

# Gypsy Moth is Here to Stay

Gypsy moth poses a major threat to the health of our hardwood forests. This invasive insect arrived in Dane County in the 1990s and is now well-established in our area. Unfortunately, gypsy moth is here to stay. As you celebrate Arbor Day this year, make sure you know the facts about gypsy moth and how you can help reduce its harmful effects.

## Gypsy Moth Basics

Gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) is a Eurasian species that has been slowly spreading across North America since its first introduction in Boston 140 years ago. It is now found from the eastern seaboard west to Wisconsin. The moth is well established in the eastern half of the state and continues to expand its range. The gypsy moth population appears to be growing. Surveys conducted in 2008 indicated that the number of infested sites within Dane County is increasing.

The gypsy moth is a serious tree pest. Although they prefer oak, gypsy moth caterpillars will feed opportunistically on the leaves of hundreds of different trees and shrubs. In large populations, gypsy moths can defoliate trees and kill those that are already under stress. In addition, some people experience allergic reactions caused by contact with gypsy moth egg cases or caterpillars.

## Be on the Lookout: Four Life Stages

Like other moths and butterflies, gypsy moths experience four distinct life stages. Each spring (typically in late April) gypsy moth caterpillars hatch and begin their destructive feeding frenzy. The gypsy moth is both most damaging and most recognizable in its caterpillar form. Look for colorful caterpillars with five pairs of blue dots and six pairs of red dots running along the length of the back. Unlike tent caterpillars, gypsy moth caterpillars do not built silk tents and they can quickly strip trees of all vegetation.



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By the middle of July, the full-grown gypsy moth caterpillar looks for a sheltered place to transform into a pupa. Its soft skin is replaced by a hard, dark brown protective shell. Within this immobile shell, the insect undergoes metamorphosis. Adult moths emerge between mid-July and early August. As adults, gypsy moths are easy to overlook. Flightless female

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days. You may also opt to use an insecticidal spray (such as Golden Pest Spray Oil) to kill gypsy moth larvae. In either case, wear gloves to prevent skin irritation. To learn more about identifying and managing gypsy moth egg

Slow the Spread program. In eastern and central Wisconsin, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) operates the Gypsy Moth Suppression Program, which is designed to keep populations in check and prevent associated damage. For additional information on gypsy moth and gypsy moth management in Wisconsin, see <http://gypsymoth.wi.gov/> and <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/gypsymoth/index.cfm>

Dane County is participating in the 2008-2009 Gypsy Moth Suppression Program. Within Dane County, 34 aerial spray treatment blocks covering 2,716 acres have been proposed for 2009, including sites in the City of Madison, the City of Monona, the City of Middleton, the Town of Middleton, the University of Wisconsin Arboretum.