

New Gypsy Moth Problem?

Just when we thought we had the gypsy moth problem under control, there is a new strain threatening our trees.

The Asian gypsy moth is of great concern to officials in the United States and Canada. Compared with the European gypsy moth, which is a permanent resident in parts of North America, the Asian variety could spread faster and cause much greater damage if it becomes established.

The adult female European gypsy moth does not fly, but its Asian counterpart does fly and may lay an egg mass up to 25 miles from where she lived as a caterpillar. The Asian gypsy moth could elude the conventional monitoring efforts use for European gypsy moths. In other words, the Asian gypsy moth could simp-

ly outrun us. It also eats a wider variety of hardwood and coniferous trees than its European cousin. Hybrids of European and Asian gypsy moths may have the same troublesome traits as the Asian gypsy moth.

Gypsy moths were found in and around Wilmington, North Carolina, in July. The source of the infestation was a cargo ship carrying ammunition from depots and bases in Germany. Asian gypsy moths have apparently spread to Germany and are mixing with their European cousins.

Officials from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture discovered that the female moths on the infested ship were flyers like Asian gypsy moths. Samples of

the moths were collected so scientists could examine their genes (the only way to tell Asian and European gypsy moths apart). Some of the moths were the European variety, some were the Asian variety, and most were a hybrid of the two.

Germany is experiencing the largest infestation of gypsy moths since World War II, and reports indicate that outbreaks are occurring in other European countries as well. As more military equipment and personnel return to bases in the United States, the chance is greater than unwanted gypsy moths could be introduced into uninfested parts of the United States. The same goes for commercial cargo.

Forest pest specialists from the USDA Forest Service and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service are working with Russian

counterparts in eastern Russian port cities and their environs to set up monitoring programs for the Asian gypsy moth.

In addition to monitoring outbreaks at their source in Russia, scientists are looking into using control measures when necessary and modifying how goods are stored and loaded on ships at port to reduce the risk of loading Asian gypsy moths as well.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is using an exclusion strategy to prevent ships originating from eastern Russian ports from entering U.S. ports until they can be inspected and

certified free of Asian gypsy moths. The Canadian government is also taking action to prevent Asian gypsy moth introductions into Canada.

In 1992 eradication projects were carried out on more than 160,000 acres in Washington, Oregon, and Vancouver British Columbia to wipe out Asian gypsy moths. The moths entered the United States and Canada via ships carrying cargo from eastern Russian ports. Monitoring gypsy moth traps in this area for one year shows that the Asian gypsy moths were completely eliminated.

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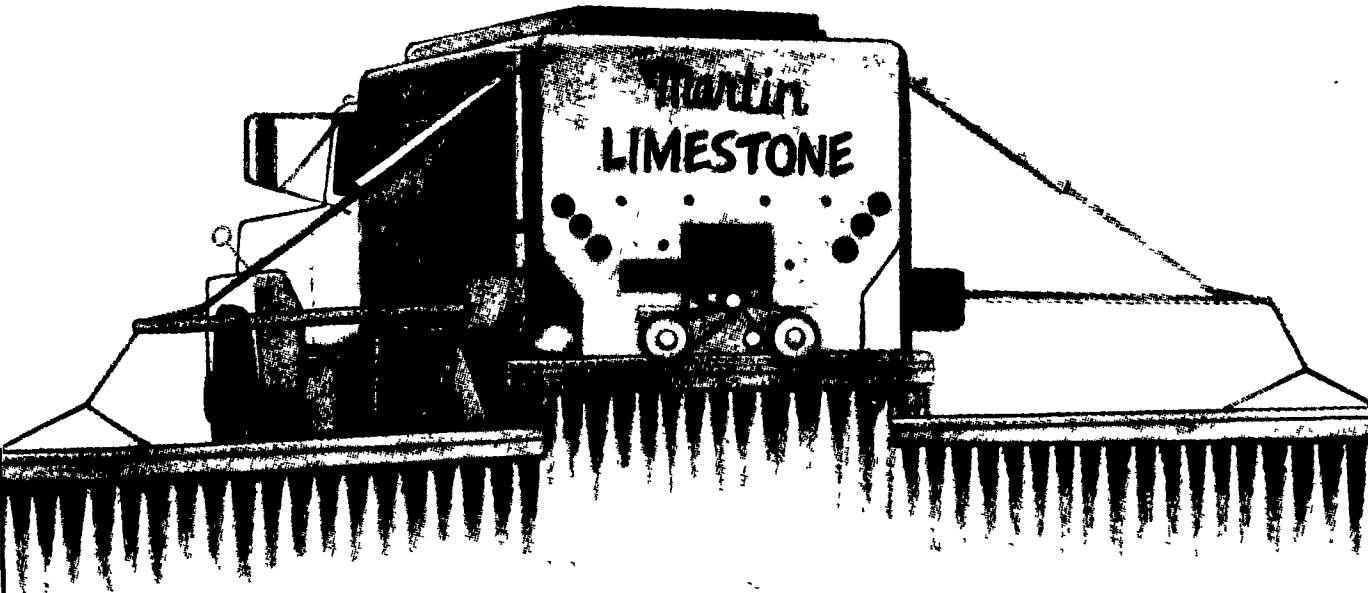
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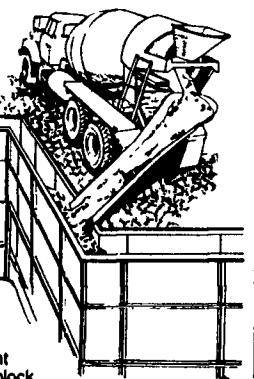
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