

# Healthy trees limit damage by gypsy moth

**As these pesky varmints move across the country, steps to limiting damage are becoming more intensive.**

■ An overall tree health program that includes pruning, species selection, fertilization and watering can help overcome the damaging defoliation dished out by the ever-expanding gypsy moth migration.

Last year, 7.3 million acres of trees suffered moderate to heavy defoliation because of the *Lymantria dispar* Linnaeus moth.

Besides large infestations in the Northeast (see map), the moth has also hit California, Utah, Washington, Oregon and other states, according to Dr. Jerry Hertel of the U.S. Forest Service.

A landscape manager can avoid potential problems on a property with diversified planting that includes species which the moths generally avoid.

If trees under your care are indeed hit by this pest, an aggressive program of good general tree health can help recovery efforts, says Hertel.

"One of the misconceptions is that the gypsy moth kills everything it touches," Hertel points out. "Secondary organisms actually do the killing." Armillaria fungus can attack roots, and the two-lined chestnut borer can make mincemeat out of the trunk and branches of a moth-infected tree.

"If the tree is healthy, it will maybe survive two to three years of defoliation," Hertel observes. "If the tree's sick, maybe one year of defoliation will kill it."

Here are some tips to keep the tree healthy and moth-free:

- Avoid compacting the ground or changing the surrounding grade level.
- Try not to subject the tree to lawn mower wounds.
- Make sure the tree has enough fertilizer and water.
- Remove moth shelters, such as bark flaps, dead trees and branches, boxes, cans

and old tires.

Pheromone traps can be used to detect the pest's presence, though they will not drive them away, Hertel emphasizes. "(The traps) would clue you to look for

the egg masses. Just because you have male moths doesn't mean you'll find the egg masses in an area."

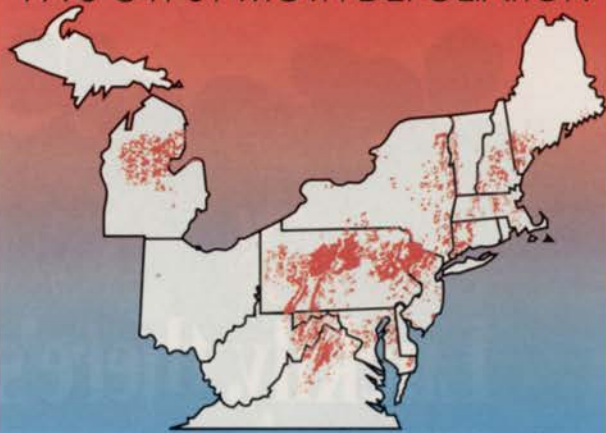
Simple scraping will not kill an egg mass. Eggs, larvae and pupae can be destroyed with soapy water or a kerosene dip.

Skirt traps can be used to detect and trap larvae. They are made by tying an 18- to 24-inch wide piece of burlap around a tree with a string, and then draping it

downward like a skirt. The caterpillars will hide there during the day, and you can then count and remove them.

Or, use barrier bands consisting of double-sided sticky materials such as Tanglefoot, petroleum jelly or grease to prevent larvae from crawling up the trunk. These materials should be applied on duct tape or tar paper to avoid contact with the bark. (Petroleum-based products can cause swelling and cankering on thin-barked trees.)

## 1990 GYPSY MOTH DEFOLIATION



Source: USDA Forest Service

## PESTICIDES FOR GYPSY MOTH CONTROL

Active ingredient	Representative trade names	Remarks
<i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i>	Dipel Thuricide	Registered for aerial and ground application. Available under a variety of trade names. Toxic to other moth and butterfly larvae. Can be used safely near water.
acephate	Orthene	Registered for aerial and ground application. Available under a variety of trade names. Toxic to bees and some gypsy moth parasites. Commonly used from the ground to treat individual trees.
carbaryl	Sevin	Registered for aerial and ground application. Available under a variety of trade names. Toxic to bees and gypsy moth parasites. At one time, the most widely used chemical in gypsy moth control programs.
diflubenzuron	Dimilin	A restricted-use pesticide that can be applied only by certified applicators.

