

# The Garden Corner

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Didn't it seem like we had more web worms than we had last year? We're not talking about tent caterpillars that build their nests in the crotch of trees; but, the critters that weave the unsightly, tangled mess on the tips of branches. Most of us find enjoyment in appreciating the wonderful foliage displayed in our plants and trees and these creepy crawlies greatly detract from the peace and harmony we seek provided by nature. If you feel the way I do about these leaf criminals, this month's article is for you.

First we need to answer a question: Where do these beggars come from? The late summer to early fall webs we encountered this year had their beginnings before the killing frost last season. Egg casings were left under the bark and in the leaf litter surrounding the tree. If, during your fall clean up, you left the surrounding leaves; you inadvertently supplied this year's crop.

Now that we know where they come from, how do we keep them from coming back? Before providing any type of control suggestions, I've got to share one gardening tip provided by a horticulturalist from the University of Iowa that you may find entertaining. He instructed his readers to grab a blow torch and burn the trespassers out! He also added the caution: Be careful not to set your tree on fire. Really? Please don't do this!

The easiest control and the most non-invasive method is to prune the affected branches. The caterpillars don't stray far from their homes because the webs are weaved around the leaves they are eating. What if the invaded tree is too high to reach the webs? What until late winter and spray with dormant oil. Will these two suggestions rid your place of all the web worms? No; but, it will get most of them. Don't forget to clean up the surrounding area. One last thought and you can return to your regular program: For those who depend on chemical solutions, Malathion will insure they never return; but, you could be doing harm to both beneficial insects and the local bird population. Also, there are organic solutions available from Gardens Alive you might find useful.

No matter your plan of attack; please leave the blow torch in the garage. For your comments/questions/ suggestions write: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email: [maandpak@embarqmail.com](mailto:maandpak@embarqmail.com) and I'll get right back with you. From all your county Master Gardeners, we wish you and yours a terrific Holiday Season and a wonderful coming year. See you in January – 2017!