

PROTECT YOUR TREES FROM WINTER MOTH



Winter moths have been responsible for widespread defoliation for most of the last decade. Male and female moths emerge around Thanksgiving time and may continue to emerge well through December whenever milder temperatures prevail during that time period. Many different deciduous plants are susceptible, including oaks, maples, basswood, ash, crabapples, apple, blueberry, and certain spruces.

The moths of both sexes are attracted to lights. Females, which are wingless, will climb up a tree trunk while emitting a sex pheromone to attract males of their species. Clouds of male winter moths can be seen flying around tree trunks, resting on the bark and mating with females at this time. Once mated, the female continues scurrying up the tree to lay eggs. Both males and females die soon after mating and egg deposition. Each female winter moth lays up to 150 eggs. The egg clusters look like tiny individual barrels that are tightly packed together.

Winter moth caterpillars, which hatch from the deposited eggs in late-May and June, are bright green with three narrow white stripes on each side. The leaf-eating caterpillars chew holes in leaves and sometimes flower buds. As the caterpillars grow, the size of the holes they make increases.

What you can do to control winter moth:

- Use tree bands. Wrap a 6-inch-wide or wider band of cloth, tape, or plastic material around each tree trunk at a convenient height. Saran Wrap™ or Stretch-tite™ will work. Then spread sticky glue on the band (Tanglefoot™ is sold at garden centers). As wingless female moths race up the trunks and encounter the bands, they attempt to climb over and become stuck on the sticky bands. Put up bands in mid-October and take them down in February.
- Handpick caterpillars and egg masses. Crush them or drop them in soapy water.

Additional information is available through the Topsfield Conservation office at **978-887-1510** and conservation@topsfield-ma.gov.

Sources:

UMASS Extension Landscape Nursery "The Winter Moth," 2004

Northeast Nursery Inc. "Strategies for Identifying & Controlling Winter Moth," 2005

British Columbia Capital Regional District "Caterpillars," 2010