

# Prepare your summer gardening checklist

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson



June 27, 2012

Webworms produce a spider-like maze of webs that envelope leaves near the tips of branches. Webworms feed voraciously as a family group on the foliage contained within the spider-like web.



When does spring arrive here in Galveston County? That depends on whom you ask and how they gauge the arrival of spring. As I prepare this column, daytime temperatures have broken the century mark this week and Tropical Storm Debby is bringing rainfall to some regions of the Gulf Coast.

July is almost here and that means heat and humidity are settling in as the summer season gets underway. Most of us put our gardens into a holding pattern in July.

We just try to keep the bugs and weeds at bay and to keep everything watered. If you are not quite sure what you should do to keep your garden aloft, here's your checklist and flight pattern for July.

Weed Control Seminar

Discussion topics will include the most common weed problems in local landscapes and gardens, chemical and cultural management options and understanding how weeds gain a foothold in the home landscape.

Check New Landscape Transplants

Rainfall has been more generous thus far this year when compared to this time last year. Make periodic inspections on recently planted landscape trees and shrubs for soil moisture level. Their root systems will not become well-established for some time. During extended periods of dry weather conditions, be sure to water new transplants regularly to avoid stressing plants.

Taller Lawns

Check the cutting height of your lawn mower. During hot, dry weather conditions, consider raising the lawn mower blade to a higher setting. The higher the cutting height, the less lawn grass is stressed resulting in a healthier lawn.

Low Spots In The Lawn

Low areas in the lawn may be gradually filled with shallow applications of good top soil where needed. However, avoid temptation to apply a layer of sand over the entire lawn area just because your neighbor does. This is an excellent way to introduce new weeds, smother your grass and encourage unwanted insects and disease problems.

Webworms, Bagworms

Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

*News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.*

Do you have a bumper crop of something growing in landscape beds this spring that you did not plant? Is your



“Do I have webworms or bagworms on my trees and shrubs?” This has been a frequently asked question over the last few weeks. Webworms are the ones that make the spider-like maze of webs around leaves near the tips of branches, and bagworms are the ones that live inside brown bags that they drag along with them for protection.

Both insect pests can be controlled with biological sprays these days. Dipel, Bio-worm Killer or other organic spray products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* is the stuff to use. The caterpillars eat it, become sick almost immediately, stop feeding and then die within a few days.

Bagworms can be somewhat difficult to control, especially as caterpillars become larger. Other insecticides currently labeled for bagworm and webworm control include acephate, carbaryl, cyfluthrin, malathion and permethrin.

#### Bark Lice On Trees

July is the month when many homeowners start reporting the appearance of strange webbing on the trunk and limbs of trees. Several concerned homeowners have already sent e-mails to me with digital photos of bark lice on tree trunks. The webs are produced by colonies of very small insects known as bark lice. The webs may give trunks and limbs the appearance of being “dressed” in a white stocking. Fortunately, bark lice (which really aren’t lice) don’t cause any harm to trees. In fact, they are very beneficial in that they eat lichens and fungi growing on the bark. No control is needed.

#### Chinch Bugs In Lawn

Check out areas of the lawn near sidewalks, driveways and other “hot spots” in the lawn for signs of premature wilting and eventual yellowing. If affected areas turn brown and die, it is probably the result of chinch bugs feeding. If your lawn had chinch bug damage last year, be sure to keep a lookout for these

early signs of wilting. Since chinch bug damage could easily resemble drought-stress, you will have to do some detective work. The insects aren’t that hard to find when their population level is on the increase. Pull the grass back in those areas where the grass is starting to wilt prematurely and look for small, black-bodied (and possibly white-winged) insects that look like little gnats scurrying around and you’ve probably found chinch bugs. Insecticides containing permethrin or cyfluthrin in a granular formulation provide effective control.

#### Crape Myrtles

Crape myrtles are putting on a spectacular flower display this year. The flowering period of crape myrtles can be extended by pruning flower heads as soon as possible after they finish flowering.

