

Puss Caterpillar or Asp

By Deborah Birge, Fort Bend Master Gardener

Q: Hi Hotline, I have a couple of sunshine blue, blueberry bushes. Every day, sometimes 2 Xs a day. I find these on the bush. I have tried Bt but they keep coming.

A: There isn't much you can do about managing these caterpillars until they all pupate and go away. You don't need to worry about harm to your garden however, as stinging caterpillars typically do not do enough feeding to harm plants.

If you have large populations of stinging caterpillars and decide you need to try to manage them, you can try *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*, BTK. However, this will also kill all the non-stinging or "good" caterpillars, which are an important food source for songbirds. You may also look for a pesticide with active ingredients such as spinosad or azadirachtin, which are naturally derived products.

Puss caterpillars can also be controlled when they become abundant by spraying with a residual pesticide such as [permethrin, cyfluthrin or similar sprays](#) labeled for control of caterpillars on ornamental plants.



Puss Caterpillars or Asp; Photo Credit: Jean Trevino

Mike Merchant, retired AgriLife Extension urban entomologist, Dallas, states "The best solution to dealing with stinging caterpillars may just be educating adults and children on what these caterpillars are, what they look like, and the importance of not touching them with bare hands."

Resource: <https://citybugs.tamu.edu/factsheets/biting-stinging/others/ent-3010/>