

# *“Solutions for a happier lawn and garden”*



## **IT'S RAINING GYPSY MOTHS AGAIN! (Gypsy Moth control for 2016)**

Two weeks ago, we got out of our car after a fun, family dinner. We were standing under the two, huge Oak trees in our yard. I have always loved them. They shade our home perfectly and our hammock is stretched comfortably between them. “Shh”, my daughter said. “Listen”. I wondered what we were listening to. The bullfrogs in the pond? The peepers on the trees? “What? What do you hear?”, I asked. My daughter scolded us to be really quiet. “I hear it! Rain”. No, that was not it. It was a perfectly clear night. It sure sounded like rain but unfortunately it was not. It was the sound of Gypsy Moth caterpillars chewing, chomping, and tearing at the leaves of our giant Oaks. Little pieces of leaves fell to the ground and their feast sounded just like raindrops hitting the foliage. Darn!

2015 proved to be a resurgence year for Gypsy Moths in many parts of Connecticut or possibly just at my house. Ugh! Gypsy Moths are always around us in low levels but I was hoping that they would not be as active for 2016. 2015 was really dry so I understand why the natural virus did not kick in and kill off the caterpillars, but I thought maybe because we had a little more rain this spring that we might be in better shape. WRONG. I will be the first to admit that I was wrong but I wish I was not. Gypsy Moths prefer to feed on trees such as; Oak, Aspen, Willow, Birch, and Apple. However, if the population is high enough, they will feed on most any tree. They even love blueberry bushes. I personally have found them on my Hickory, Beech, Stewartia, Maple, and even the Heuchera below the trees. They will attack some needled conifers and evergreens. A sad customer sent me photos of an Azalea and Blue Spruce being devoured by this furry creatures. Not good!

So, what do we do? Do we let them continue their little tap dance on our tree's foliage? Nonsense. There is always something we can do. Isn't there? At this stage in the game, Gypsy Moth caterpillars are getting larger. I spotted them on my tree trunk this morning. Typically they will reach a length of 2&1/2 inches but the caterpillars on my Oak definitely reached 4 inches long. My poor Oak trees. I went into my garage and pulled out Bayer Rose & Flower Insect Killer. As I moved over to Oak tree #2, I ran out of my spray. Back into the garage. This time, Bayer's Vegetable & Garden Insect Spray or Bonide's Eight will do the trick. I have some wonderful, organic products in my garage that are also very effective but I was being impatient and could not find them right away. Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew and Monterey's BT are my two go-to organic products. When I head home today, I will be putting Tanglefoot Tree Wrap and Tanglefoot Insect Barriers around my two big Oaks right away!

Here we are at the beginning of June and the Gypsy Moth caterpillar is happily feasting. They should be winding down towards the end of June/beginning of July. Let's hope the natural fungus and virus kicks in and eliminates them before they get to complete their nasty feast. Unfortunately, they will do a significant amount of damage until then unless we take action.

They will be pupating in a few weeks. Let's catch them before they go to this stage. The only natural control Connecticut has for the pupal stage is the white footed mouse. This little mouse can only eat so many pupae!

Pull out The Gypsy Moth Trap by Safer to control the brown, male moths that make it through the pupa stage. The trap is filled with a pheromone that the male Gypsy Moth adult loves. They think they are going to find a female moth to mate with but instead they fall into the trap and can't get out. This will help cut down on the reproductive cycle.





After they pupate, out pops the white, flightless Gypsy Moth mama and the brown, Gypsy Moth papa. They do not live long. They don't even eat. Their sole purpose is to mate and make more babies. The white, female moth will lay one sac of eggs on trunks of trees, branches, rocks, patio furniture, etc. Each egg case holds anywhere from 100 to 1,000 eggs. At this point, I will be heading back into my garage and pulling out Bonide's Horticultural Oil. The horticultural oil sprayed on the buff colored, hairy egg cases will suffocate the eggs so they will not be able to hatch in Spring of 2017. If you miss the chance to spray the egg cases this Fall, there is always early, next Spring. The Gypsy Moth overwinters as an egg.

Get prepared for Spring of 2017. Stock your shed or garage with Bayer 12 Month Tree & Shrub Protect & Feed. It is a systemic product, applied to the soil, at the base of the tree. The tree will absorb it all the way up into the leaves. When Gypsy Moth caterpillars hatch in the Spring and make their journey up the tree to eat, they will get a mouth full of product. If your tree is very large, like my Oak, I would consider doing your treatment in Fall of 2016 or early Spring of 2017. Let's keep our fingers crossed for a wetter Spring next year. There is a fungus and a virus that naturally keep the population of Gypsy Moth's low. When the Spring is very dry, like last season, the fungus and virus are not as active, thus the Gypsy Moth explosion.

One night, go outside and stand under the largest tree on your property (preferably an Oak) and just listen. If it sounds like rain but there is not a cloud in the night sky, look close, it may be the the very hungry caterpillar.

Come see us at Van Wilgen's. We would love to help!

Thanks a bunch...Stacey



*Van Wilgen's*

Garden Center

51 Valley Road

North Branford CT