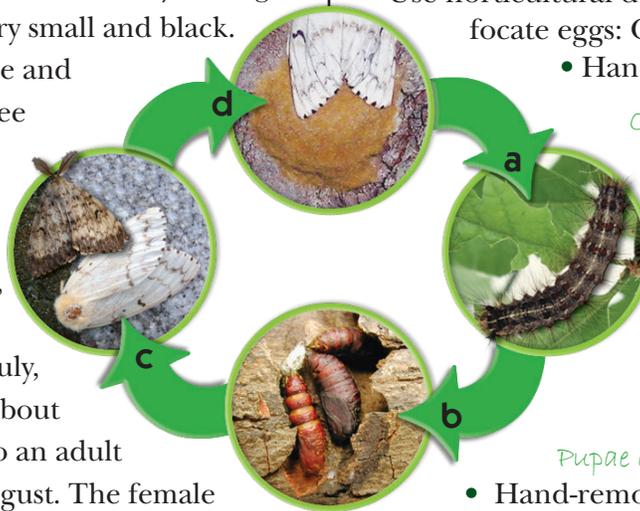


Spongy Moth Treatment & Control

The spongy moth (formerly known as Gypsy Moth) is an invasive pest that is firmly established in the eastern and central part of the state. During periods of high populations, the spongy moth will strip trees of their leaves and can defoliate entire neighborhoods by late June. While healthy trees can survive, weak or stressed trees will often decline rapidly and die. Spongy moths are expert "stow-aways", often traveling from spot to spot on almost anything in your yard- clay pots, vehicles, bicycles, and especially firewood!

Lifecycle and Identification

Effective treatment for spongy moth is in knowing the lifecycle. One of two most vulnerable stages for treatment is early in the larval stage. (a) The larvae (caterpillars) are present from May through mid-July. At first, they are very small and black. By June, they are quite visible and active, crawling out of the tree canopy during the day. The caterpillar is bristly with two rows of dots along its back –6 pairs of red near the rear, and 4 pairs of blue near a striped black head. By mid-July, moths then pupate (b) for about two weeks, transforming into an adult moth, emerging in July/August. The female moth, larger than the male, is white with V-shaped marking on the wings. The male is smaller, brown and has feathery antennae. (c) Within two weeks, the spongy moths mate and perish, leaving behind firm, golden tan egg masses full of up to 1,000 eggs.



The masses – easy to recognize and find just about anywhere!– are also readily treatable. (d) Masses can remain until the following May when the cycle begins again.

Susceptible Trees

Spongy moth feed on a multitude of shrubs and trees, but prefer Oak, Aspen, Apple, Crabapple, Tamarack, White Birch, Witch Hazel, Mountain Ash, Basswood, Ironwood and Linden. They are also known to feed on Maple, Walnut, Chesnut, Hickory, Cherry, Hemlock, Elm, Hackberry, Beech and Boxelder.

Spongy Moth Controls

Management of the spongy moth depends on the moths lifecycle stage and time of year.

Egg Masses

- Use horticultural dormant oil application to suffocate eggs: October-April
- Hand-remove and dispose of eggs

Caterpillar

- Apply bug barrier band on tree trunks to prevent caterpillars from climbing into canopy ; late April and again in June
- Spraying of bacterial insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Btk) in May

Pupae and Moth

- Hand-remove all brown-shelled pupae from various surfaces in July

Other Options

- Spray with botanical insecticides
- Soil systemic insect control
- Trunk injectable insect control

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