

# Leaf rollers damage foliage



PHOTO COURTESY OF UC DAVIS

The name leaf roller is given to many different species of caterpillars. These pests feed on new growth foliage.

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**A** client brought in some leaves from her apple tree to the OSU Extension Master Gardener Plant clinic recently. What is causing the leaves on my apple tree to pucker and become deformed?

Upon close inspection, we discovered a small caterpillar inside one of the leaves. The name “leaf roller” is given to many different species of caterpillars that roll foliage around themselves as they feed, creating a shelter from predators such as birds. The caterpillars spin sticky webbing as they roll, attracting dust and dirt, which can also conceal them. Leaf rollers feed on new growth. The new leaves

appear ragged or stunted. In severe infestations, an entire tree may be defoliated and weakened, and can scar fruits.

Their life cycle involves pupating within the rolled leaves or in the tree bark with a brownish silk cocoon, emerging as adults two weeks later.

The adult form is a brown moth. There is usually one to two generations per year.

Natural enemies of leaf roller caterpillars include birds and parasitoid wasps, which can be encouraged into the garden. Gardeners can

also pick off and destroy infested leaves. We also recommend applying a dormant oil spray during the winter when the trees are leafless, thoroughly covering the branches with the oil to smother and kill any egg masses.

**ASK A  
MASTER  
GARDENER**

