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Forestry Invitational

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eastern tent caterpillar

Malscosoma americanum (F.)

The eastern tent caterpillar is primarily an aesthetic problem and has little adverse effect on the host trees. Species of the genus *Prunus* are preferred hosts, with black cherry being the primary, uncultivated host.

Full-grown larvae are between 2 to 2 1/2 inches (50 to 65 mm) in length. Caterpillars have black heads, with long, light brown body hairs. The back has a light stripe, bordered on each side with yellowish-brown and black wavy lines. The sides are marked with blue and black spots. Moths have a wingspread of about 2 to 2 1/2 inches (50 to 65 mm) and are yellowish-brown, with two narrow, light lines across the front wings.

The larvae construct a white web or tent in the crotch of a small branch. They consume the entire leaf, except the midrib.

Overwintering eggs hatch about the time black cherry buds open in the spring. Young larvae begin to construct a tent and enlarge the structure as they grow. Full-grown larvae construct tough, silken cocoons. Moths emerge in early summer and lay eggs in shiny, dark brown masses around small twigs or branches of host trees.

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