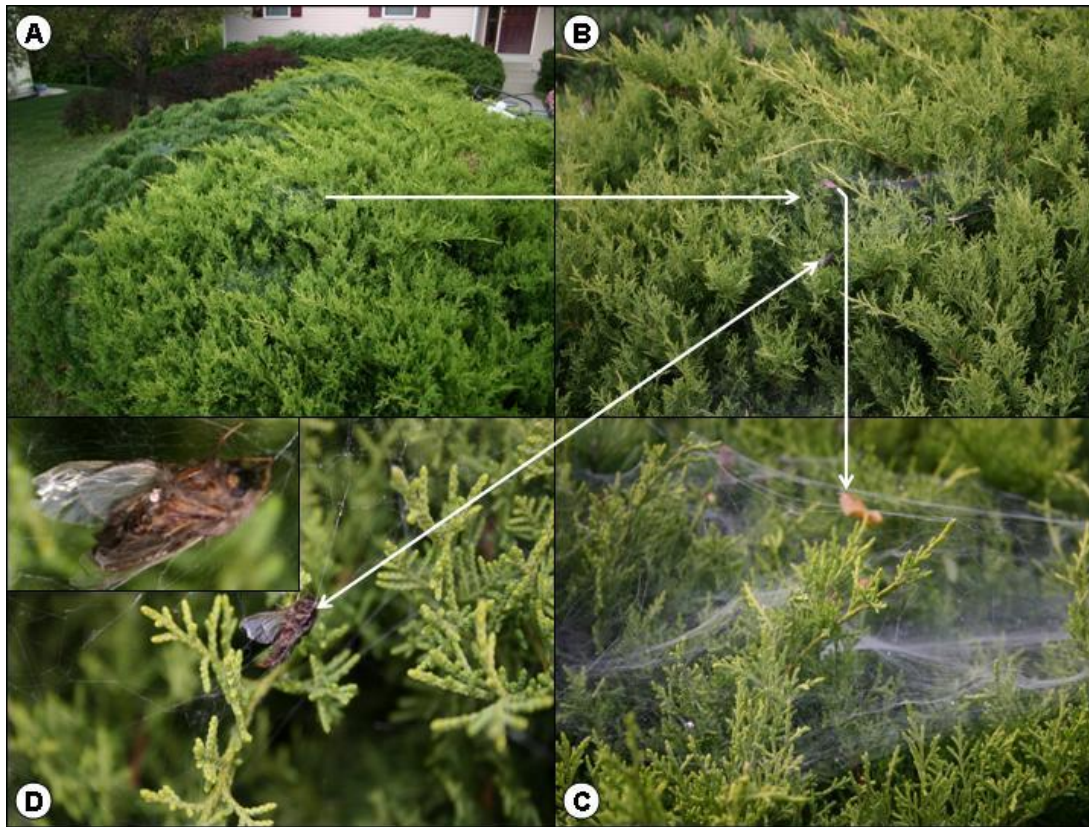


Figure 2

This could be used to support the oft stated, “Spiders are important for their roles as biological control agents”. Of course there can be debate as to the TOTAL EFFECTIVENESS of such (in this instance) for preventing bagworm situations the following year. There would be those who would correctly state, “Well it’s one less male bagworm moth to mate with a female bagworm moth”, only to be correctly countered with, “Well there are plenty of other male moths left for mating purposes”. Again, this all may be “of passing interest”. (Side note ----- place an insect on the spider’s web and watch the spider rush out to gather its meal).

Ongoing Twig Girdler Activities

Over many years, I have had 2 nearby local sites where I could count on for the presence of twig girdlers. Late last week, I visited one site, and there were branches already on the ground. If it is happening here, it’s happening elsewhere. So a refresher on twig girdlers.

Usually people only become aware of twig girdling activities after-the-fact ---- the presence of branches lying on the ground beneath trees (Figure 3).

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Figure 3

If one examines the end of a branch, they will see a quite clean smooth “cut” with the exception of a ragged central core (Figure 4).



Figure 4

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The critter responsible for the “smooth cut” is a seldom seen longhorned beetle called the twig girdler which blends in with its background (Figure 5).



Figure 5

When viewing a girdled twig still on a tree, a person may wonder how it is possible for the beetle to have fitted its head into such a rather deep and narrow groove. One only has to look at the beetle's head to realize its special design suited to its girdling task. The head is compressed from front to back, and somewhat elongate from top to bottom ----- just right for allowing it to fit into the V-shaped notch of the girdle (Figure 6).

