

Lymantria dispar

Gypsy Moth

European and Asian



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Gypsy Moth is native to Europe, Russia, China and Japan. The European subspecies or “strain”, *L. dispar dispar*, established in the eastern U.S. for over 125 years, is notable for having females that are incapable of Flight. Females of the Asian “strain”, *L. dispar* subspecies *asiatica* and *japonica*, however, can fly up to 20 miles and, because of this, are considered a greater threat. Asian GM has been introduced into North America on more than 20 occasions, but so far, as a result of rapid response, all populations appear to have

HOSTS

GM caterpillars feed on over 500 species of trees. European GM usually prefers broad-leaved hosts, especially oak, but Asian GM is less discriminating and will often attack softwoods such as pine and larch as readily as the hardwoods.

LIFE HISTORY

Eggs: Laid in masses containing 100-600 eggs, attached to objects such as trees, rocks, furniture, vehicles, etc., and covered with tan hairs or scales from the body of the female. Fall, winter and spring are spent in this stage.

Larvae: Caterpillars are hairy and when mature may be 50-65 mm long, with five pairs of blue spots and six pairs of brick red spots on their backs. They tend to feed at night and move down to hide on tree bark or in forest litter during the day.

Pupae: Dark reddish-brown and often held in place by a very loosely woven silken cocoon which may incorporate larval hairs. Pupal stage lasts about two weeks.

Adult: Male moths, with grayish-brown wings (wingspan approx. 2.5 cm), readily fly during the day in a zig-zag pattern, searching for mates. The more robust female moths (5 cm wingspan) are white with wavy black markings. As mentioned above, female European GM do not fly, but remain near their empty pupal cases, waiting to be mated, and then lay their eggs at the same spot. Female Asian GM are mobile.

DAMAGE

Most trees can usually survive one complete defoliation, however, multiple years of heavy GM feeding will reduce tree vigor to a point where other pests or climatic stress, such as drought, may kill the tree. Other problems associated with GM outbreaks include pollution from large quantities of frass, dead leaves and cast larval skins which may cause allergic reactions in some people.



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