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Fungus of the Month - May 2007



Beauveria bassiana

A number of fungi attack and live parasitically on various insects and their larvae. *Beauveria bassiana* is present throughout the world and in southwestern Australia, it can be found infecting a wide range of arthropod hosts including Helena gum moth larvae (*main photo*), weevils (*inset, left*) and wasp larvae (*inset, right*). When spores of the fungus come into contact with the host insect's body they germinate, enter the body and grow inside consuming the inner tissues and eventually killing the insect. As the fungus grows it extends firstly from segment joints in the insect body and eventually forms a white mass of fungal material that covers the whole body. Infected insects can be found at any time of the year, but the above examples were found in autumn when insect larvae are more common.

The Latin name – what it means: *bassiana* – in recognition of Agostino Bassi, an Italian entomologist who in 1835 discovered it as the cause of death of silkworms.