

## Eastern Tent Caterpillar



### Mature caterpillars

Wild cherry trees are their favorite host plant. Flowering crabapples and hawthorns are frequently attacked. In some areas, heavy outbreaks may occur every ten years on trees such as peach, plum, witch hazel, rose, beech, birch, willow and poplar. Unsightly webs in the forks of trees are an early sign of this insect's presence. Caterpillars hide in the webs at night and feed among the leaves during the day. They can defoliate entire cherry trees. Leaf loss will weaken these trees, but defoliation often occurs early enough so that wild cherries can replace the eaten leaves with new ones. However, other tree species may be killed because they don't have enough time to grow a new set of leaves for food production and storage needed for winter survival. Eggs hatch around the first week of April in central Maryland. Young caterpillars are completely black, spinning the silk tents which they enlarge as they grow. Mature caterpillars develop a distinct white stripe down the back. Most feeding damage is done in May by the large caterpillars. For cultural control, remove wild cherry trees from hedgerows and fields bordering properties with valuable ornamentals susceptible to tent caterpillar attack. Use heavy gloves to rip out the developing tents with their caterpillars. For chemical control, trees should be sprayed by a licensed professional in April while caterpillars are still young.