

Gypsy Moths

May to July: Hand Pick Caterpillars

Handpicking caterpillars is most effective on small newly planted trees, shrubs, and plants infested with gypsy moth. If possible, gently shake the tree so caterpillars fall from leaves. Thoroughly inspect the remaining foliage, branches, and trunk for caterpillars and using gloves, pick them off your tree. Fallen and collected caterpillars should be placed and left to soak in soapy water to destroy them.

Other positive ways to protect your trees:

- Attract birds and other creatures that eat these insects by planting attractive flowers, herbs or shrubs in your garden.
- Keep your trees healthy by watering during times of drought and mulch as this will help them be more resilient to pests and diseases.

June – August (Larger caterpillar stage): Burlap Banding

Once the caterpillars grow to about an inch (2.5 cm) in length by mid-June, they will move down the trunk to seek shelter from predators and heat during the day. Reduce the number of larvae on the trees in your yard by trapping them.

Required Supplies

- Burlap cloth
- Twine or rope
- Bucket of soapy water. Dish soap works well

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Wrap and secure a piece of burlap cloth around the stem/trunk of your tree
2. Tie twine or rope around the center or slightly below the center of the burlap
3. Drape the burlap cloth over the twine or rope so there is an overhang where the caterpillars can crawl underneath to seek shelter during the day
4. Check the trap by lifting the overhanging burlap cloth every afternoon and collect any hiding caterpillars
5. Put them into a bucket of soapy water for a few days to destroy them

July – August (Female Moth stage): Burlap Wrapping

To Trap Female Moths: Wrap burlap lower on the trunk of the tree to trap the female moth (which are unable to fly) before it crawls up the tree and lays eggs. This is the same method used for the larger caterpillar stage. Once captured, drown the moths in soapy water.

July – August (Male Moth stage): Hang Pheromone Traps

Hang pheromone traps in trees to attract male moths, which prevents them from mating with female moths and producing eggs. Once captured, drown the moths in soapy water.

November – late April (Egg stage): Destroy Egg Masses

Survey your property for egg masses and scrape them off surfaces into soapy water to destroy them.

Required Supplies

- A flat object such as a butter knife or plastic paint scraper
- Catchment container or bag to collect the egg masses
- Bucket of soapy water. Dish soap works well

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Place your catchment container below the egg mass
2. Use your scraper tool to remove the egg mass from the surface. Ensure that all eggs are scraped. Try not to leave any residual eggs in bark ridges or crevices
3. Empty the contents of your catchment container or bag into a bucket of soapy water
4. Leave the eggs sitting in the bucket for a day or two, then dispose of the contents

Egg masses can be located high up in trees. Take care, especially if using ladders. Some private tree care companies can be hired to provide this service at heights.