



United States Department of Agriculture



DON'T MAKE A MOVE UNTIL YOU CHECK FOR THE GYPSY MOTH

DID YOU KNOW...

... that in the late 1860s, a French artist and amateur entomologist accidentally introduced a devastating forest pest into North America that we're still battling today?

Etienne Leopold Trouvelot settled in Medford, Mass., where he began searching for native silkworms for use in silk production. After a trip back to France, he returned to Medford with some European gypsy moth egg masses and began raising the moths on trees behind his house. Some of the caterpillars escaped. Understanding the potential magnitude of this accident, he notified local entomologists, but no action was taken.

The first gypsy moth outbreaks in North America struck Medford in the 1880s. More than a century later, the moth has dramatically changed the landscape in 20 states and the District of Columbia, and without your help, it threatens many more. Since 1970, 83 million acres in the United States have been defoliated by the gypsy moth.



Hungry gypsy moth caterpillars can strip a forest bare in the summer. Photo by Tim Tigner, Virginia Department of Forestry, Bugwood.org

A VORACIOUS APPETITE

This invasive pest puts the "sport" of competitive eating to shame. Forget willpower and moderation. Their appetite speaks for itself: Left unchecked, an infestation of gypsy moth can defoliate up to 13 million acres of trees in one season.

A Dramatic

CHANGE OF SCENERY

The moth can leave a forest with a barren, wintry look in the middle of the summer. The gypsy moth is known to feed on more than 300 trees and shrubs. It's particularly fond of oak, apple, alder, basswood, birch, poplar, sweet gum, willow, and hawthorn, but it's been known to dine on other species, including hickory, maple, cherry, cottonwood, elm, gum, larch, sassafras, and hornbeam.



PROLIFIC PROCREATORS

The gypsy moth has four stages of development — egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (cocoon), and adult (moth). It has one generation each year. During the late-summer months, female moths attach egg masses to trees, stones, walls, logs, and household items such as patio furniture, children's toys, and lawn equipment. Each egg mass contains up to 1,000 eggs and is covered with buff or yellowish “hairs.” The velvety egg masses are on average 1½ inches long and three-fourths of an inch wide. After eggs hatch in the spring, the caterpillars feed voraciously and grow to between 1½ and 2½ inches in length.



THEY'RE ON THE MOVE!

They're notorious hitchhikers. The gypsy moth often travels into noninfested areas when people are moving or traveling from an infested area, transporting vehicles and other outdoor items with gypsy moth egg masses attached.



USDA'S RESPONSE TO GYPSY MOTH

USDA and its partners continue to fight the spread of gypsy moth, an effort that began in 1890. Today, we are slowing its spread along the infestation's leading edge, working with states to set out traps to monitor for new outbreaks, and eradicating outbreaks outside currently infested areas. But we cannot battle this destructive pest alone. We need your help. Please inspect for gypsy moth egg masses and *remove before you move*.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

It's simple: Inspect your vehicles and outdoor household goods — lawn furniture, grills, outdoor toys, camping equipment, etc. — for gypsy moth egg masses. The removal of the egg masses from their locations can be performed easily with a putty knife, stiff brush, or similar hand tool. Simply dispose of the egg masses in a container of hot, soapy water, or place them in a plastic bag, seal it, and set it in the sun.

Whether you decide to perform the inspection yourself or hire a professional, the law requires you to carry an official certificate of inspection of all common outdoor household articles when you move or travel from a state infested with the gypsy moth to a noninfested state.



Gypsy moth egg masses on a lawn mower.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

Please visit YourMoveGypsyMothFree.com for additional information and an inspection checklist for your move. Once completed and signed, the checklist is an official certificate that will satisfy the requirements of all noninfested States.

Please inspect for gypsy moth egg masses and remove before you move.