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### NEWS



Chris Simon/Metroland

The Town of Halton Hills is offering burlap spongy moth kits to help limit the damage the invasive species causes to trees.

## TOWN OFFERING SPONGY MOTH KITS TO RESIDENTS

The Town of Halton Hills is offering free spongy moth kits to help residents protect trees against the invasive species.

### WHAT HARM DO SPONGY MOTHS CAUSE?

Spongy moths, (*Lymantria dispar dispar*), damage trees by eating large amounts of leaves in their larvae (caterpillar) stage. When a tree loses leaves over several years, it weakens the tree by making it more vulnerable to disease.

The caterpillar feeds on all species of oak trees as well as poplar, birch, willow, maple beech and cherry trees. If a supply of deciduous leaves is not avail-

able, they will feed on coniferous trees, such as hemlock, pine and spruce or ornamental shrubs.

### WHY IS IT A PROBLEM THIS YEAR?

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry says southern Ontario is in an area experiencing a spongy moth outbreak. In most years, birds feeding on the caterpillars will keep the population in check. Because of a large amount of egg masses in 2021, there are too many for these natural controls to limit the population of caterpillars.

### HOW THE KITS WORK

When the caterpillars grow to about 2.5cm in

length, they will move down the trunk to seek shelter from predators and the heat. A burlap cloth wrapped around the trunk of the tree and folded over. The caterpillars will seek shelter under the folded burlap and then can be scraped into a bucket of soapy water. Gloves should be worn since the caterpillar hairs can cause skin irritation or allergies.

### WHERE CAN YOU GET KITS?

Kits are available while supplies last as part of a town pilot project. The burlap kits can be picked up at the Robert C. Austin Operations Centre at 11620 Trafalgar from Monday to Friday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.