Source: U.S. Forest Service



## LANDSCAPE ORNAMENTALS REACTION TO GYPSY MOTH INFESTATION

### More preferred

alder  
apple  
aspens  
basswood  
river birch  
boxelder  
hawthorn  
larch  
mountain ash  
oak  
sweetgum  
willow

### Less preferred

arborvitae  
ash  
catalpa  
E. red cedar  
fir  
grape  
holly  
honeylocust  
horsechestnut  
black locust  
mulberry  
spruce  
sycamore  
tuliptree

### Intermediate

A. hornbeam  
A. beech  
black gum  
buckeye  
sweet birch  
cherry  
chestnut  
cottonwood  
cucumbertree  
dogwood  
elm  
E. hophornbeam  
hickory  
magnolia  
maple  
persimmon  
pine  
redbud  
sassafras  
serviceberry  
sourwood  
walnut

Source: Ohio State University



Gypsy moth skirt trap (left) and milk carton trap will help monitor gypsy moth presence.

Natural enemies of the gypsy moth are parasitic and predatory insects such as wasps, flies, ground beetles and ants. Some spiders and certain birds such as chickadees, bluejays, nuthatches, towhees and robins will eat the moths, as will about 15 species of mammals like white-footed mice, shrews, chipmunks, squirrels and raccoons.

Some pesticides commonly used to control gypsy moths are *Bacillus thuringiensis*, acephate, carbaryl and diflubenzuron. Before using these products, however, check with your county extension agent, state entomologist, state forester or the U.S. Forest Service, Hertel advises.

—Jim Guyette

# Positioning with customer service

by Rudd McGary, Ph.D.

Al Ries and Jack Trout were the people most responsible for using the concept of "positioning" in their book, "Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind."

The word means to take a place in the consumer's mind by differentiating your company from the rest.

Some examples of famous positions are "The Pepsi Generation" and "At Ford, Quality is Job One."

In the green industry, we must work just as hard to differentiate as do the large national corporations. We must first work to find ways to explain how we are different, and then be able to deliver what we have promised.

Some of the most popular positions in the green industry:

- The technically competent company: "We know how to make your grass grow" or "We have a licensed agronomist (or horticulturist or arborist) on staff."
- Low price: "No one does this for less," or "We'll meet or match any price you get."
- Local ownership: "We are your neighborhood store for green grass" or "Locally owned and operated."

## What is 'positioning' and how do you use it to get more customers?

I would not recommend low price positioning; it tends to cut into profits and it's very hard to get rid of. But in some cases, local position works, most often in smaller towns and cities.

There is, however, one position that is a recurrent desire of consumers: customer service. The use of this as a position makes sense—but it isn't simply putting this on your trucks and going out to make your millions.

Certain common factors that consumers say they want that stress customer service:

**1) Politeness**—Both in person and on the phone, the customer wants to be treated like a human being. If your people who interact with the public are rude to them, you won't have a company very long. Almost no company has ever been accused of treating its customers too politely.

**2) Problem resolution**—If a customer has a problem and can get it resolved quickly, he or she will perceive the compa-

ny as one which gives good customer service. This takes:

- a staff that can handle unhappy customers on the phone;
- people who are technically capable of responding to problems;
- people who can explain what the problem was to the consumer and what is being done about it; and
- follow-up to make sure the customer is satisfied.

**3) Professionalism**—Not only in technical matters, but also in the ways you administer the account: how your bills go out, how you collect, how you problem-solve, how you treat customers and how you look (from uniforms to stationery).

You might want to consider using another position in conjunction with customer service. The key is to understand the customer's needs and make sure your organization works on customer service every day.

Do that, and include it in your positioning, and you should prosper.

—The author is senior consultant for Strategic Consulting Group of Worthington, Ohio.