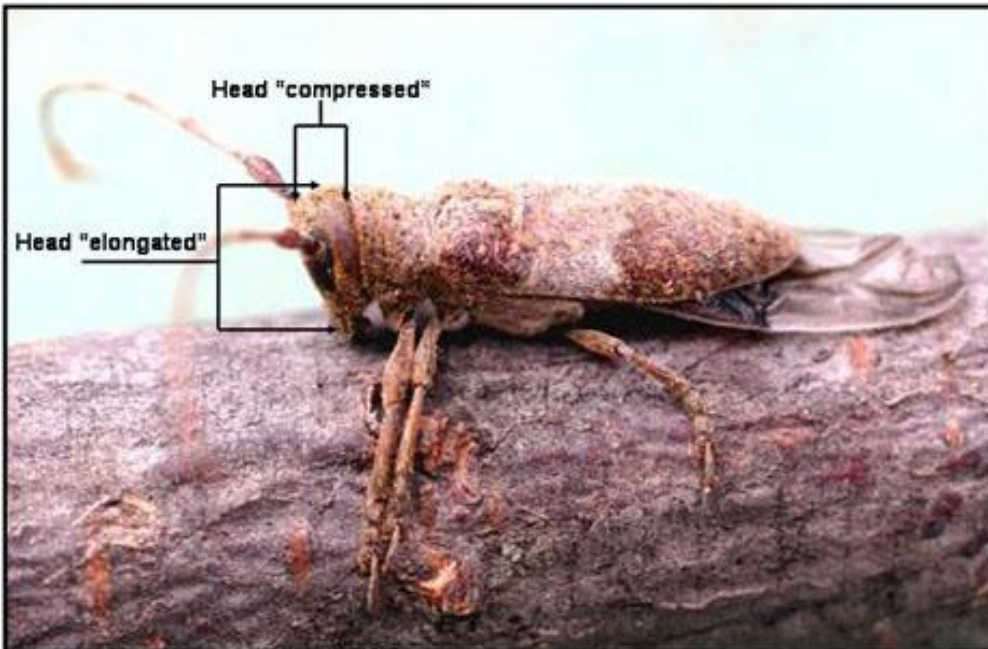


Figure 6

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With remarkably strong and stout mandibles, the twig girdler beetle is well adapted for its “girdling task”. If viewed under a dissecting scope, the mouthparts look like miniature jaws-of-life. The diameter of the girdled twig may be related to the ability of the beetle to encircle/grip the twig (Figure 7) with its legs as it does a 360 to complete the girdling task.



Figure 7

As earlier mentioned/seen, when viewing the end of “the cut”, there is a central core. This is because the girdler does not completely sever the branch. Thus the branches die and leaves turn brown while still attached to the tree (Figure 8).



Figure 8

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Eventually due to drying out and the weight of the cut branch, and aided by wind, the core snaps and branch falls to the ground (Figure 9).

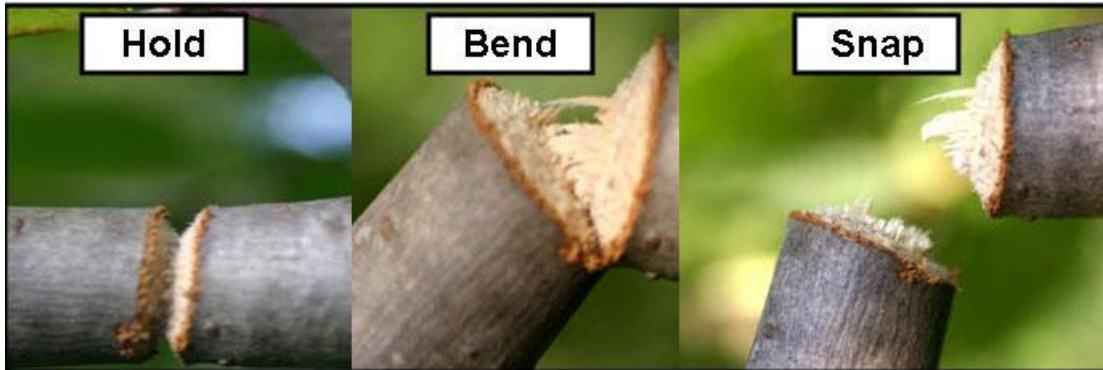


Figure 9

Why would girdlers do what they do? Because girdler larvae apparently require a drier wood for their development. Before the female beetle girdles the branch, she deposits eggs in the terminal portion of the branch that she will girdle. If you closely examine a downed branch, you should be able to see numerous areas where she chewed/created niches just below side shoots. She then turned around (butt-end to the niche) and inserted her ovipositor just beneath the bark and deposited a single egg at each site. Turning around, she “spit” into the egg site to create a protective seal for the egg (Figure 10).

