



The University of Georgia
Cooperative Extension Service
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Azalea Caterpillar

Introduction: Azalea caterpillars, (*Datana major*), feed almost exclusively on azaleas. They usually feed in groups and emerge mostly in August or September. These caterpillars raise their head and posterior in unison when disturbed. They can defoliate plants if left untreated.



Description: The immature caterpillar is approximately ½ inch long and reddish to brownish-black with white and yellow stripes. The mature caterpillar is about 2 inches long, black, and has 8 yellow to white longitudinal broken stripes. The head and legs are crimson or reddish in color.

Life Cycle: Little is known about this insect but there seems to be only one generation per year. Eggs are deposited by the insect in masses of 80-100 on the underside of the leaf. The first-instar caterpillars feed in a cluster side by side unless disturbed. The adult form is a light brown moth with a wingspan of approximately two inches.

Control: *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Biotrol WP, Thuricide, Sok-Bt), may be used when the larvae are small. Sevin 50WP, Malathion, and various Pyrethroids are recommended for control. Follow label recommendations for chemicals. If the numbers are small enough they can be removed by hand. Larger caterpillars must be sprayed directly to control because of decreased eating when nearing pupae stage.

Produced 1999 and Revised 2007 by: Jake Price, University of Georgia Extension Agent, Lowndes County.