

Educational Instruction Guide



Note: Your Cecropia, Io, Polyphemus, Prometheus or Hybrid all have very similar care.

Larvae Stage:

FEEDING: If your Cecropia is starting out as a larva (caterpillar) It is most likely very large already, meaning it is almost ready to build a cocoon. Hopefully, your Cecropia has come with enough leaves to last it until it begins building its cocoon. If, however, your larva is small, or you want to add leaves you will need to find Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) this is the ONLY tree they will eat. If you cannot find Black Cherry and your larva is large do not worry it will start building its cocoon as soon as it realizes there is nothing more to eat.

Fun Fact: Caterpillar poop has a special name it is called "frass"

Did you Know? Cecropia larvae molt their skin four times. Each stage is called as "instar" and at each instar the caterpillar will change color.

Black Cherry is commonly found on the border of conifer woods and growing in old fields with trees.

Did you know? That there are three layers to a Cecropia pupa the first layer is the outer cocoon and is the toughest, inside that is the inter cocoon which helps keep the pupa from drying out and inside that is the actual pupa or chrysalis in which the moth transforms into a moth.

Pupa Stage:

When your caterpillar has finished growing it will begin its amazing transformation into a giant moth. But don't get too excited this process takes around ten months!

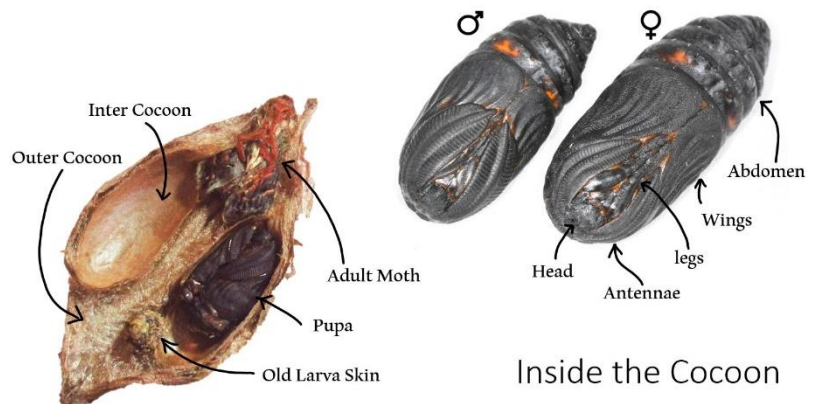
During this time, you must make sure the cocoon is well protected and kept in just the right location.

To protect it from parasites and predators place your cocoon inside a mesh enclosure, the pop-ups made for butterflies work great because they come with a fine mesh to keep tiny wasps from getting in and parasitizing the pupa.

Once your cocoon is protected you can find a safe place to put it outdoors. The cocoon can survive extremely low temperatures thanks to its naturally built-in antifreeze so don't worry about it freezing.

Typically, a deck or backyard is the perfect place.

DO NOT put it in a garage or garden shed these places get too dry in the winter and the pupa can die.



Inside the Cocoon

Ever wonder what happens inside that mysterious pupa? It all starts with DNA. DNA is like the words in a book it tells the caterpillars body how to make all the parts to build a caterpillar. This is incredible! but if the caterpillar only had the instructions to build a caterpillar, then it would always be a caterpillar. It turns out that your caterpillar has two sets of instruction, one tells its body how to make a caterpillar and the other tells its body how to make a moth. Inside the pupa the instructions for building a caterpillar are put away and the instruction for building a moth begin to be used. The moth instruction tells the body how to build the scales, the antennae, the wings, and every other part needed for an adult moth. When this intense process is done the caterpillars, body will have been turned into a moth who will emerge a new creation.

Fun Fact: The Cecropia moth only lives for about seven days, this is because they do not have mouths to eat. All the energy they have to live on was stored away as a larva. This means that they must be extremely efficient with their time and energy. When a female moth emerges, she stays put and does not fly until she has mated.

To let the males, know where to find her she will emit a pheromone from her abdomen that will waft out into the night air and attract a mate. The male moth is the one with the larger feathery antennae this is no coincidence, those antennae are the most powerful noses in the world they allow the male moth to smell the female's pheromone from up to two miles away! Once the male moth has flown to the female his energy has been used up and he dies. Now it's the females turn to fly.

She will fly out the following night and find host plant to lay her 200 to 400 eggs once she has done this her energy will also have been used up and she will die. In this short life the mission of the moth has been completed for the next generation of caterpillars can be expected to hatch about ten days later.

Adult Stage: If your pupa has been overwintered in the north your Cecropia will be ready to emerge around the first part of June. However, if you have kept it indoors or live in a southern state you can expect it to emerge much sooner, possibly as early as January.



WARNING YOU CAN NOT RELEASE THIS SPECIES UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE!

