

LEAF CHEWING CATERPILLARS

WHAT IS THE THREAT:

Caterpillars belong to the insect order *Lepidoptera* and are the larval stage of moths and butterflies. One example is the Eastern Tent Caterpillar, *Malacosoma americanum*, which feeds on forest trees, cherry, apple, and many other shade trees. Other leaf chewing caterpillars include Gypsy Moth, Winter Moth, Spring and Fall Cankerworm, bagworm and Tussock Moth.

WHERE IS THE THREAT:

Leaf chewing caterpillars can be found all over the US where trees are grown. Some moths, such as Winter Moth, are more common in the upper latitudes of the US, but others can occur within naturalized ranges of common trees.

SYMPTOMS:

Young caterpillars chew leaves entirely, or 'skeletonize', by consuming all tissue between leaf veins. Feeding in the upper canopy of trees, caterpillars can often go undetected until large amounts of frass or fecal pellets begin falling. In many cases, the frass is more objectionable to homeowners than leaf loss.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT:

A systemic trunk injection of either ACE-jet™ or the TREE-äge® family of products is recommended at first sign of feeding. ACE-jet™ has quick knock-down capability and lasts for up to 60 days, eliminating the pest population in the tree. TREE-äge products provide up to two years of protection for long lasting coverage from leaf chewing caterpillars, and may be injected in the spring or fall.



Gypsy Moth larva



Eastern Tent Caterpillars



California Oak Worm



Egg masses on trunk of an oak tree

Photo Credit: Header Image: USDA Forest Service - Region 8 - Southern Eastern Tent Caterpillars taken by: Gerald J. Lenhard, Louisiana State Univ, Bugwood.org
California Aph taken by: Dawn Fluharty, Arborjet Egg Masses taken by: Milan Zubrik, Forest Research Institute - Slovakia, Bugwood.org