



Severn Sound Environmental Association

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GYPHY MOTH MANAGEMENT PRACTISES (02/10/2019)

Gypsy Moth Biology

Populations of invasive Gypsy moths (*Lymantria dispar*) have increased in Simcoe County in 2019, with multiple infestations reported in the Township of Tiny. Gypsy moth caterpillars, known as larvae, feed exclusively on the leaves of trees, including native species such as oak, maple and birch. Through this feeding activity, gypsy moth larvae are capable of defoliating their host trees, while leaving behind significant accumulations of frass (droppings) on decks, yards and roads. Starting in late summer, adult Gypsy moths emerge and begin laying spongy masses filled with hundreds of tiny eggs that will hatch and restart the cycle the following spring.

Although feeding by gypsy moth larvae can slow growth and increase host susceptibility to drought and disease, mature trees are generally resistant to this disturbance and will typically survive leaf damage from this pest. Due to predation from birds and mammals, combined with larval mortality from bacteria found in the environment, Gypsy moth populations undergo rapid fluctuations and can be naturally controlled within a number of years.

Control of Gypsy Moths

Products have been developed to aid in the treatment of significant Gypsy moth infestations, like TreeAzin systemic and BTK biological insecticides and can be applied using stem injection or aerial spray techniques. These products are not intended to kill adult moths or egg masses and are only effective if ingested by the larvae, making treatment timing critical to improving management success.

In Ontario, pesticides are regulated by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and the Pesticides Act (1990) and all products must be registered for legal use before application can occur. For controlling Gypsy moths, registered chemical products can only be purchased and applied by licensed exterminators and in some instances, may require a permit from the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks. Additional federal, provincial and municipal permissions may be required depending upon the location and proposed application method of the insecticide treatment. Property owners are responsible for adhering to all applicable regulations and conditions associated with insecticide treatment of Gypsy moths in Ontario.

Tips for Landowners

Landowners who have detected Gypsy moth infestations on their property can take steps to protect their trees and reduce the impacts of this invasive species, without the use of chemicals, by following these steps:

- Locate and destroy egg masses hidden on tree trunks, fences, trailers, buildings and woodpiles
- Larvae can be captured and destroyed by hand or by using a shade or movement trap. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment to reduce the risk of skin irritation or allergic reactions from Gypsy moth hairs
- Water infested trees during periods of drought
- Refrain from fertilizing trees- this can stimulate leaf growth and increase larval feeding activity
- Remove dead or diseased branches and tree material
- Contact the SSEA Invasive Species Program to report a Gypsy moth sighting and to get more advice on management options

Information Resources

- 1) Learn how to identify invasive Gypsy moths: <https://bit.ly/2nPNskL>
- 2) Government of Canada Gypsy Moth Factsheet: <https://bit.ly/2nE0aDf>
- 3) Province of Ontario Gypsy Moth Factsheet: <https://bit.ly/2ow99X1>