

HOT NEWS

BEWARE OF CERTAIN FALL TIME CATERpillARS

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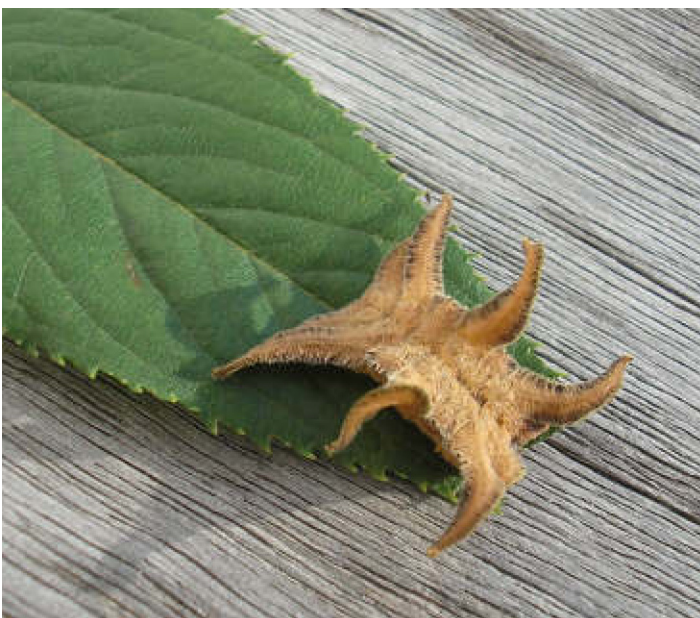
Bees, wasps, and hornets have a well-deserved reputation of being able to inflict a very painful sting. Caterpillars, on the other hand, are thought to be fuzzy, cuddly creatures that could hardly harm a leaf. Each year a few people, including the person who submitted the accompanying photo, come to find out that this general categorization is not always true. They learn the 'hard way' that handling some caterpillars can produce painful results.

Many caterpillars have, what appear to be, spines or barbed hook-like growths covering their body. These are sometimes remarkable, but other than scaring away kindergarten children, they are not very useful for defense.

A few caterpillars are encountered each year that are much different. These can sting! There are about a half dozen of so caterpillars to be cautious of. As a group, stinging caterpillars come in various shapes, sizes and colors. Just recognizing what each one looks like is the best way to avoid them.

One of these caterpillars is the Hag moth caterpillar, sometimes called a 'monkey slug'. The caterpillar is brown with a series fleshy arms or lobes, extending from the body. The caterpillar is covered with stinging hairs that are used as defensive weapons. These hollow quill-like hairs are connected to poison sacs. If touched by some unsuspecting person, they break through the skin releasing their poison. Reactions range from a mild itching to a more severe pain, dermatitis, or even intestinal disturbance.

Hag moth caterpillars are usually found feeding on the lower surfaces of leaves in various trees and shrubs, including oak, chestnut, dogwood, sassafras and ash.



Hag moth caterpillar