The information in this document is for educational purposes only. The recommendations contained are based on the best available knowledge at the time of publication. Any reference to commercial products, trade or brand names is for information only, and no endorsement or approval is intended. The Cooperative Extension System does not guarantee or warrant the standard of any product referenced or imply approval of the product to the exclusion of others which also may be available. The University of Connecticut, Cooperative Extension System, College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.

Integrated Pest Management Program
Plant Science and Landscape Architecture Extension

Eastern Tent Caterpillar *Malacosoma americanum*  
Forest Tent Caterpillar *Malacosoma disstria*

Tent caterpillar is the common name for larval stages of moths that belong to the Lasiocampidae family. Two species of tent caterpillars (Eastern and Forest) are of particular concern in New England states due to the devastating defoliation caused by their feeding.

**Identification and Host Preference**  
The Eastern Tent Caterpillar has a distinctive white stripe along the length of its back. At maturity, larvae are 1 1/2” - 2” long. They feed on apple, crabapple and cherry trees and build distinctive webbed nests in forks of trees.  
The Forest Tent Caterpillar has keyhole-like, or shoe print-shaped, whitish spots on each body segment, which run the entire length of the body. Larvae have a bluish appearance and are covered with fine white hairs. They feed on several different deciduous hosts including: Oak, Maple, Poppers, Birch, Ash, and Elm. This species does not make a noticeable web, they tend to climb higher and are more dispersed throughout the host tree.

**Life Cycle**  
Tent caterpillars have one generation a year and overwinter as eggs. Females lay a batch of eggs around small branches. The egg masses for each species are very similar in appearance. Eggs hatch near the time of budbreak on the host plant. Young larvae damage the newly expanding foliage and continue to feed on the leaves as they develop. Nests are seen in late May.

**Management**  
During the winter or prior to budbreak, host trees should be monitored and eggs pruned out and destroyed. In the spring, newly formed webs of Eastern Tent Caterpillars can be pruned out or physically removed by hand. Insecticidal soaps are effective on the younger caterpillars and should be applied only when they are out of the nest to achieve proper coverage. Many other chemical insecticides are also labeled for this pest (contact your local Cooperative Extension office for more information).

**References:**  
UMass Extension: Eastern Tent Caterpillar and Forest Tent Caterpillar Fact Sheets  
[http://ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/eastern-tent-caterpillar](http://ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/eastern-tent-caterpillar),  
[http://ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/forest-tent-caterpillar](http://ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/forest-tent-caterpillar)

Prepared by Jennifer Dacey M.S., Nursery IPM Program, UConn Extension

---

Forest Tent (left) and Eastern Tent (right)  
Photo credit: A. Chiriboga UConn Extension

Egg mass on branch  
Photo credit: Steven Katovich, USDA Forest Service

Eastern Tent caterpillars in tent  
Photo credit: Robert L. Anderson, USDA Forest Service