

From The Bedford Extension Master Gardener HELP DESK

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WHY ARE MY TULIP POPLAR'S LEAVES CURLED UP?

QUESTION

A few years ago a client walked into the VCE with samples of leaves from her *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Tulip Poplar) that were curled up, with what looked to be egg casings inside the wrapped leaves. The client stated that the tree looked healthy and had no issues. Rather, she was interested in learning what, exactly, was inside the leaf roll and whether or not any action should be taken.



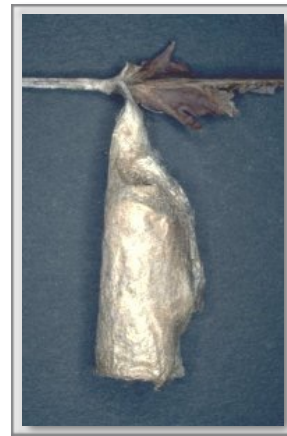
Tulip Poplar blooming in the spring
wildflowers.dcc.edu

DIAGNOSIS / RECOMMENDATION

Neither the on duty Master Gardener nor Senior VCE Agent could identify the insect by the egg casing, or by using the Pest Management Guide extant at the time (Section 4, Home Ornamental: Insects of Trees, Shrubs, Annuals, and Perennials). A digital photograph was sent to Virginia Tech's entomologist, Eric Day, who identified it as egg casings from the Prometheus silkmoth, *Callosamia promethea*. According to Eric, the silkmoth is not a pest and therefore nothing further needed to be done.



Callosamia promethea caterpillars and eggs
prariehaven.com



Typical *Callosamia promethea* cocoon
ag.auburn.edu

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The males and females of the Promethea silkmoth, *Callosamia promethea* differ. The male body is black; wings are black with tan borders, faint tan postmedian lines, and pink near the eyespots on the forewing tips. The female wings are dark brown to reddish-brown with tan borders and well-developed tan cell spots on wings.



Male Callosamia promethea
M.McCarty en.wikipedia.org



Female Callosamia promethea
bugguide.net

- They are somewhat large as adults, with a wingspan of 2 15/16 to 3 3/4 inches.
- They mate starting in late afternoon (4:00 PM) to sunset.
- There is one brood from May to July in the north, two broods from March to May and in August in the south.
- The insect overwinters as a pupa in a tough silken cocoon suspended from a twig in the tree. The cocoon is 30 – 35 mm long, 15 mm across at its widest point, and is usually enclosed in a leaf. Cocoons are fastened to trees by a silken thread and usually persist through winter.
- Adults do not feed; larvae feed on leaves of various host plants. Host plants include *Lindera benzoin* (spicebush), *Sassafras albidum* (sassafras), *Liriodendron tulipifera* (tulip tree), *Magnolia virginiana* (sweetbay), *Fraxinus americana* (white ash), *Syringa vulgaris* (lilac), and others. [1] [2] [3]

For more information, go to websites listed in Resources Links below.

RESOURCE LINKS

- [1] <http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Callosamia-promethea>
- [2] <http://bugguide.net/node/view/22990>
- [3] <http://www.ag.auburn.edu/enpl/bulletins/promethea/promethea.html>
- [4] http://www.prairiehaven.com/?page_id=8499

All resource links accessed March 23, 2016

Answers provided herein were based on specific situations and growing conditions.

These recommendations may or may not be appropriate for all circumstances.

For specific recommendations for your particular situation please contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

MASTER GARDENER HELP DESK

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