

Spot the work of chewing machines!

Foliage feeding insects can seriously damage the leaves of our precious plants (including trees). While healthy plants can cope with most foliage feeding insects there are some exotic species which can eat most of a plant's leaves and weaken the plant's health. Without leaves our plants are more likely to die if stressed by drought or disease.

How many foliage chewing insects can you help detect?

Activity goal

The goal of this activity is to spot, photograph and report signs and symptoms of plant foliage feeding insects.

What to look for

Look for damaged leaves on plants including bushes and trees. These may be chewed, discoloured, skeletonised or mined. Severe leaf damage leads to totally bare stems or branches. Different foliage chewing insects cause different types of leaf damage.

Chewed leaves



Leaf holes with rough edges

Voracious caterpillars like the exotic [Spongy moth](#) create holes in the leaf edges and leaf centers, defoliating branches and killing trees.

Other hungry chewers are grasshoppers like the [Australian plague locust](#).

Spongy moths are not present in Australia.

Skeletonised leaves



Skeleton patterns

The larvae of some beetles, moths and sawflies feed along the leaf veins leaving windows in the leaves. For example, [Gum-leaf Skeletoniser](#) larvae can cause so many leaf windows that the tree looks bronze and scorched.

Leaf mines



Wiggly patterns on leaves

Leaf miners are the larval stages of some species of moths, beetles, and flies. [Citrus leaf miner](#) larvae bore inside leaves, resulting in winding or blotchy areas with squiggly lines, causing leaves to twist and curl.

Why is it important to find and report insect pests?

Your reports of foliage feeding insects can help protect your food, Western Australia's fruit, nursery and forestry industries and our natural environment from damaging exotic and native pests. Check any plants and trees you see for signs and symptoms of leaf chewing insects regularly. Your reports increase the likelihood of early detection and eradication of exotic plant pests.

Are you ready to report these pests?

Materials required

- A mobile (phone or tablet) with [MyPestGuide® Reporter](#) installed.
- Instructions for making a [report](#).

A macro lens for your camera is ideal but not essential, especially if your phone has a macro setting.

What to do

1. Take a walk in your garden, park, orchard, or forest. Choose a plant and take a close look at it.
2. Look for holes in leaves, skeletonised and mined leaves. Look for stems or branches with no leaves. See if you can spot any insects too.
3. Start a new report in MyPestGuide® Reporter app:
 - a) Take three close-up photos of your findings.
 - b) Take a final picture showing as much of the plant as possible for identification.
 - c) Complete the details and submit your report.
4. Choose another plant in the same area. Repeat steps 2-3.

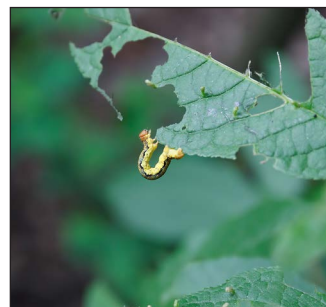
Spot signs and symptoms of leaf-chewing insect activity



Presence of caterpillar droppings



Clusters of swarming caterpillars



Large and irregular holes in leaf edges



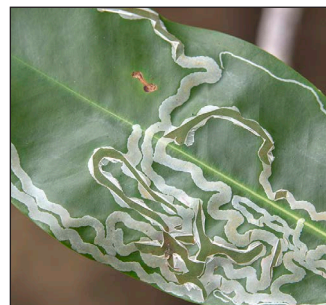
Lacey holes in skeletonised leaves



Cocoons built around needles and leaves



Large, rugged holes in leaves



Leaf miner galleries



Defoliated branches and canopies

Important disclaimer

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