



What is the Gypsy Moth?

Gypsy moth is a non-native, highly destructive threat to Washington's environment. Two primary kinds of gypsy moth have been detected in Washington: the European (sometimes called North American) gypsy moth and the Asian gypsy moth. Gypsy moth caterpillars are voracious eaters that defoliate and kill trees. Gypsy moth is an invasive species that has been detected in Washington each year since 1977. Washington sees more gypsy moth introductions than any other western state.

Why should I be concerned about the Gypsy Moth?

Gypsy moths feed on hundreds of species of trees and shrubs. In states where the pest is established, infestations can defoliate entire swaths of trees in neighborhoods, parks, and state and national forests. This can lead to degraded stream quality, loss of habitat and food for other wildlife including threatened species, and warmer water temperatures, leading to the death or displacement of salmon, steelhead, and other fish. Some people are also allergic to the caterpillars, breaking out in rashes or hives when coming in contact with the gypsy moth hairs.

How is Gypsy Moth being introduced to Washington?

European gypsy moths usually come to Washington as people who travel or relocate from infested states to the Northwest. Asian gypsy moths are most often introduced through the ports.

What is the difference between the European gypsy moth and the Asian gypsy moth?

While both types of moths are extreme threats to the environment, the Asian gypsy moth is even more so for two reasons:

1. Unlike the European gypsy moth, **the Asian gypsy moth female can fly**, allowing the populations to spread broadly more quickly.
2. While the European gypsy moth feeds primarily on deciduous trees, **the Asian gypsy moth also feeds on evergreens**, which is particularly problematic in the "Evergreen State."



What is being done to protect our state from the Gypsy Moth?

The Washington State Legislature has charged the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) with preventing gypsy moth from becoming established in our state. WSDA's gypsy moth program traps each year to monitor the gypsy moth. Based on the annual trapping results and in consultation with national and international experts, WSDA drafts a treatment proposal for introductions so as to prevent permanent gypsy moth populations from becoming established. After assessing potential environmental impacts of the plan and making it available for public comment, WSDA finalizes the plan and conducts the eradication. Finally, follow up trapping (and treatment, if necessary) ensures that the gypsy moth is eradicated.

Get more information about gypsy moth identification and control at agr.wa.gov/gypsymoth

