Caterpillar Identification Chart

34 caterpillars with a photo, the one feature that separates each, and its size. Free to reuse with a link to orvik.app/tools/caterpillar-identifier/

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Some of these sting



Monarch

Danaus plexippus

Bold bands of yellow, white and black around a smooth body, with two pairs of soft black filaments — one behind the…

Size: Up to 4.5 cm



Black swallowtail

Papilio polyxenes

Green with black bands and a row of yellow-orange dots on each band, found on parsley, dill, fennel or carrot tops

Size: 4–5 cm



Tomato hornworm

Manduca quinquemaculata

Enormous, plump, bright green, with eight white V-shaped marks pointing forward along each side and a black or…

Size: 7–10 cm



Tobacco hornworm

Manduca sexta

Seven straight white diagonal stripes along each side and a curved red horn

Size: 7–10 cm



Woolly bear

Pyrrharctia isabella

Dense stiff bristles, black at both ends with a rust-brown band in the middle, hurrying across a road or path in…

Size: 4–5 cm



Yellow woolly bear

Spilosoma virginica

A uniformly shaggy caterpillar in pale yellow, cream or occasionally rust, with no black ends

Size: 3–4.5 cm



Eastern tent caterpillar

Malacosoma americanum

A continuous white stripe down the centre of the back, blue and orange dashes along the sides, and a dense silk tent…

Size: 4–5 cm



Forest tent caterpillar

Malacosoma disstria

A row of white keyhole or footprint shapes down the back instead of a continuous line, and it builds no tent — it…

Size: 4–5 cm



Fall webworm

Hyphantria cunea

Pale hairy caterpillars living inside a loose grey web that encloses the leaves at the very tip of a branch,…

Size: 2.5–3.5 cm



Spongy moth

Lymantria dispar

Five pairs of blue dots followed by six pairs of red dots down the back — a colour sequence nothing else has — with…

Size: 4–6 cm



White-marked tussock moth

Orgyia leucostigma

HANDLE WITH CARE

A bright red head, four short cream toothbrush tufts on the back, and two long black hair pencils pointing forward…

Size: 2.5–3.5 cm



Hickory tussock moth

Lophocampa caryae

HANDLE WITH CARE

White and fluffy with a row of black tufts down the back and four long black pencils at each end, found on hickory,…

Size: 3.5–4.5 cm



Milkweed tussock moth

Euchaetes egle

Clusters of caterpillars covered in dense tufts of black, orange and white hair, stripping a milkweed leaf together…

Size: 3 cm



Puss caterpillar

Megalopyge opercularis

CAN INJURE YOU

Looks like a small toupee or a tuft of cotton wool, tan to grey, with a pointed tail of longer hair

Size: 2–3.5 cm



Saddleback caterpillar

Acharia stimulea

CAN INJURE YOU

A brown slug-like body with a bright green blanket across the middle carrying a purple-brown oval "saddle", and four…

Size: 2–2.5 cm



Io moth caterpillar

Automeris io

CAN INJURE YOU

Pale green with a red-and-white stripe along each side and dense clusters of branched, bright green venomous spines…

Size: 5–6 cm



Buck moth caterpillar

Hemileuca maia

CAN INJURE YOU

Dark purple-black speckled with white dots and armed with rosettes of branched, hollow, cream-tipped spines

Size: 5–6 cm



Spiny oak slug

Euclea delphinii

CAN INJURE YOU

Flat, oval and slug-shaped with no visible head, in green or yellow, edged with paired spiny horns and usually…

Size: 1.5–2 cm



Luna moth caterpillar

Actias luna

Fat, bright translucent green with a faint yellow line along each side and small orange knobs down the back, each…

Size: 6–9 cm



Cecropia moth caterpillar

Hyalophora cecropia

The largest caterpillar in North America: a thumb-thick blue-green body studded with blue, yellow and red knobs…

Size: 10 cm



Polyphemus moth caterpillar

Antheraea polyphemus

Bright apple-green with a diagonal yellow line running back from each pair of legs and small red-and-silver knobs

`Size: 7–9 cm`



Mourning cloak caterpillar

Nymphalis antiopa

Velvety black speckled with white, a row of eight red-orange spots down the back and branched black spines

`Size: 4–5 cm`



Great spangled fritillary caterpillar

Speyeria cybele

Velvety black with orange-based branched spines, feeding only on violets and only at night — which is why it is…

`Size: 4–5 cm`



Cabbage looper

Trichoplusia ni

Smooth pale green with thin white side stripes, tapering towards the head, and it moves by arching its back into a…

`Size: 3–4 cm`



Imported cabbageworm

Pieris rapae

Velvety, uniformly green with a faint yellow line down the back, matching the leaf so closely it is usually found by…

`Size: 2.5–3 cm`



Fall armyworm

Spodoptera frugiperda

Brown to green with stripes and four black dots in a square on the second-to-last segment, plus a pale inverted Y on…

`Size: 3–4 cm`



Cutworm

Agrotis and Noctua species

Dull, greasy-looking and unmarked, found curled into a tight C just under the soil surface beside a seedling that was…

`Size: 3–5 cm`



Bagworm

Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis

You rarely see the caterpillar at all — only a spindle-shaped bag of silk covered in fragments of the host's own…

`Size: Bag 3–5 cm`



Inchworm or cankerworm

Geometridae

Thin, twig-like, with legs at the front and rear only, so it moves by looping

`Size: 2–3 cm`



Spicebush swallowtail

Papilio troilus

Smooth green with two huge false eyespots on the swollen thorax that make it look like a small snake, resting inside…

`Size: 4–5 cm`

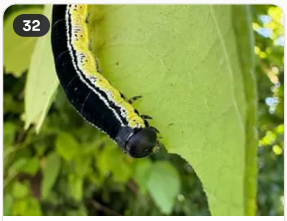


Eastern tiger swallowtail

Papilio glaucus

Plump smooth green with a swollen front end carrying two yellow-and-black eyespots and a thin yellow-and-black band…

`Size: 5 cm`



Catalpa sphinx

Ceratomia catalpae

Black and yellow with a shiny black horn, feeding in large groups that can strip a catalpa completely

`Size: 5–7 cm`



Hummingbird moth caterpillar

Hemaris thysbe

Pale green with a yellowish stripe on each side and a short blue-green horn, on honeysuckle

`Size: 4–5 cm`



Viceroy caterpillar

Limenitis archippus

Lumpy, saddle-shaped and mottled olive-brown and cream so it reads convincingly as a bird dropping, with two bristly…

`Size: 3 cm`

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