

What's At Home In Your Backyard?

Bagworms

become active this time of the year. You may have noticed 'cones' about two inches long hanging on junipers, arborvitae or other trees and shrubs in your backyard. Bagworms are caterpillars that live inside spindle-shaped bags which they construct to protect themselves against birds and other enemies.



The 'cone' or bag contains the wingless female who has formed this bag by tying bits of foliage together with silken threads. She will lay her eggs in this bag. The eggs will remain dormant over the winter. Early in June, the insects will hatch into worms that look like 1/8 inch long bags.

These worms will promptly get to work defoliating the tree or shrub. There is only one generation each year.

The easiest way to control bagworms is to pick the bags off the infected tree or shrub in the fall or early winter. The bags can then be destroyed by burning or by drowning in a bucket of soapy water. At this life stage they are relatively easy to see and handle.

The other option is to treat with pesticides right after the young worms have hatched in early June. The trees or shrubs must be chemically sprayed until completely soaked. The preferred insecticide is *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

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FALL 2010 CALENDAR

Clark County SWCD Calendar

- * Monthly Board Meeting, October 7
- * Election Day, November 2, SWCD office closed
- * Monthly Board Meeting, November 4
- * Thanksgiving Holiday, November 25 & 26, SWCD office closed

Did you know?

If every American home replaced its five most-used incandescent light bulbs with Energy Star rated compact fluorescent bulbs (CFL), we would save enough energy every year to light more than 3 million homes, save more than \$600 million in energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars!



(US Dept of Energy statistics)

Leaves, leaves and more leaves



Fall is a gorgeous time with all the trees turning fabulous shades of red, orange and yellow. For many people, the down side of all this beauty is the eventual falling of all those leaves, causing what they feel is an enormous mess to collect and dispose. But wait! Is it really a

mess or a free resource that can be effectively utilized?

Brown tree leaves contain nutrients that can enrich your soil as well as acids which can improve the pH of the generally alkaline soils of central Indiana. All it takes is a little effort on your part to convert large leaves from a potentially smothering mat to a shredded, usable additive.

The easiest way to use your leaves is to shred them right into your grass. All you need to do is run your lawn mower (a mulching mower works best) over the yard fairly frequently during the weeks the leaves are drifting down. The leaves which are 'mowed' into pieces too small to rake up, settle down between the grass blades, disintegrate over the winter and feed the grass roots. Studies at Purdue University have proven that this technique is very beneficial to the grass. For many people, this form of mulching can be accomplished with normal fall lawn mowing procedures. However, those with lots of leaves or exceptionally large leaves may need to make some extra passes over the yard to properly shred the leaves.

A second way to use your leaves is as shredded mulch for your flowerbeds. You simply rake the leaves into a pile, run the lawn mower back and



forth over the pile a few times, and rake the leaves into the flower bed. To determine how many passes with the lawn mower, watch for a final product that is no more than 2 inches square. Use leaf mulch the same way you would use any other type of organic mulch. Spread it 1-4 inches thick (no thicker) and keep it out of the crowns of perennials and a few inches back from the base of trees and shrubs. The leaf mulch, like any other organic mulch, will slowly disintegrate and add nutrients to the soil.



A final way to use your leaves is to compost them. Leaves can be added directly to the compost pile, provided you don't put on a deep layer of nothing but leaves which could form a solid, impenetrable mat. The leaves need to be

mixed with other compost materials, preferably green ones like weeds or grass. This mixing can be accomplished by adding the different materials in alternately narrow layers or by physically turning or stirring the compost heap. If the leaves are especially large or numerous, you may wish to shred them before placing them on the compost pile to speed up the composting process.

All of these methods for handling leaves will enrich the soil by utilizing a great and free nutrient source. In the process, you'll be saving yourself from some of the extra work associated with fall leaf clean-up. There's the added benefit of not having to purchase, load and dispose of leaf bags.

Article written by Kathryn Mascaro and first published in the Fall 2002 Backyard Tree Farm newsletter.



Monarch Migration



In all the world, no butterflies migrate like the Monarchs of North America. They travel much farther than all other tropical butterflies, up to three thousand miles. They are the only butterflies to make such a long, two way migration every year. Amazingly, they fly

in masses to the same winter roosts, often to the exact same trees. Individuals only make the round-trip once. It is their children's grandchildren that return south the following fall.

