



Ornamentals

Cankerworm

Pest Fact Sheet **55**

Introduction

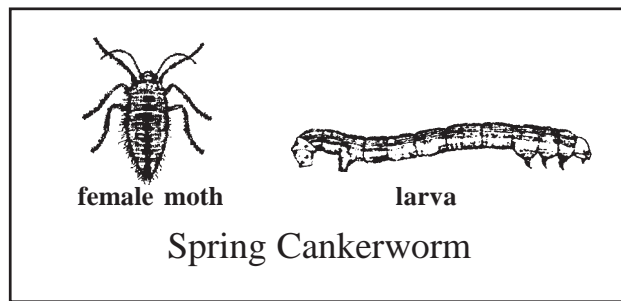
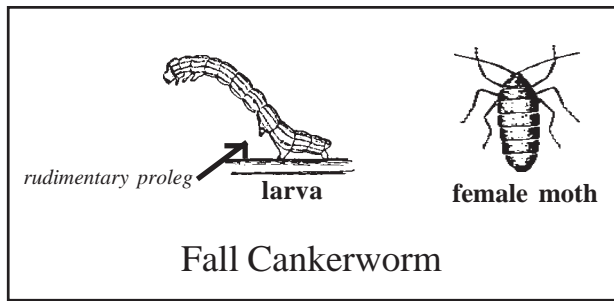
The spring cankerworm, (*Paleacrita vernata*, Peck) and the fall cankerworm, *Alsophila pometaria* Harris are native pests to the deciduous forest, shade and ornamental trees of North America. Periodic outbreaks of these pests cause serious defoliation. The habits of these two pests are nearly identical, being named SPRING and FALL cankerworms because of the season during which each lays its eggs. The larvae of each species are known variously as *loopers*, *geometers*, *inchworms* or *spanworms*.

Descriptions & Life History

Life Stages	Fall Cankerworm
Egg	Brownish-gray, flowerpot shaped, laid in compact masses of 50 or more in exposed sites. Eggs laid chiefly in the fall.
Larva	0.75" long, light green to brown or black with pale, whitish lines down the back. Rudimentary prolegs present of 5th abdominal segment.
Pupa	Enclosed in a tough cocoon, particles of earth woven in with the silk.
Adult Female	Abdomen without spines. Emerge in November - December.

Adult: Cankerworm moths are brownish gray colored, the female is wingless, while the male bears wings. Because the females are wingless, they are forced to crawl upward into trees to deposit their eggs either in patches or compact masses (fall cankerworm) or loose clusters in (spring cankerworm). Eggs begin to hatch toward the end of May. There is only one generation per year.

Larva: The larva or caterpillar of both species occur together and have similar eating habits. They destroy the young leaves and buds of numerous species of deciduous trees, but prefer elm and apple. Trees may become totally defoliated, which may result in the death of the tree. Death is most likely if the tree has been defoliated more than once or is of low vigor. Toward the end of their feeding period (latter part of May, early June), the affected trees begin to take on a lacy appearance. Cankerworm larvae feed for about 3 to 4 weeks and then crawl down the trunk or drop by silk threads to the ground



where they enter the soil to a depth of one to four inches. In the soil they transform into the pupal stage. This stage remains in the soil until the fall. Fall cankerworm moths begin to emerge from the soil soon after the first frost. The spring cankerworm remains in the pupal stage during the winter and emerge as moths a few days after the snows have melted in the spring.

Control

Banding: Both species of cankerworm female must climb up the tree trunks to lay their eggs. They will crawl all the way up to the crown and lay eggs on small branches. Barriers similar to those used on trees for the gypsy moth can be made by placing a sticky band 5 to 6 inches wide around the trunk of the tree. If the bark is heavily fissured or has deep grooves through which the females can crawl, inexpensive cotton batting can be placed under the band. The sticky material should be placed on the band and *not* on the bark. Many of these sticky materials can cause girdling if placed on the bark.

Consult your county Extension Educator (see county office telephone listing below) for specific pesticide recommendations.

UNH Cooperative Extension County Office Telephone Numbers

Belknap (603) 527-5475	Carroll (603) 539-3331	Cheshire (603) 352-4550	Coos (603) 788-4961	Grafton (603) 787-6944
Hillsborough Goffstown (603) 641-6060	Merrimack (603) 796-2151	Rockingham Brentwood, NH 03833 (603) 679-5616	Strafford (603) 749-4445	Sullivan (603) 863-9200

Stop! It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. If unsure of registration status of a particular pesticide product, contact the NH Division of Pesticide Control at (603) 271-3550. Store pesticides in their original containers in a locked cabinet or shed away from food. Dispose of unused pesticides or empty containers safely, according to NH regulations. If you suspect pesticide poisoning, call the New Hampshire Poison Control Center at 1-800-562-8236.


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Revised 2/03