

WEEDS

CATERPILLARS ON YOUR CAPE LILACS?

WHILE Cape Lilac, *Melia azedarach*, is native to the Kimberley, it was introduced to south-west WA as a garden shade tree. It has berries which are eaten and the seeds dispersed by birds, and the tree has become a weed in disturbed sites.

This year, many people noticed that, in high summer, their trees were defoliated by black hairy caterpillars. OK - but - during the day, the great mass of caterpillars looks for a shady hidey-hole ... a shed, or house, is ideal. Ian McColl of York went into his egg-packing shed early one morning to find caterpillars swarming over everything! And we have had reports of them infesting houses - even getting between the sheets in a bed! (Yeuk!!!!)

They are caterpillars of the White Cedar Moth, *Leptocneria reducta*, ('White Cedar' is the eastern states name for this tree) and it's not certain how they managed to get to south-west WA. In their natural habitat predators - probably birds - regulate the numbers, but presumably this isn't happening here, since they have only really been noticed in Perth during the last 18 months.

Killing the caterpillars inside a building would be horribly messy. The best action is to wait until they have all gone to feed, then block off all possible access holes by using quality surface insect control sprays. You could also tie some old hessian or carpet around the trunk of the Cape Lilac, and sprinkle it with vegetable or tomato dust containing carbaryl (make sure children or pets cannot contact the dust) so that the caterpillars contact the chemical as they crawl up or down the tree. Best long-term action, remove the Cape Lilac and replace it with something that's locally native.

Photos: Entomology Branch, Dept of Agriculture



Caterpillar



Larvae

UPDATE YOUR 'WESTERN WEEDS'

'Western Weeds' has been reprinted. Copies can be obtained from AgWA, for \$25.00 + GST. However, since the book was originally published, in 1997, there have been many changes in taxonomy, new weeds discovered, etc. Because amending the text would mean reformatting the whole book with huge costs, the Plant Protection Society of WA has reprinted it unaltered. However, an insert listing all changes up to December 2002 has also been produced. If you have an existing copy of 'Western Weeds' and would like a copy of the insert, ring (08) 9334 0530, or email me on: pennyh@calm.wa.gov.au and I will send you one.

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