Tent-Making Caterpillars of Colorado

Tent caterpillars

Fall webworm

Uglynest caterpillar

Silverspotted tiger moth
Tent Caterpillars (*Malacosoma* species)
Western Tent Caterpillar \textit{(Malacosoma californicum)}
Tent caterpillars spend winter in the egg stage, within an egg mass on twigs. Egg hatch occurs in spring.
Collectively, the caterpillars create a silken tent, often in the crotch of branches.
The caterpillars usually rest on or in the tent during the day, and feed at night.
Tent caterpillar activity occurs early in the season, beginning shortly after new leaves are produced.

This infestation of southwestern tent caterpillar, south of Grand Junction, was photographed on May 5.
After feeding the full-grown caterpillars wander a bit then settle and pupate, within a cocoon.

Southwestern tent caterpillar cocoons underneath a bridge.
Adults usually emerge in June or early July. After mating females lay their egg masses on twigs.
Tent Caterpillars (*Malacosoma* species)

Western tent caterpillar

Eastern tent caterpillar

Forest tent caterpillar

Sonora tent caterpillar

Southwestern tent caterpillar
Forest Tent Caterpillar

A tent caterpillar that does not make a permanent tent!
Fall Webworm

*Hyphantria cunea*

Often the most commonly noticed of the tent making caterpillars
Fall webworm winters in the pupal stage.

Adults emerge in late spring and lay eggs on foliage.
Fall webworm winters in the pupal form. Adults emerge in late spring and lay eggs on foliage.
As they develop the larvae construct a tent of loose webbing that covers the foliage on which they feed.
The old tents may very visibly persist through winter

(Note: These insects are sometime called bagworms – a name properly apply to a very different group of caterpillars.)

A case produced by a bagworm caterpillar
Comparison of Tent Caterpillar vs. Fall Webworm

Damage occurs in spring

Damage occurs in summer
Comparison of Tent Caterpillar vs. Fall Webworm

Larvae construct a dense tent in branch crotches.

Larvae construct a loose tent over foliage.