**Fall Webworm**

_Hyphantria cunea_ (Drury); Family: Arctiidae

*Fall webworm larvae (caterpillars).*
*Photo from www.forestryimages.org*

*Lacy L. Hyche, Auburn University.*

*Webworm web on a pecan tree.*
*Photo from www.forestryimages.org*

_G. Keith Douce, University of Georgia.*

**Injury**

The larvae of the fall webworm feed on more than 100 species of fruit, shade, and forest trees. They are especially noticeable during late summer and early fall. The larvae spin conspicuous webs enclosing entire branches or groups of branches. The webs are more numerous in open locations, such as along roadsides. Larvae feed inside the webs, stripping the leaves with just the mid-vein remaining.

Damage is usually not severe, as fall webworms are seldom numerous enough to cause total defoliation. When they are present in large numbers the damage is still not serious, because these insects are late season feeders and by the time the leaves are consumed the leaves have already performed most of their function to the plant. The webbing, which may persist after leaf drop, however, is unsightly.

**Description**

The larvae are quite hairy, and range in color from light buff green to near black. Both color forms may be present in a local area. The adults are one of our common tiger moths, white, sometimes with dark spots on the wings.

**Life History**

There may be two broods of the fall webworm each year in some areas of New York State. The first brood occurs in May but is small and often goes unnoticed. The main brood occurs during July and August, and is larger than the first.
Eggs are laid in hair-covered masses on the undersides of leaves from May to August. The eggs hatch and the tiny larvae start building a web, enclosing a few leaves. As they grow, they expand the web, covering more foliage and thus encompassing more food. The larvae leave the web in the last instar, crawl down the tree trunk or spin down, and pupate in a thin cocoon spun in the debris at or just below the soil surface.

Management
Occasionally, an outbreak occurs on ornamental shade trees where the webs detract greatly from aesthetic value of the tree. Fall webworms are usually held in check by several different predators and parasites. Natural controls are usually behind the main surge of an insect population, but they catch up quickly and keep the insects in check.

If spraying is necessary, make sure the kind of tree to be used on, and this kind of insect, are listed on the insecticide label. One or two applications should control a population. The first application should be made in mid-July; and a second, 7 days later.