



WALNUT NOTES

Walnut Caterpillars and Other Defoliators

Leaf defoliators eat the leaves of trees and other plants, sometimes the leaves of entire trees. Defoliating insects usually do not kill trees by their feeding, but trees may lose their vigor and grow more slowly when attacked by many insects or when defoliated several years in a row. Several types of leaf defoliators strike black walnut.

Walnut caterpillar

The most common one is the walnut caterpillar, which occurs throughout the eastern United States. Walnut caterpillars are often found in masses on the trunk or feeding on the leaves (fig. 1). One colony can quickly defoliate an entire young tree. A very young caterpillar is red and covered with grayish white hairs. A full-grown caterpillar is as long as 2 inches and has a black body with yellow stripes along each side. The entire body is covered with long white hairs.

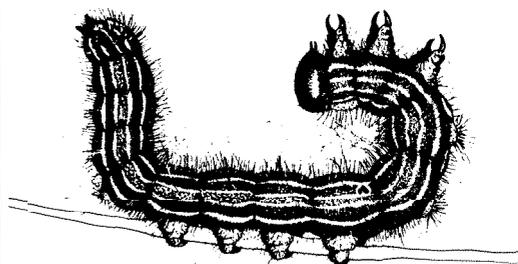


Figure 1.—Walnut caterpillar.

Fall Webworm

The fall webworm is another common and conspicuous defoliator of walnut and other trees throughout the eastern United States. It is easily recognized by its web, which encloses one or more branches of a tree and sometimes an entire small tree (fig. 2). Webs begin appearing on the outer tips of branches about mid-July. As the summer progresses, the webs enlarge and become more noticeable. The larvae live inside the web, sometimes as many as several hundred to a colony. A full-grown larva is usually pale yellow or green with a broad dark stripe down the entire back and a yellow stripe down each side. The body is covered with 1-inch-long gray or red hairs.

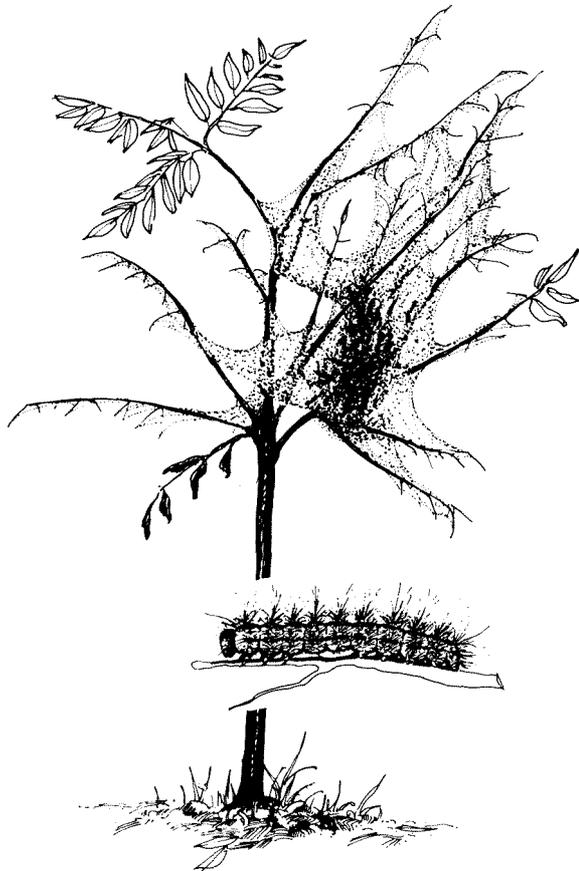
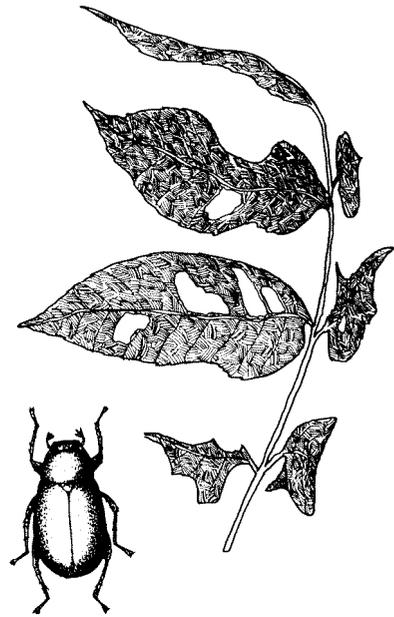


Figure 2.-Fall webworm.

Grasshoppers and May Beetles

Other insects besides caterpillars also feed on and defoliate walnut trees. Two of these include grasshoppers and May beetles. Grasshoppers may become a problem in young walnut plantations next to open fields that are mowed or cut periodically to produce hay. The grasshoppers may move to the walnut trees after the field crop has been cut. May beetles, also known as June bugs, feed on newly expanding buds and leaflets (fig. 3). The beetles also chew holes in already expanded leaves, causing a shot-hole effect in young leaves in early spring.

Figure 3.-May beetle.



Control

The simplest control method is to remove webbing and caterpillars by hand when you first notice them. This is less expensive and less environmentally damaging than chemical control methods, particularly when only a few trees are affected. Repeated defoliation over several years, however, may require chemical control. Usually no control is necessary for May beetles. Consult your local extension agent for other recommended controls.

Reference

Farris, Marion; Appleby, James E. 1978. How to identify and control the walnut caterpillar. St. Paul, MN: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, North Central Forest Experiment Station. 4 p.

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