



## Gypsy Moth

*Lymantria dispar* Linnaeus (Lepidoptera: Lymantriidae)

The Gypsy Moth (GM) is an exotic, invasive insect pest of hardwood trees in the U.S. GM is under Federal quarantine and regulations prohibit the movement of GM infested articles. Adult male GM spread by flight, but females cannot fly. GM are spread long range by people accidentally moving GM egg masses, larvae or adults from infested areas on vehicles, firewood, etc., into uninfested areas. GM larvae feed on the foliage of several hundred different species of trees and shrubs but prefer hardwoods, especially oaks and aspen.

### IDENTIFICATION:

- Female moths are creamy white with wavy black markings on the wings, and have thin antennae.
- Females are large, with wingspans up to 2½” (6.4 cm), and stout bodies 1” long (2.5 cm) or longer.
- The female’s enlarged abdomen is covered with yellow hairs.
- Despite well-developed wings, females cannot fly.

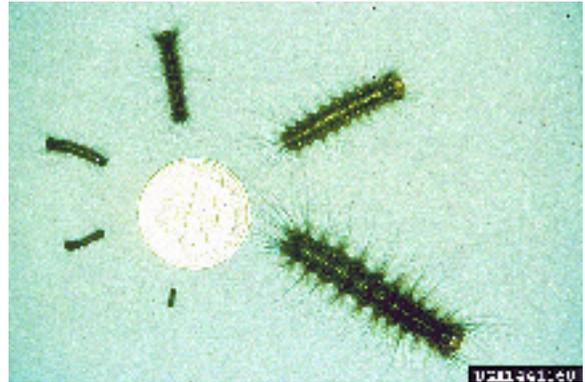


- Male moths are mottled brown (tan to dark brown) with wavy black wing markings, and oblong, feathery antennae.
- Males are smaller, with slimmer bodies, and wingspans of about 1” (2.5 cm).
- Males are strong fliers active primarily during the day.

• Egg masses resemble domed, oval shaped, buff colored pieces of chamois leather about 1-2” long (2.5-5 cm). Older masses may fade to gray with time, and may have pin-sized holes on the surface left by emerging larvae.



- Younger larvae are small, ~1/8-3/5” long (3-16 mm); black with black heads; and hairy (instars 1-6 below).



- Older larvae are 3/5-2½” long (15-64 mm); with dark gray, hairy bodies; yellow, black-marked heads; and a row of 5 pairs of blue bumps followed by 6 pairs of red bumps down the back (below).



- Pupae are encased in dark red/brown, smooth, teardrop-shaped skins about ½-1” long (13-25 mm) with sparse tufts of buff colored hairs.
- Pupae are motionless, webbed or suspended in place with a few strands of silk.



Pupae: male (left), female (right).

### What to Look For:

GM eggs hatch from early to mid-May. Newly emerged larvae tend to feed in the crowns of host trees. Older larvae tend to feed in tree crowns at night and crawl down the trunk during the day. In mid-June to early-July, larvae congregate in huge numbers searching for places to pupate. Adult moths emerge late-June to late-July and are active through mid-August. Each female lays a single, buff colored egg mass containing 100-1,000 eggs, which may be found almost anywhere outdoors.

### Symptoms of GM infestation include:

- Egg masses on tree trunks, undersides of branches, under loose bark, in tree cavities; or on outdoor items such as garden tools, furniture, vehicles, camping equipment, wood piles, etc.



Left: egg masses on tree trunk. Right: larvae hatching from egg mass.

- Feeding damage ranging from small shotgun holes in leaves, to larger holes occurring along leaf margins, to entire leaves eaten leaving only midveins intact.

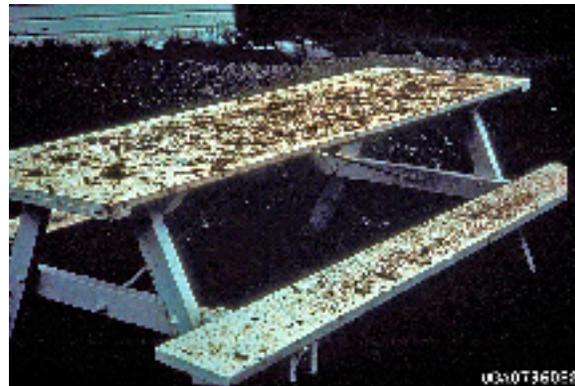


Typical early instar feeding damage: shotgun holes in leaves.



Typical mature larvae and feeding damage: entire leaves stripped with only midveins left intact.

- During severe outbreaks, large numbers of GM caterpillars crawling on walls, across roads, over outdoor furniture, in pools, on and even inside homes.
- Caterpillar silk strands, frass (droppings), leaf litter and dead moths may be abundant (below).



- Plain brown male moths flying during the day.

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**To report a possible sighting, visit the UMD Cooperative Extension Exotic Pest Threats Website:**  
<http://hgic.umd.edu/faq/sendAQuestion.cfm>

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