

Cloth Banding Trees to Suppress the Gypsy Moth

Michigan State University Extension

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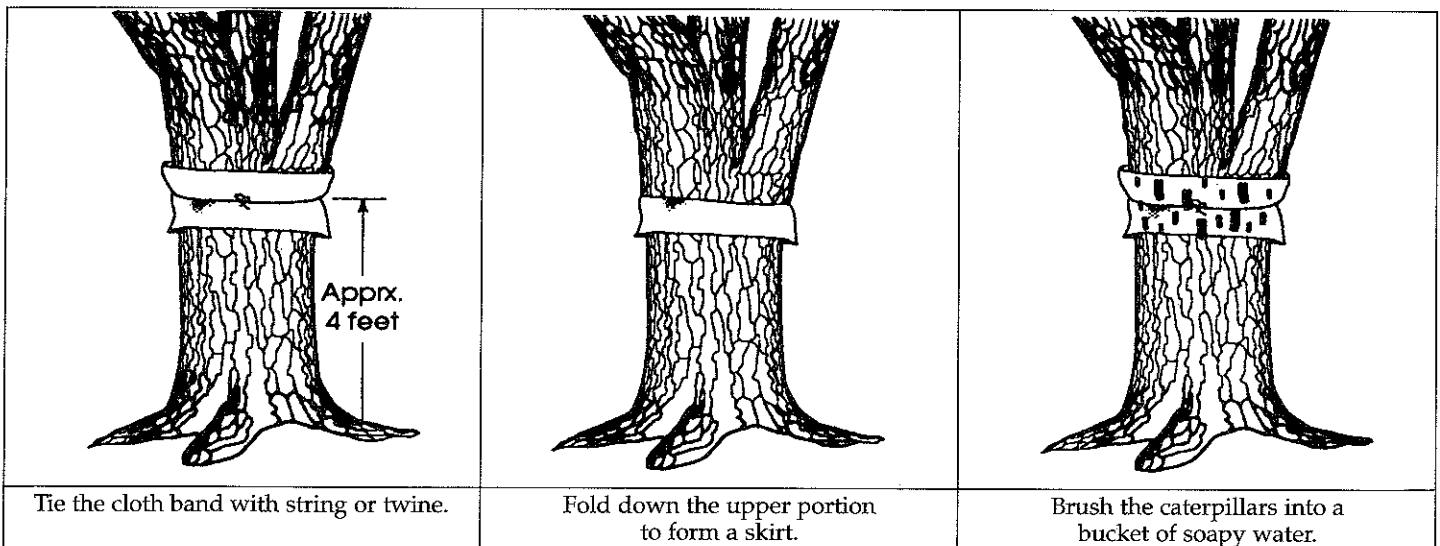
Small gypsy moth caterpillars feed on trees during the daytime. However, as the caterpillars become larger and more noticeable on foliage, they begin a daily trek from the canopy of the tree to escape direct sunlight and predators. Common daytime hiding places include leaf litter, tree bark crevices, and other places that provide protection. Towards evening, the caterpillars come out of hiding and migrate up the tree to feed on the leaves.

This change in behavior by the larger gypsy moth caterpillars gives homeowners a chance to do some small scale control activities. Using cloth and string or twine, you can construct an artificial hiding place for the caterpillars. Research shows that dark, medium weight fabrics work best (light weight fabrics tend to stick together when wet). Cut the cloth 12 to 18 inches wide and long enough to wrap completely around the tree about chest high. Tie the cloth band with string or twine as pictured, then fold the upper portion down to form a "skirt" around the tree. For best results, let the skirt be slightly ruffled so that it is easy for the caterpillars to hide beneath both sections of the cloth.

Caterpillars collect under the cloth during the morning hours as the day begins to warm up. For best control, sweep the gypsy moth caterpillars from underneath the cloth into a bucket of soapy water every day. The soapy water kills the caterpillars immediately. Use a small brush, or gloved hands to remove the caterpillars from the cloth because some people experience an allergic reaction to the "hairs" on the gypsy moth caterpillar.

Begin banding when you see caterpillars on the tree trunk during the day, usually in early to mid-June. Remove the bands when the caterpillars begin to pupate in July.

Trees can withstand up to 50 percent loss of leaves without negative effects, but 75 percent or more loss may make trees more vulnerable to disease and other insect pests. For more information, contact your Michigan State University county Extension office.





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