Let's talk about some common tree problems we face this time of year; namely, cedar-apple rust and the ever rising presence of bagworms.

Cedar-apple rust was first noticed several weeks ago and continues with recent rains and warmer temperatures and I continue to receive calls about it. Cedar-apple rust is a fungal disease and you will first find it on the host plant, cedar (juniper) trees, and shrubs typically in mid-spring. The visual symptom of cedar-apple rust is an orange, “slimy” protrusion from the branches, also known as a gall. This fungal disease can look bad on cedar trees but there really is no damage to the tree. Where this disease can do damage is on its secondary host, such as apple and pear trees. The signs of infection on apple and pear trees include yellow spots with a dark ring on the outside of the spot and dropping of leaves prematurely. This can affect the visual aspects of the tree as well as the fruit production. Some fruit apples are resistant while some are not, so please verify before treating. The only treatment is fungicide application and spraying once a week from now until the end of June. Publications are available in regards to spraying recommendations for ornamentals and fruit apples, please contact our office for more information!

Another yearly battle we face is bagworms on evergreens. This time of year it can be easy to spot the tannish/brown bags that are about 1.5 to 2 inches long. These bags are either empty or may be filled with as many as 1,000 bagworm eggs. Spraying now will do no good as the eggs won’t hatch until late May or early June. As soon as the eggs hatch, these tiny caterpillars begin to feed right away and build around them. This is the most effective time to spray for bagworms. There have been heavy populations the last couple years so we recommend spraying starting in late May and spraying every 2 weeks through the end of June. Many insecticides are labeled for bagworms, but be sure to read and follow the label. For most trees, any type of pump up sprayer will not be powerful enough to reach all of the trees, so a bigger sprayer with an electric or gas powered pump may be needed or hire a professional. If you are on a budget or have a large number of plants and can only spray once, plan to spray sometime between June 10th to 15th. You can also pick off the bags during the winter, remove them from the area and dispose of or burn them. If you have any questions or concerns about your trees, please reach out to our office at 785-263-2001, ext 2 for Tony Whitehair, Agriculture and Natural Resources agent.