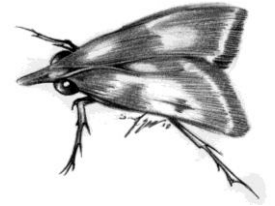


## Sophora Pyralid Moths

Texas mountain-laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*) shrubs are often affected by feeding action of caterpillars that are the young of sophora pyralid or genista broom moths (*Uresiphita reversalis*). These caterpillars, or larvae, can also be found on related species of *Sophora* in the southwest and are potentially a pest on crape myrtle and honeysuckle. Damage to plants can range from minor loss of foliage to total defoliation.

**LIFE CYCLE:** Adult moths lay shiny cream or yellow eggs in masses that can be either on the top or bottom of the leaves. Newly emerged larvae produce webs and initially feed in groups. Later they scatter and feed all through the plant. Fully grown larvae are approximately an inch long and golden-orange or greenish in color with rows of clustered white hairs surrounded by dark rings. At the time of pupation the caterpillars crawl from the plant, attach to other plants or buildings, and spin a cocoon. Adult moths later emerge from the cocoon. Generally there are two generations per year that develop from spring, just after flowering, into early summer.



**SYMPTOMS:** The larvae are voracious feeders and prefer tender young leaves. However, they will eat tougher old leaves and stems if necessary. The webs produced by young larvae are obvious. Damage can initially be observed as small tracks and pin-sized holes made by the newly hatched caterpillars, with increased damage to the edges of the leaves due to the feeding of the larger larvae. There might be tracks or pin holes on developing seed pods as well. Leaf curl sometimes occurs as a result of scarring of the leaves. Generally the leaf continues to function even if disfigured, but eventually the plant will drop the damaged leaves.

**PREVENTION AND TREATMENT:** In mature well established plants, intervention may not be necessary since the amount the caterpillars eat is not life threatening. Young or new plants can be more negatively affected and might need protection. Hand picking is an effective control in small plantings. If necessary use the pesticide Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). It is commonly applied in a powder form but can also be mixed with water and used as a wettable powder. Focus the application on new plant growth rather than older leaves for the best results. The larvae must eat the foliage on which Bt has been applied in order to ingest the toxin. It will take a day or two for it to kill them. For best results treatment should be started as soon as eggs and caterpillars are observed. There is no preventative treatment. As with all chemicals, follow the label instructions carefully. The Bt is harmless to all organisms other than caterpillars. It can affect the larvae of desirable butterflies in the garden, so be careful to only apply it to the infested Texas mountain-laurel and not get it on any other plants that might be larval food for butterflies.

For color identification photos see:

<http://nathistoc.bio.uci.edu/lepidopt/Pyralidae/Uresiphita.htm>

# Need Help?

For more information about particular desert plants or problems, call the

Desert Botanical Garden's Plant Hotline

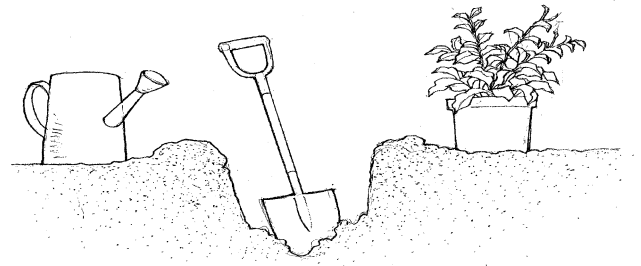
480-481-8120

Monday through Friday

from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

or email your questions to [planthotline@dbg.org](mailto:planthotline@dbg.org)

The Desert Botanical Garden provides a range of services to homeowners including a desert Plant Hotline, a variety of classes about landscaping and gardening in the desert, an onsite library, and an extensive selection of resources in the Garden Shop.



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