



# Washington State Department of Agriculture

PO Box 42560  
Olympia, Washington 98504-2560  
Visit our Web site at: [agr.wa.gov](http://agr.wa.gov)  
[Subscribe to WSDA News Releases](#)

For immediate release: June 22, 2015 (15-23)

Contact: [Mike Louisell](#) (360) 902-1813

## **WSDA trappers start annual hunt for evidence of gypsy moth activity**

**OLYMPIA** – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) began an annual ritual last week—placing bright green traps in trees, shrubs and other foliage in a continuing effort to protect Washington’s forests, agriculture and cityscapes from gypsy moth, a destructive plant-eating pest.

Twenty-three trappers are hanging 16,000 small cardboard traps in residential neighborhoods, business districts, ports and rural areas. The [tent-shaped traps](#) will be checked every two to three weeks before being removed in September.

“Our trappers play a key role in keeping permanent populations of gypsy moth out of our state,” John Townsend, WSDA trapping coordinator, said. “Trapping this summer will detect any brewing populations of gypsy moth that WSDA may propose to eradicate next spring.”

The traps are non-toxic and contain a pheromone that attracts male moths. Inside the trap is a sticky coating that traps the moth—showing entomologists where a population of the pest may be developing.

In May, WSDA completed gypsy moth caterpillar eradication efforts at Yacolt, a small town northeast of Vancouver. A biological insecticide was sprayed by helicopter during three separate periods on a 220-acre site.

“More traps will be placed in the Yacolt eradication site now to help determine if we achieved our goal of stopping the small population of gypsy moths,” Townsend said.

[Gypsy moth](#) has been detected in Washington every year since 1977, but permanent populations have not been established because of WSDA’s summer trapping and spring eradication efforts. Gypsy moths, which are not native to the U.S., arrive in the Pacific Northwest by [hitching a ride with people traveling](#) from other parts of the country. The risk also comes from foreign ships calling at Puget Sound and Columbia River ports.

Nineteen states in the East and Midwest are permanently infested with gypsy moth, causing extensive environmental and economic damage each year.

Gypsy moth caterpillars attack some 500 species of trees and plants. The caterpillar quickly strips trees and plants of leaves, destroying some and weakening others so they are susceptible to plant diseases. The caterpillar destroys wildlife habitat, degrades water quality and triggers costly quarantines of timber, agricultural and nursery products.

MORE

WSDA's trap and pest detection programs include gypsy moth, apple maggot, spartina, Mediterranean snail, Japanese beetle, sudden oak death and several wood-boring insects. The goal is to prevent the establishment of pests that could harm Washington's environment or threaten the state's agriculture, horticulture, nursery, timber and forest industries.

###

WSDA is on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#)