

Pest Profile



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Common Name: Gypsy Moth

Scientific Name: *Lymantria dispar*

Order and Family: Lepidoptera, Lymantriidae

Size and Appearance: Young caterpillars are black or brown and are approximately ¼” long. They grow to approximately 2 ½” long. Each body section has 2 spots; the first 5 sets are blue and the last 6 sets are red. The body of the mature caterpillar is covered in large hairs. After metamorphosis, the male moth is grey and brown in color and has the capability to fly. The mature female moth is grey and white with black markings and is unable to fly. The female moth is larger than the male and wingspan ranges from 1–2½ inches.

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg	25mm, egg mass	Eggs are laid in masses that are tan colored and covered in hairs from the female; 400-600 eggs can be in the mass; eggs are black in color; egg masses are laid on trees and other sheltered places; hatch in the spring in April.
Larva/Nymph	50-65mm	Young caterpillars are black in color; older caterpillars become gray with fuzzy hairs and have 5 sets of blue spots and 6 sets of red spots on their body; head is yellow and black.
Adult	38mm, male wingspan; 50mm, female wingspan	Males are grey and brown and have darker markings on their wings and can fly; females are white and have wavy dark markings on their wings and are flightless; both have V shape on wings that points to a small circle; one generation a year.
Pupa (if applicable)	50mm	Reddish brown in color; covered in hairs; pupate in protected places.

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Larvae: Chewing

Host plant/s: Primarily eat the leaves of deciduous hardwood trees, such as oaks, aspen, elm, maple, or birch. If the food supply is limited, the larvae will also eat evergreens such as pine and spruce.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults): Larvae consume the leaves of over 500 different trees, plants, and shrubs. They feed on the leaf hairs and then move onto the rest of the leaf. With increased populations, they can defoliate trees and forests. Adult moths do not process food. Caterpillars can move to new areas by riding wind currents on a silk thread. The Gypsy moth was brought to the US and has caused much damage to forests by defoliating the trees.

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