When the late summer and early fall Monarchs emerge from their pupae, they are biologically and behaviorally different from those emerging in the summer. The shorter days and cooler air of late summer trigger changes. Even though these butterflies look like summer adults, they won't mate or lay eggs until the following spring. Instead, their small bodies prepare for a strenuous flight. Otherwise solitary animals, they often cluster at night while moving southward. If they linger too long, they won't be able to make the journey; because they are cold-blooded, they are unable to fly in cold weather.

Fat, stored in the abdomen, is a critical element of their survival for the winter. This fat not only fuels their flight of, but must last until the next spring when they begin the flight back north. **The peak migration time for southern Indiana is September 19th thru October 1st.** As they migrate southward, Monarchs stop to nectar, and they actually gain weight during the trip! Some researchers think that Monarchs conserve their "fuel" in flight by gliding on southern air currents. There are many unanswered questions about how these small organisms are able to travel so far.

Another unsolved mystery is how Monarchs find the overwintering sites each year. Somehow they know their way, even though the butterflies returning to Mexico each fall are the great-great-grandchildren of the butterflies that left the previous spring. No one knows exactly how their homing system works; it is another of the many unanswered questions in the butterfly world. For more information check out www.monarchwatch.org.



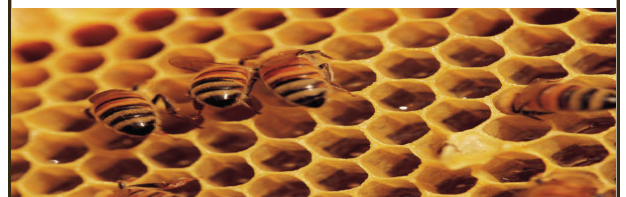
Attracting Bees

In the United States, there are nearly 5,000 different species of native bees. Most of them are solitary, friendly bees that nest in holes in the ground or burrows in twigs and dead tree limbs. These bees do not have hives to protect them, so they are not aggressive and rarely sting. Bumblebees, carpenter bees, sweat bees, leafcutter bees, digger bees, and others pollinate many different kinds of plants. They play a critical role in healthy wild plant communities and gardens. About 30 percent of our diet is the direct result of a pollinating visit by a bee to a flowering fruit tree or vegetable plant. Providing bee habitat in your yard can increase the quality and quantity of your fruits and vegetables.

Bees are extremely sensitive to many commonly applied insecticides. If you must use chemical insecticides in your garden, apply them in the evening when bees are less likely to be active.

Bees are attracted to most flowering plants, and are especially fond of blue and yellow flowers. Try planting your garden to have different species blooming in the spring, summer, and fall.

A good use for untreated scrap lumber (at least 3 to 5 inches thick) is to drill holes (from 1/8 inch to 5/16 inch in diameter) about 90 percent of the way into the thick wooden block. Space the holes about 1/2 inch to 3/4 inch apart. The 5/16 inch holes work best as homes for orchard bees, which are excellent pollinators of fruit trees. Hang your bee blocks under the eaves of your house or garden shed, protected from direct sun and rain.





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www.clarkswcd.org

*Nature And Your
Yard*

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This newsletter
brought to you by the
Clark County SWCD
and
Plant A Tree For
You And Me












For You And Me

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is a joint project of the Clark,
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Fun 'Indiana' Facts

-  There are an average of 400 funnel clouds sighted each year in Indiana.
-  The courthouse roof in Greensburg has a tree growing from it.
-  Purdue Alumnus, Earl Butz served as the Secretary of Agriculture.
-  Johnny Appleseed is buried at Fort Wayne.
-  There are 154 acres of sculpture gardens and trails at the Indianapolis Museum of Art.
-  Crawfordsville, Indiana in Montgomery County is the only site in the world where crinoids are found. (What is a crinoid? A form of deep-water marine
-  Ninety-percent - 90% of the world's popcorn is grown in Indiana.
-  The birthplace of the automobile, the pneumatic rubber tire, the aluminum casting process, stainless steel and the first push-button car radio was in Kokomo.
-  The world's largest orchid species collection is found at Ball State University

... And you thought there was only corn in Indiana.