

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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Have you noticed green or brown clusters hanging from your ash trees? If you have, you are not alone. A sample of these clusters was brought into the office this past week. These clusters are caused by a tiny mite and the condition is called ash staminate flower gall.

Tivon Feeley, Extension Forester with Iowa State University explains: "Galls are abnormal growths or swellings of plant tissue that is damaged. Galls can be caused by insects, mites, bacteria, fungi, nematodes and mechanical damage. They are commonly found on leaves, twigs, branches and occasionally the main trunk of a tree. However, in this case the damage is done to the flower of the ash tree. The mites are feeding on the tiny male flowers".

"The mites are too small to be seen without the aid of a hand lens, but the damage they caused has been very noticeable this year particularly on white ash. The mites spend the winter under the flower buds and begin feeding and laying eggs in the developing flowers in spring. The ash tree, in response to the mites feeding, grows new malformed plant tissue (gall) around the mite. The galls in turn provide some protection for the mite against weather, predators and parasites".

"The ash staminate flower galls remain on the tree for up to two years. The galls are green at first, and later become brown to black within the growing season. Research has shown that this particular gall does not harm the tree's health or growth rate. The galls are usually an aesthetic problem and chemical control is not necessary and rarely works".

Another insect concern that was brought into the office this week was from a flowering crabapple tree and it had webbing encircling branches. Inside the webbing were inch long, hairy, yellow caterpillars. The webbing was created by the fall webworm.

According to Donald R. Lewis, Iowa State University Extension Entomologist, "the fall webworm is easily noticed on walnut and other hardwood trees. Clusters of fall webworm caterpillars construct loose, gray, silken webs on the ends of the branches".

"Fall webworm tents start small, but the inch-long, hairy, yellow caterpillars enlarge the web every few days as they grow and consume the leaves within the tent. By the end of the summer webs may be 2 to 3 feet long and enclose the entire end of a branch".

"Damage caused by the fall webworm is not significant to well-established, otherwise healthy trees. Damage is more unsightly than serious because of the limited amount of foliage consumed and the time of the year. Only the leaves inside the webs are eaten".

“Control is not essential. Applications of insecticide are of little or no benefit. The only practical control is to cut off webs when they are first noticed. Prune and discard the webs you can reach and ignore the rest”.

For more information about ash staminate flower gall or fall web webworms, call the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.