



# BUG BIZ

Pest Management and Insect Identification Series



## Eastern Tent Caterpillar

The appearance of silky tents or nests in wild cherry trees indicates the hatching of the eastern tent caterpillar. The nests these caterpillars spin also may be found in various flowering shrubs, shade, fruit and forest trees.

The conspicuous webs make infested trees unsightly, and the caterpillars become pesky invaders when they search for food or a place to spin a cocoon.

The eastern tent caterpillar overwinters in the egg stage in a collar-like, brown glistening mass on the twigs and branches of host plants. Each mass may contain an average of 200 or more eggs. Hatching occurs in March. These gregarious larvae, upon hatching, collect in a fork or crotch of a tree and begin constructing their tents.

As the larvae feed on the foliage, they continually increase the size of the web until it is a large nest or tent 2 or more feet long and 1 foot in diameter. The larvae crawl back to the tent at night and move out to feed on the foliage during the day, defoliating increasingly larger portions of the branches and tree.

The caterpillars feed for six to eight weeks. They are hairy, blackish, mottled with a white stripe, brown and yellow and have lines along the sides with a row of oval blue dots on each side.

The larvae most frequently cause concern when migrating to protected places to pupate. They crawl on plants, roadways, walks, buildings, homes, cans, etc. Their migration might suggest infestation elsewhere than on the host. No feeding occurs, however, when larvae mature and begin migrating; they simply are looking for a place to attach their cocoon to pupate.

Pupation is a transition stage from larvae to adult. This stage lasts about three weeks, and during May and June the reddish-brown moth with two oblique, white bands on the forewings emerges and can be found swarming about lights. It is at this time that the egg masses are deposited on the twigs and branches of preferred hosts.

### Control

Early control is important, since the larvae are usually clustered and are more susceptible at an early stage of development.

Effective insecticides for caterpillar control may be found in the Insect Pest Management Guide, Recommendations for Ornamentals and Flowering Plants. This publication is available on our Web site: [www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com).



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