

## Controlling Bagworms on Leyland Cypress

Leyland cypress has become one of our most popular trees. They are fast growing and make excellent screens or specimen trees in the landscape. They were used almost exclusively for replacing red tip photinias which were plagued by fungal leaf spots.

For the past several years, Leyland cypress themselves have fought to survive bagworms. Most of you who have called in with bagworm damage have done so in late summer or early fall which is a time when we begin to notice the ornament-like bags hanging from the leaves. This is also the time when it is most difficult to control with insecticides. Thus, hand-picking is the best advice experts give us.

There is, however, a time in the life cycle of a bagworm that they are most vulnerable. The eggs that have spent the winter months in the protection of the bags usually begin to hatch in mid-to late May. If you have had a problem in recent years, you may not want to scout to find these young crawlers. Go ahead and spray: *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) is very effective in controlling bagworms. Spray now and again in about two weeks. Other conventional insecticides such as malathion, permethrin, or cyfluthrin can also be used, especially in the case of heavy infestations. The younger the larvae the better result you can get from the Bt products.

Just remember that timing is important. As the larvae feed and begin to grow, they begin to form the bags using silk like thread and bits of plant material which they carry around with them while they feed. If you see them at this stage, they will resemble tiny ice cream cones. Bagworms are considered the chameleons of the landscape. They blend in so well that they are seldom seen until damage is already significant.