

## Sequoia Pitch Moth

**Order:** Lepidoptera  
**Family:** Sesiidae  
**Species:** *Synanthedon sequoiae*

The Sequoia pitch moth infests pines and select other conifers.

The adult moth is clear winged with yellow and black markings resembling a yellow jacket wasp. The larvae, which do the damage, are about one inch long, yellowish, with a red-brown head.

The larvae feed by burrowing under the bark of the trunk or a branch and feeding there. On the trunk of the tree, the point of attack is often a point immediately under a branch. On branches, they tend to attack at points where the branch sends out side branches. A large, pinkish pitch mass develops at the point of entry. The larva feeds locally in the area under the pitch mass. As the pitch mass ages, much of the pink tinge disappears and it takes on a hard, grey appearance. An infected site is often re-infested and the size of the pitch mass increases.

If a new pitch mass is removed, the single larva is often found in the bark directly under it, or sometimes on the underside of the pitch mass itself. Older pitch masses often show the small exit hole used by the moth while in the pupal stage.

### Host Plants

The most commonly seen host plants are pines, such as Austrian, ponderosa, mugho and shore pine. However, Sequoia pitch moth does attach other conifers such as Douglas fir and spruce.



### Damage

As noted above, feeding is local, and initially damage is mostly aesthetic. However, on the trunks of small trees and the branches of all trees, repeated attacks may result in girdling and the death of the tree or of the end of the branch.

### Prevention

Maintain the overall health of the plant. Avoid stress as from under or over watering.

Avoid pruning in late spring through early fall when the moths are active. Pitch from wounds attracts the moths. Wounds created in late fall and winter are less likely to attract moths.

### Control

Where possible, remove pitch masses by scraping or prying them off. Dispose of them as larva in the pupal stage may be present within the mass.

Pheromone “sticky traps” may help.

WSU does not recommend any home chemical control.