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**Fall Webworms** – By now I am sure that all of you have seen those unsightly masses of webbing in all sorts of trees in your landscape or just out in the woods. These webs are caused by a caterpillar, fall webworm. These are unlike tent caterpillars which make a web in the crotch of a tree and venture out to feed. Fall webworms continually increase the webbing enclosing the ends of several branches and feeding within the webbing.

For the most part the damage caused by these caterpillars is minimal. This late in the year the leaves of most trees are getting ready to fall and have done just about all they are going to do to benefit the tree. Even extensive defoliation will not cause significant problems, and an infestation this year does not necessarily mean that you will have a worse problem next year.

Every year we get calls about these pests and it never fails that some people want to burn them out. I know that setting fire to something is a lot more exciting than using a pesticide, but you will probably cause more damage by doing this, especially with conditions as dry as they have been the past few weeks.

There are several products that you can use to control these pests and here are just a few. *Bacillus thuringiensis* is an environmentally friendly pesticide that will kill these caterpillars with little or no risk to birds, bees, or other non-target organisms. It is sold under several names such as Dipel, or Thuricide. Most other chemical insecticides will provide control; products containing pyrethroid active ingredients (e.g. permethrin, cyhalothrin or cyfluthrin) are also effective against caterpillar pests. The key to controlling caterpillars is to apply the insecticide when the insects are small. Trying to control large caterpillars usually results in little or no kill. Also check to make sure that there are actually caterpillars in the webbing. Spraying an empty web is going to do nothing except waste your time and money.