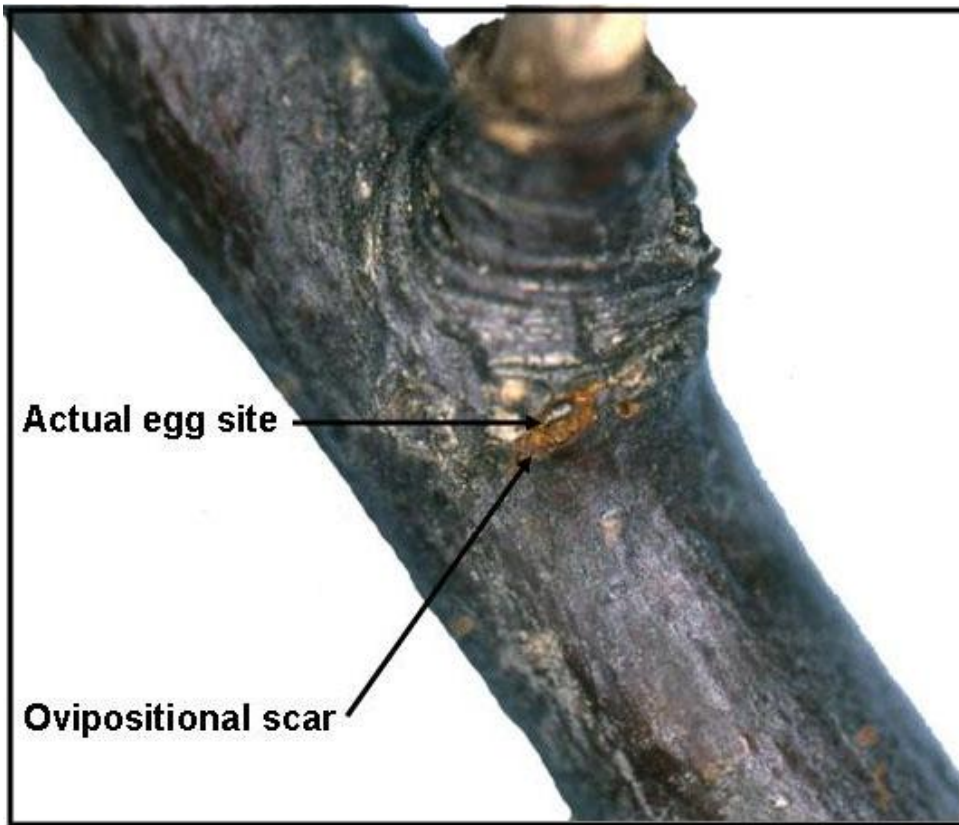


Figure 10

Other than the litter of fallen branches, tree health and vigor are not compromised. There really is no practical control against twig girdlers. Given the size of trees and the extended period of beetle activity, forget spraying. Rather, one must simply let nature have its way.

Gather up and dispose of fallen branches to hopefully eliminate (or at least put a dent in) next year's beetle population.

Of course, there is one way of "defeating" twig girdlers: deprive them of trees. I earlier mentioned that I revisited 1 of 2 sites where I regularly observed twig girdling activities. And the girdlers were present and active. At the other site, no twig girdler activity. It formerly was an undeveloped 20 acre parcel of land of which approximately 10 acres was a woodlot (elm, hackberry, mulberry and pecan). It no longer exists ---- and so that girdler population has been eliminated (Figure 11).

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Figure 11

Bob Bauernfeind

Report from the Kansas State University Insect Diagnostic Laboratory:

The following samples were submitted to the Insect Diagnostic Laboratory from September 14th to September 27th, 2012.

September 14 – Reno County – Black carpet beetle in home

September 14 – Logan County – Green lacewing larvae in home

September 14 – Shawnee County – Carpenterworm larva and roundheaded borer larvae in willow (firewood)

September 17 – Johnson County – Drugstore beetles in home

September 17 – Sedgwick County – Winged harvester ants around home

September 18 – Sedgwick County – Tropical rat mites in home

September 18 – Leavenworth County – Chironomid midges around pond

September 21 – Riley County – Boxelder bug nymphs on outside of home

September 21 – Norton County – Winged harvester ants around home

September 21 – Wyandotte County – Drugstore beetles in commercial building

September 24 – Sedgwick County – Flatheaded apple tree borer and sap beetle in hackberry trees

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September 24 – Pratt County – Straight-faced solfugid or windscorpion in commercial building

September 26 – Phillips County – *Hogna* sp. wolf spider in home

September 27 – Riley County – Soft bat tick, *Carios kelleyi*, in commercial building

September 27 – Phillips County – Bat bug in home

September 27 – Decatur County – Winged carpenter ants in lawn

September 27 – Rice County – Winged legionary ants in home

September 27 – Riley County – Ichneumonid wasp, *Ophion* sp. around home

September 27 – Riley County – Black bean aphid, *Aphis fabae*, in greenhouse

If there are any questions regarding these samples or about the identification of any arthropod please contact the Insect Diagnostician at (785) 532-4739 or GotBugs@ksu.edu.

Holly Davis

Sincerely,

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