

The Mimosa Webworm in Missouri

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The mimosa webworm is a relatively new insect pest in Missouri. It attacks the leaves of both mimosa and honey locust trees.

Two factors have brought about the increased importance of this pest—the extensive loss of American elm trees, due to Dutch elm disease and phloem necrosis, and the increased use of the honey locust and its varieties as a replacement for the American elm in landscape plantings. Coupled with this has been the increased use of mimosa in landscape work.

There are two generations of the pest in Missouri. However, these generations overlap to the extent that some larvae are usually present on infested trees from June until September. The larvae of the second generation are often so numerous during late August that they cause extensive damage to infested plants.

Life History

Mimosa webworms pass the winter as pupae within tough, white silken cocoons. The cocoons may be in crevices in the bark of the infested trees or any tree nearby, in cracks in the weatherboarding of a house, under trash on the ground, in old larval webbing on the trees, or in any other protected place near the host plant.

The small steel-gray moths, with small black dots on the forewings, emerge in late May or early June. They have a wing span of from 3/8 to 7/16 inch and a body length of about 3/16 inch. The moths live for several weeks and lay their eggs on the leaves of the host plant. These eggs are oval, white and very small. Just before hatching they change in color from white to rose.

The small, dark greenish-brown larvae hatch from the eggs and start to feed on the leaflets. They web the leaflets together and feed within this protected area. Some of these larvae reach maturity by mid July. Others mature by early August. At maturity the larvae are slender, about one inch in length and grayish-brown in color, and have five light-colored stripes, one on the back and two on either side, running the length of the body. They spin additional silk in the webbed leaves or move to a protected area, spin their cocoons and change to pupae. The second generation moths emerge in

late July or mid-August and deposit their eggs. The larvae from this generation are often so numerous that they skeletonize all the leaves on the host trees and leave the ugly webbing over most of the limbs. The larvae mature and change to pupae for overwintering.

Control

Do not make extensive plantings of honey locusts or mimosa trees unless you make plans for chemical control. The sunburst variety of the thornless honey locust is very attractive to this pest and is often completely defoliated.

Chemicals for control of the webworm are listed in the following table:

Insecticide	Formulation	Dosage per Gallon	Dosage per 100 Gallons
Acephate (orthene)	16% emulsifiable concentrate	1 teaspoon	3 pts.
Carbaryl (Sevin)	50% wettable powder	2 teaspoons	2 lbs.
	80% wettable powder	2 teaspoons	1¼ lbs.
Diazinon	50% wettable powder	2 teaspoons	1 lb.
	4 lbs/gallon emulsifiable concentrate	1 teaspoon	1 pt.
Trichlorfon (Dylox)	80% soluble powder	1½ table-spoons	1½ lbs.

NOTE: Apply sprays in early June and early August. The web must be penetrated with the spray for good control.

Caution

Handle insecticides with care. Follow directions on the insecticide label. Keep insecticides off the skin and out of eyes, nose and mouth. Wash immediately with soap and water if concentrates are accidentally spilled on the skin. Store unused insecticides in a dry area, out of the reach of children and pets.



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