

A HEALTHY TREE is a HAPPY TREE

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Orange Striped Oakworm

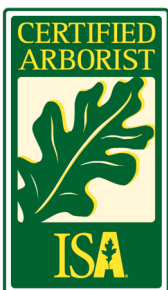
Description: The orange striped oakworm is sometimes very abundant on oaks in late August and September. In NC, willow oak and pin oak tend to be their preferred hosts. They occasionally feed on other hardwoods as well. The moths emerge in June and July and deposit their eggs in clusters of several hundred on the underside of oak leaves. The eggs hatch in about a week or so. The tiny, green-colored caterpillars begin to feed together consuming leaves except for the midrib. Gradually small greenish caterpillars grow into larger black caterpillars with yellow or orange stripes running lengthwise along their bodies. These caterpillars have a prominent pair of spines or slender horns sticking up behind the head.



Symptoms: Caterpillars defoliate sections of various oak species and sometimes completely defoliate smaller trees. Because the oak worm ingests such tremendous amounts of feed, one of the ways it is discovered is the thickly scattered waste pellets that fall from tree foliage.

Control: Control is complicated by the size of many of the infested trees. Fortunately, late summer defoliations are much less damaging to the health of trees than early spring defoliations. In most cases it is probably better to rely on birds, diseases and parasites to lower the population next year. If treatment is deemed desirable, timing treatment to the young larvae is most effective. To determine when young larvae are present, watch for defoliated tips of branches beginning in mid-August. Fecal pellets on sidewalks or car hoods are often an early clue. Detecting caterpillars before they are large enough to notice in the trees allows application of insecticide before the caterpillars do much damage.

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