

LLIA Special Reports

Be Aware. The Spongy Moth Has Arrived At Lauderdale Lakes.

By the LLIA Healthy Lakes Committee

The spongy moth, *Lymantria dispar* (formerly known as the “gypsy moth”), has been in Walworth County for a while now, but last year we saw a large uptick in their population. It likes aspen, birch, crabapple, hawthorn, linden, mountain ash, oak and willow trees; blue spruce and white pine are also occasionally attacked. The caterpillars feed on



A spongy moth caterpillar.
Photo credit: PJ Liesch, UW Entomology

tree leaves from the end of April to July, causing defoliation. This weakens the trees and sometimes kills them outright. In most cases, trees recover and produce new leaves in July. The hairy caterpillars can also cause skin irritation. Here is the link to the newly updated fact sheet: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/spongy-moth/> It can also be found on the LLIA website, LLIA.org, in the Property section under the Endeavors tab.

There are several options to manage these pests and save our trees, including:

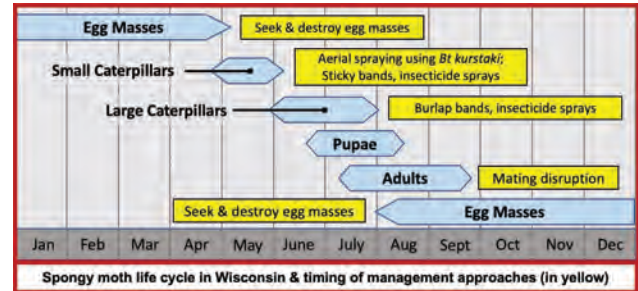
- **Destroying egg masses** by gently scraping them into a container of soapy water. Don't just scrape egg masses onto the ground or try to crush them



Adult female spongy moth with egg mass.
Photo credit: Ryan Hodnett via Wikipedia CC

with your shoe as they will survive to hatch next spring. Alternatively, spray them with a horticultural oil labeled for gypsy or spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar*). Do not use motor oil, mineral spirits non-horticultural oils or others not specifically labeled for *Lymantria dispar*.

- **Placing barrier bands on tree trunks.** Sticky bands can be used around tree trunks to capture and kill small caterpillars. The UW-Madison Division of Extension Spongy Moth website has full instructions for this method: bit.ly/3lZPdIS.
Burlap Bands: Since larger caterpillars hide during the day, a band or skirt of burlap hung around the trunk of a tree with twine can offer a hiding spot. Burlap bands should then be checked daily, and caterpillars knocked into a container of soapy water to kill them.



University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension

- **Applying pesticides.** Insecticide sprays specifically for *Lymantria dispar* can be an option for short trees and shrubs, but only for a short period of time against caterpillars less than ½-inch long. For large trees that cannot be effectively sprayed, consult a certified arborist about additional management options.
Furthermore, if you are spraying where the insecticide could drift or be sprayed into the lake, then a permit from the Wisconsin DNR is needed (Mosquitoes or Other Flying Insects - Permit No. WI-0064581). This Q&A sheet provides more detailed information: https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Wastewater/GP_Pesticides_QA.pdf

For more information on spongy moth, see the UW-Madison Division of Extension spongy moth website <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/spongymothinwisconsin/> or contact our Walworth county Extension agent, Julie Hill via email: Julie.hill@wisc.edu, via her office phone: 262-741-4958 or her cell phone: 262-374-4191.