Fact sheet

Plant Health AUSTRALIA

# Asian gypsy moth

## What is Asian gypsy moth?

Asian gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) is a destructive pest of forest, horticultural and urban trees and if it were introduced into Australia it could cause extensive environmental and economic damage to our native bush, forests, crops and gardens.

The larval (caterpillar) stage of this pest causes heavy defoliation of trees and shrubs, killing them or increasing their susceptibility to other pests. Asian gypsy moth has an extremely wide host range, feeding on the foliage of more than 650 species of plants.

Evgeny Akulov, Russian Research Institute of Plant Quarantine, Bugwood.org

Hairy larvae showing distinctive blue and red spots

## What does it look like?

Asian gypsy moth produces large (2-3 cm by 1-2 cm) egg masses that are generally covered with yellowish or tan fuzz. These are deposited on solid objects, such as trees, rocks, outdoor furniture, machinery and structures.

The larvae are the most destructive stage and range in length from 3 to 65 mm. They are covered in long hairs and mature larvae have a very recognisable double row of spots along the back, usually four to five pairs of blue followed by six pairs of red.

Adult moths show a difference in appearance between the sexes. Adult male moths have greyish-brown wings and a wingspan of 30-40mm, whereas the adult female moths are white with grey markings and larger with a wingspan of around 40-70 mm.

USDA APHIS PPQ Archive, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org

Male (bottom) and female (top) Gypsy moth adults

## What can it be confused with?

There are a number of endemic and exotic moth species within the same family as Asian gypsy moth, many of which are economically important pests of trees and shrubs. However, any moth or caterpillar that matches the Asian gypsy moth description should be referred to an expert for identification.

Milan Pernek, Forestry Research Institute, Bugwood.org

Large numbers of eggs masses can be found on trees or other solid objects

## What should I look for?

Egg masses affixed to structures, equipment or plants are the most likely life stage to be directly detected. As infestation levels increase, feeding damage will become evident and webbing may be seen attached to plants following larval 'ballooning'.

## How does it spread?

Young larvae can spread up to several kilometres on the wind through a process known as ballooning (spinning silk that catches the wind). Adults are strong flyers and can travel up to 40 km before mating.

Eggs can also be transported when attached to nursery stock, plant parts, vehicles, machinery and equipment.

## Where is it now?

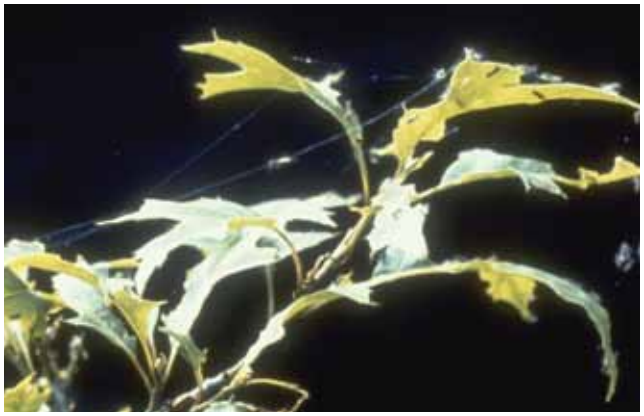
The Asian gypsy moth originated in Asia, and is now found throughout eastern Russia, China, Korea and Japan. There have been several introductions of the pest into North America since the early 1990s which have been the subject of intensive control and eradication campaigns to prevent its establishment. The pest was also introduced into New Zealand in 2003 and subsequently eradicated.

## How can I protect my orchard from Asian gypsy moth?

Source plant material only from clean, accredited suppliers, and preferably material that is certified. Check your orchard frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common pome fruit pests so you can tell if you see something different.

**If you see anything unusual, call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline**

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE**
**1800 084 881**



USDA Forest Service - Region 8 Archive, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Damage to oak trees and the larval webbing which is used for 'ballooning'

Manfred Mielke, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Tan egg masses on door, US Army ammunition bunker

USDA APHIS PPQ Archive, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org

Examples of Asian gypsy moth larval forms