

Gypsy Moth



Moth laying egg mass

Tree damage is caused by insect larvae which emerge beginning in early spring and continuing through mid-May. Larvae move to the leaves of trees and eat mostly at night, then seek shade from the sun; although feeding can occur in daytime in heavy infestations. Feeding continues until mid-June or early July. Gypsy moths prefer the leaves of deciduous hardwood trees such as maple, elm, and particularly oak. They also feed on apple, alder, birch, poplar and willow trees and will also attack evergreens like pines and spruces. During heavy infestations, competition for food will drive the caterpillar to attack almost any tree or shrub. Tree damage ranges from light to almost complete defoliation. Most deciduous trees can survive a moderate degree of defoliation and many can even survive one complete defoliation by the gypsy moth caterpillar. However, continuing attacks can fatally weaken a tree or leave it vulnerable to other insects or disease. Egg masses appear on tree trunks, outdoor furniture or the sides buildings. Cultural control includes planting resistant trees such as Red Cedar, Sycamore, Red Spruce, Ash, American Holly, Locust, Tulip Poplar and Catalpa. Destroy egg masses before April when egg hatching begins. Use sticky barrier bands to trap young caterpillars before they enter treetops and use hiding bands to provide a refuge for migrating caterpillars that can then be removed and destroyed. For chemical control individual trees should be sprayed from the ground by a licensed professional. Over the last 20 years, several millions of acres of forest land have been aerially sprayed with pesticides by government agencies in order to suppress outbreak gypsy moth populations in large forested areas.