

Mysterious Webs on Tree Trunks are Psocids

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Have you seen silken webbing covering the trunk of a shade tree? Citrus and Oak trees are favorite hosts for the insect that creates this web. Are you in a panic, searching your garage for something to spray on the web?

Relax and sit back, there is no need for concern or control. What you are seeing is the webbing of a small insect that feeds on lichens, fungi, pollen and decaying organic matter. This small, harmless insect is called a psocid or webbing barklouse. Its scientific name is *Archipsocus nomas*.

Psocids construct a fine silken web on tree trunks and sometimes on large branches. This web protects the maturing insects from rain and predators. The webs may look unsightly, but neither the insect nor its web cause any harm. These webs are usually observed during the summer months.



In the spring, female psocids lay their eggs in clusters on leaves, branches and trunks of trees. They cover the eggs with a very fine web that is mixed with debris or sometimes with feces. The cluster of eggs is very tiny and hard to see. From March to June, colonies become more frequent, and from July to October these colonies rapidly increase in both number and size. By early December, populations have been greatly reduced by frost, and the webs begin to fall apart. Colonies of psocids are rare in the winter, seeking shelter in live oak hammocks and stands of cabbage palms where they are best sheltered from killing frosts.

These insects are harmless and serve a purpose in nature. Just let them do their thing. There are no recommended control measures. For more information on psocids visit the University of Florida Featured Creatures website at <http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/trees/barklouse.htm>.