

## Infestation Frustration

In 10 years of gardening I have never had an infestation—until this year. It had been a pretty hectic couple of months (plant sale, work—so many excuses!), and I had ignored certain parts of the garden that tend to "coast" on their own.

After the plant sale, Rita Thomas and I were walking through the garden and she asked me what was happening with my Mugo pines. They looked really thin and seemed to be losing their needles. I didn't really take a close look then (I know, I know, bad gardener), but two days later I finally went out to take a closer look. There appeared to be something bulbous around the branches at certain points on the plant. I looked closer and saw that the object was actually hundreds of small caterpillars! And they were sucking the life out of the needles and completely consuming them. (EEEWW! I have nothing against caterpillars, but we're talking horror movie quantities.)

I went into the house and consulted an old copy of Michael Dirr's **Manual of Woody Landscape Plants** (love that book!) to see what afflicts muginos. It sounded like sawflies, so I then consulted **The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control**—another book I recommend. It was definitely sawflies. The book said that spraying with insecticidal soap would help. As it happened, I had a bottle in my garage I had never used, so I gave all three of the muginos a good spray—really spraying heavily where the sawflies had collected. Within two days, the sawflies were gone. I have since read that they can emerge again in late summer. You can bet I'm going to pay more attention to my muginos from now on.



This incident has taught me to try to make the time to look at all of my garden plants, and not take any of them for granted. I'm crossing my fingers for a full mugo recovery!

—Stephanie O'Neal