

Gypsy Moth information from Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program

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Unfortunately 2020 seems to be a terrible year for Gypsy moth outbreaks right across southern Ontario. Our program focuses on outreach and education for this species, as well as helping to support the tracking and monitoring of invasive species through citizen science with the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System of Ontario www.eddmaps.org/ontario . Thank you for providing us with photos and a location for this tracking system, and for spreading the word in your community.

Reporting invasive species helps us to better understand the current distribution of gypsy moths and understand long term trends and patterns, in addition to the work carried out by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/forest-health-conditions>). It also might help to inform your municipality or city in the future should they undertake management programs to support landowners, which we have seen in the past with the City of Toronto and Hamilton, for example.

How can you manage it?

Our program focuses on outreach and education for this species, including communicating to the public about identification, impacts, and the steps people can take to reduce the spread of invasive species from one location to another. Our program does not have a role in the physical management of Gypsy Moth, but there is some good information that may be helpful available at the following websites to help manage them on your property. The websites describe the identification of the gypsy moth at its various life stages, which in turn will guide management techniques. Burlap wraps and tape bands are good options to try and capture/remove as many caterpillars as possible at a time. Captured caterpillars/ moths can be put in a bucket of dish soap and water to drown them.

- <http://www.invadingspecies.com/gypsy-moth/>

- <https://forestinvasives.ca/Meet-the-Species/Insects/European-Gypsy-Moth#76747-manage>
- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/gypsy-moth>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/pest-control-tips/gypsy-moths.html>
- <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/gypsymoth/biology.cfm?fbclid=IwAR2BWjcy4TrEv2Hu5b4I9BKAwab7hjofllqdBLZK52oxozEPENN4hJzi2YQ>
- Burlap wrap guide: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYf1F4-isRk>

Some folks have also consulted with arborists or pest control companies for further advice and assistance. For larger infestations, you may wish to call your local municipal office to ask them to consider larger management projects, such as aerial sprays, for next spring.

If you are still seeing caterpillars, you will likely notice the amount of caterpillars decrease shortly as they enter their pupal (cocoon) life stage. At that point, you may choose to remove any cocoons that you are able to, and same with the adult moths and eggs later on in the summer. Burlap wraps can be used to trap adult female moths as they are unable to fly. Pheromone traps can be used to trap adult males. I do understand it may be hard to find these traps as they are in such high demand, so you could try making your own https://www.gypsymothalert.com/traps_homemade.html. Collected moths can be put in dish soap and water to drown them. The [City of London website](#) has great information on how to manage the moths at different life stages. The adult moths will not continue feeding on the tree foliage and only live for 2 weeks before they die. Egg masses that can be reached can be scraped off and placed in a bucket of soapy water for a couple of days, or burned to destroy them. Some hardware stores and garden centres may also sell a horticultural oil that can be applied to egg masses to essentially suffocate them, or I have read that a homemade spray of soybean oil and water (1:1 ratio) can be tried as well.

In the links above, you will see that Gypsy moths do naturally go through cycles of outbreaks, but that doesn't make it any less frustrating as a property owner seeing these effects. The Conservation Halton website mentions that "Gypsy Moth infestations can cause moderate to severe defoliation of certain types of trees. Healthy trees can usually withstand losing their leaves for a few years" (<https://conservationhalton.ca/gypsy-moth>).