Azalea Lacebugs and Bagworms on Landscape Plants
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Check for evidence of Azalea lacebugs and for the presence of bagworms on your landscape plants. Azalea lacebug makes azalea leaves turn white. Bagworms may be found on needled evergreen shrubs and trees.

Azalea lacebugs are about one-eighth inch long with light brown bodies. The lacy, clear wings of the adults have dark brown to black markings. The nymphs are black and spiny. They prefer evergreen azalea varieties but attack deciduous varieties and mountain laurel also. Sap removal by the sucking, piercing mouth parts of the adults and nymphs causes a spotting visible on the upper leaves. In heavy infestations, leaves may be white and drop prematurely. Spots of their tarry excrement build up on the under sides of the leaves.

Populations are greatest in mid to late summer as the second generation appears. Adults fly readily and are often gone before symptoms appear. Their injury is light to moderate and widely distributed. In contrast, the immature or nymphal stages are wingless and can move only by walking. Injury builds slowly but can become very intense as the insects near maturity.

Check for infestations so that a treatment can be applied before the plants are disfigured by the pest. Insecticides such as insecticidal soap, summer horticultural oils, or Malathion may be used depending on the plant species or cultivar. Always read product labels carefully. Look for information on phytotoxicity that can occur on sensitive plants or under some environmental
conditions such as high temperature. Repeated treatments may be needed to control these pests effectively. Thorough treatment of the undersides of the leaves is needed for best results.

Bagworms are a major pest of evergreen trees and shrubs such as juniper, arborvitae, cedar, pine, and spruce. Numerous bagworms feeding on these plants can strip the foliage and cause them to die. The key is to continue to check your landscape plants for the bagworms before they have a chance to defoliate it.

Bagworms overwinter as eggs inside the brown bag that contained the female adult. In late May or early June, the eggs hatch. Small, blackish larvae crawl from the bottom of the bag. Larvae cover themselves with pieces of leaves and bark from the plant as protection over their hind part while they feed. You don’t notice them until small pieces of branch begin to wiggle. They add on to the bag as they grow making it large enough to allow them to withdraw into it when disturbed. Bags reach 1.5 to 2 inches long by early September.

Adult males emerge in September. The creamy white, wingless adult females attract the males by releasing a sex attractant pheromone. When the male finds a female, he mates with her through the bottom of the bag.

The fertilized female lays 500 to 1000 eggs, which fills the bag, forcing her to drop from the bag and soon die. The eggs remain in the bag until they hatch the following May. Bagworms have a single generation per year.

Hand removal of bags during the fall through the spring may be sufficient to minimize the problem if small numbers are present. Cut the top of the bag off near the branch where it is hanging to avoid removing the needles from the branch in that area.
When numerous small bagworms are attacking evergreens, insecticides are needed to prevent serious damage to the plant. The best time to apply an insecticide is before the bags are a half-inch long. This usually is in late June or early July. If the bag is larger than a half-inch, control with an insecticide is very poor.

Products containing the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt)* target young larvae only and is not toxic to birds and beneficial insects. The Bt bacteria produces a protein toxin which disrupts the stomach lining of the larvae. The insect may not die for several days, but the feeding stops shortly after eating the toxin. Dipel and Thuricide are two products containing Bt, but there are others.

Insecticides containing pyrethroids as the active ingredient can be used for managing bagworms too.

Follow label directions when using insecticides and be sure they are registered for use on the plant or crop you intend to spray. If applying an insecticide to a food crop, note the minimum number of days that must be observed between the date of the last application and the date of harvest.

For more information about azalea lacebugs and bagworms, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480.

**Question and answer:**

What can I do to control aphids on plants? Aphids are small insects which suck out nutrients from plants. Their soft bodies can be green or rose-red. Ladybugs and other beneficial insects will help control small numbers of aphids. Insecticidal soap also controls the aphids as
long as the stream of spray contacts the insects. Other insecticides are available, but read the label to make sure the product controls aphids and are labeled to use on the affected plant.

**Ongoing event:**

Owensboro Regional Farmers’ Market is open from 6:30 a.m. to noon or sell out on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at the corner of Triplett Str. and Parrish Ave. at 1205 Triplett Street and on Wednesdays in the parking lot of the Owensboro Health Regional Hospital, 1201 Pleasant Valley Road from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. Cabbage, tomatoes, summer squash, potatoes, herb plants, baked goods, blueberries, blackberries, meats, handmade items, and more are available at the market. Enjoy fresh, locally grown produce.

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