

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Dear Resident:

Re: City-owned trees impacted by gypsy moth near your property

Over the winter and spring, City staff will be removing gypsy moth egg masses from trees along your street in an effort to minimize damage caused by the European gypsy moth. You are encouraged to monitor the trees on your property for any signs of gypsy moth and take action by following the measures outlined in this letter.

Gypsy moth is a non-native insect found throughout southern Ontario that feeds on a variety of tree species such as oak, birch and maple. Gypsy moth caterpillars eat leaves causing the trees to lose some or in extreme cases, all of their canopy. However, since the canopy has the ability to regrow as the season progresses, long term effects can be reduced or prevented through management techniques.



Figure 1. Gypsy moth

Richmond Hill's plan to manage trees on City property



Figure 2. Gypsy moth egg masses

Richmond Hill will be using a number of different methods including egg mass removal, watering and monitoring to minimize damage to trees on City property in impacted areas and help reduce the spread of gypsy moth in our community.

Street trees that exhibit gypsy moth infestations will be targeted throughout the winter and spring when the moth is most manageable. During the winter, gypsy moth populations are present as egg masses found along the trunks and underside of larger branches of trees. City staff will be removing egg masses on small to medium sized trees through manual scraping or a specialized portable vacuum to reduce the number of hatched caterpillars in the spring. Watering will occur in the hotter summer months if necessary.

How you can manage trees on your property

Trees on private property are the responsibility of the property owner. You are encouraged to monitor the trees on your property to identify any signs of infection - look for egg masses in winter, caterpillars in spring, and moths in July and August - and take action to remove gypsy moths as often as possible (see steps below). To help prevent infestation, water your tree regularly to promote tree health, especially during the hottest days of summer.

What to do if you discover a gypsy moth infestation on your property

There are a number of actions you can take to help reduce gypsy moth populations. Control methods are closely linked to the gypsy moth's life cycle stage and time of year.

- **Late August to late April - Egg mass removal:** Where infestations are accessible, scrape the beige felt-like egg masses (see Figure 2) off the trees on your property with a dull knife and soak in soapy water for a few days before discarding them in the garbage.
- **May to August - Burlap banding:** Caterpillars can be trapped by placing burlap around the trunk to prevent them from reaching the leaves during their feeding stage. During the day, caterpillars move down the trunk of the tree to seek shelter from predators and midday sun. Burlap traps provide a place for them to hide and get shelter from the heat and at the same time contains the caterpillars preventing them from climbing back up to the tree canopy.



Figure 3. Gypsy moth burlap band.

How to make a burlap barrier band trap:

1. Wrap and secure a piece of burlap cloth around the trunk of your tree. The burlap should be approximately one metre wide.
2. Secure the burlap at the middle with a rope to allow the burlap to fold over.
3. Be sure to check these bands in the late afternoon before the caterpillars migrate back up to the crown of the tree to feed during cooler evening temperatures. Check the trap by lifting the overhanging burlap.
4. Pick off or scrape caterpillars into a container of soapy water for a few days before discarding them in the garbage.
5. Wearing gloves while handling the caterpillars is advisable to avoid any skin irritations or reactions.

In the event that managing populations becomes unfeasible through the methods described, seek a professional tree care company for assistance.

Trees that have lost their leaves should be watered regularly to promote leaf growth. Extensive watering should occur during the hot summer months when natural precipitation is low and most caterpillars are in their cocoon stage.

Visit RichmondHill.ca/GypsyMoth for more information. If you have questions or concerns regarding the activities taking place on your street, please contact Access Richmond Hill at 905-771-8800 or email access@richmondhill.ca.

Sincerely,

Ann Marie Farrugia
Manager, Parks Operations