

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

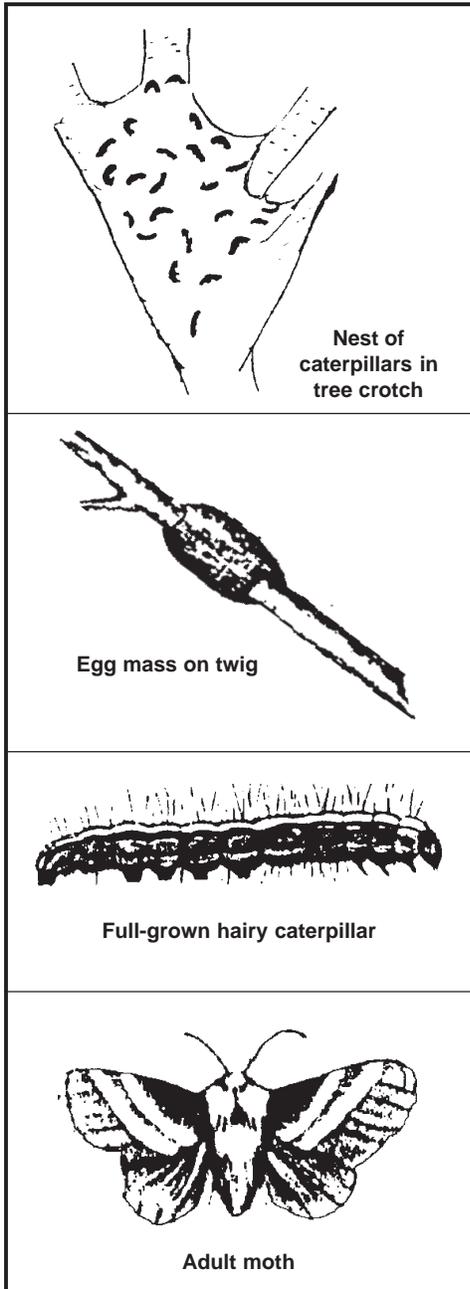


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Eastern Tent Caterpillar



There are two species of tent caterpillars: the eastern tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma americanum*, and the forest tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma disstria*. The eastern tent caterpillar is by far the most common and abundant. Its favorite food is wild cherry, but it will also attack apple, crabapple, peach and plum.

Life History

Eggs are laid in masses of several hundred called "saddles" because they circle twigs. The egg mass is covered with a brownish, gluey froth that protects it from the weather. Prune off these saddles in the fall or winter. The young caterpillars emerge about the time the buds open in early April and form a silken nest in the crotch of a branch. This is the difference between the eastern and forest tent caterpillars; the latter does not spin a silken web nest. The nest is small at first, but is gradually enlarged as the caterpillars grow. Keep alert, and destroy nests in their early stages with a garden hose and high water pressure or remove with a gloved hand.

The caterpillars remain in the nest during a storm or the hottest part of the day. They come out to feed in the morning, evening or at night if it is not too cold. When fully grown, the caterpillars leave the nest, and after feeding for a few more days, crawl to some protected place and spin their cocoon. They are about two inches long, thinly covered with long, soft, light brown hairs and have a general black color. There is a white stripe down the back, bordered with reddish-brown, and along each side there is a row of oval blue spots with brown and yellow lines.

They scatter to some distance from the nest and spin white cocoons, usually on the tree trunk or some nearby object. They change to brown pupae and later emerge as light, reddish-brown moths with two white stripes. They emerge during the latter part of June or early July and lay their eggs soon after. There is only one generation a year and the period from July until the following April is passed in egg clusters.

E-1-37 AAH reviewed RT 1/03

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Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

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Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce plant problems. These include using resistant plant varieties, proper plant selection and placement, good aftercare and biological and/or mechanical controls. As a last resort, after all other remedies have been explored, a pesticide* that is least toxic to people and natural predators, can be considered. Prior to using any pesticides, plants should always be monitored for the degree of infestation and a sensible control measure considered.

* A pesticide is a substance that kills, or attempts to kill, a particular pest, e.g. **insecticide**, **fungicide**, **herbicide**, etc.

Control

Cut off and bury egg masses before they hatch during the fall or winter. Destroy the nests by wiping out with gloved hands. Do this during the hot part of the day when most of the caterpillars are in the nest. Most of the infestations that are so unsightly along the roadsides and backyards are on wild cherry trees. Since these trees are not particularly decorative or valuable, keep them cleared out of the woods and adjoining highways. For heavy, widespread infestations, spray young larvae with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt, Caterpillar Attack, Dipel, Thuricide), or neem.

Chemical pesticides may be available. If you choose to use a chemical pesticide, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations. Spray this pest late in April to early May from 90-190 GDD or when Japanese quince blooms.

N.B. TO CERTIFIED PESTICIDE OPERATORS (CPO)

There may be other restricted use pesticides available to CPOs. Check Cornell Recommends for Trees and Shrubs for the current year.

Do not use a hose-end sprayer!

Hose-end sprayers do not dissolve, mix or apply pesticides accurately or evenly. The changing rates of water pressure, different hose diameters and water temperature provide variables that prevent accurate mixing and delivery. A hand-pump or powered tank sprayer, where the pesticide is pre-mixed to the proper dilution, allows for the application of a known mixture as per label instructions.

For an explanation of Growing Degree Days (GDD), see Home Grounds Fact Sheet E-1-0.



"This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension specialist or your regional DEC office (631) 444-0341. Read the label before applying any pesticide. Cornell Cooperative Extension and its employees assume no liability for the effectiveness or results of any chemicals for pesticide usage. No endorsement of products is made or implied."