



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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WSDA trappers start annual hunt for gypsy moths

OLYMPIA – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) begins its annual gypsy moth hunt next week. Trappers will place bright orange traps in trees, shrubs and other foliage in a decades-long effort to protect Washington’s forests, parks, agriculture, and cityscapes from a pest capable of defoliating over a million acres of trees in a single year.

This year, about 34,000 traps will be placed statewide to monitor for gypsy moths, 70% more than the 20,000 traps set most years. Intensive trapping will be conducted in the [areas treated for gypsy moth](#) this past spring, which was WSDA’s largest eradication project since 1992. Trapping will include Eastern Washington, where no trapping occurred in 2015.



This extensive undertaking will require 35 trappers to place the small cardboard traps in residential neighborhoods, business districts, ports and rural areas. The triangular traps are then checked every two to three weeks until being removed in September.

“Trapping is integral to keeping gypsy moth from finding a permanent home here in Washington State,” Tiffany Pahs, WSDA trapping coordinator, said. “Our trappers play a critical role in finding populations at an early stage, allowing us to respond to introductions quickly.”

The non-toxic traps contain a pheromone that attracts male moths. Inside is a sticky coating that ensnares the moth. Detections alert WSDA to new introductions and developing populations of gypsy moths. In the fall, WSDA entomologists use the trapping results to plan responses for the following year, including standard trapping, intensive trapping, and treatments if necessary.

Gypsy moths have been detected in Washington every year since 1977. They are introduced to Washington on items transported from infested areas or through the ports. Permanent populations have not been established because of WSDA’s consistent trapping and treatment efforts.

Gypsy moths are non-native, highly destructive pests that attack more than 500 types of trees and shrubs. The caterpillar destroys wildlife habitat, degrades water quality and triggers costly quarantines of timber, agricultural and nursery products. Additionally, many people suffer from rashes and other allergic reactions when they come in contact with the caterpillars.

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