



Mimosa Webworm

Mimosa webworms attack both mimosa and locust trees in Ohio. Widespread use of thornless honeylocusts as ornamentals has heightened interest in the control of this insect, because all varieties of the tree are susceptible to attack. Damage is done by webworm caterpillars, which web foliage together and skeletonize leaflets. The insect has two generations each year. However, injury is most noticeable by August when second generation larvae are at the peak of activity. Continued feeding may cause infested trees to turn brown as if scorched by fire.

DESCRIPTION AND LIFE HISTORY

Adult mimosa webworms are small, silvery-gray moths which have wings stippled with black dots. Moths of the first generation appear in early July, while those of the second generation are seen in August. Adults lay eggs on foliage and in old webbing. Eggs are tiny, oval and at first pearly-white, but turn pink as hatching time nears. Full-grown caterpillars are about 1 inch long and grayish-brown in color with five lime green stripes running lengthwise down the body. They have a dark head, and the body is sometimes tinged with pink.

First generation caterpillars spin their cocoons between the folded leaves that they have webbed together. Second generation caterpillars leave the tree canopy to find a site where they can spend the winter in cocoons protected from cold temperatures. Feeding continues throughout July, pupation occurs, and new moths appear in August. The pupae of this second generation over-winters on the host plant. In urban areas, this is often on tree trunks near buildings and paved areas or on the buildings themselves. The white cocoons resemble puffed rice and are often found in groups.

Injury consists of tying foliage together with silk and then skeletonizing the foliage giving it a bronzed appearance. Injury can range from mildly aesthetic to defoliation. In late summer, larvae seeking protective over-wintering sites may temporarily become a nuisance by climbing on houses or other structures.



Leaflets of honeylocust that have been tied together and skeletonized by the mimosa webworm.



Injured leaves from feeding of Mimosa Webworm on Locust

CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS

In the absence of pesticide use, mimosa webworm problems occur in sheltered urban areas or along roadsides. The many birds and insects that feed on the caterpillars are likely to prevent the injury from harming tree health. To prevent unsightly amounts of webbing, trees can be sprayed with insecticides that target young caterpillars in mid-late July and in late August.

