ECOLANDSCAPE
A new and sustainable approach in landscaping

PINE PROCESSIONARY MOTH



⚠ **Indicative calendar for the Algarve; adjust to what you see on the trees.** This flyer gives general information. It is not a treatment order, medical advice or a promise of eradication.

The pine processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*) feeds on pines and cedars. From the third larval stage, the caterpillars shed urticating hairs. The hairs stay in nests and on branches, and the wind can carry them. They can harm people and pets, and they stay dangerous even after the caterpillar dies. **Do not fell healthy pines to control this insect.**

1 Life cycle and when to act

When	What happens	What to do
Jun–Sep	Adult moths fly at dusk; females lay eggs on needles. Isolated and edge trees are often hit first.	**Pheromone traps, put out before the first flights.**
Summer–autumn	Young larvae hatch and feed in small, loose nests.	
Mid-Sep–Oct (sometimes into early Nov)	The window for Btk, while larvae are young (about 8–10 mm).	**Btk on young larvae, if a licensed technician confirms it is justified.**
From autumn	Compact white silk nests in the crown, often on sunny tips. Urticating hairs from the third larval stage (often late October onwards); the risk stays high until the processions end.	**Autumn–winter, before processions: professional nest removal and trunk collar traps.**
Late winter–spring (often Jan–May, earlier in mild Algarve winters)	Processions: larvae come down and bury themselves in the soil.	**During processions: keep children and pets away, check the collars, call professionals. Never touch the caterpillars.**
All year		**Nest boxes for tits and bat boxes, installed outside the breeding season.**

Pupae can stay in the soil for 1–3 years. A year without nests does not mean the pest has gone, and moths can fly in from neighbouring land.

2 Biological control

- **Btk (autumn, young larvae):** a selective microbial insecticide that works only when larvae eat treated needles. It does not kill eggs or remove hairs already present; sun, rain and poor coverage reduce its effect. Only a product currently authorised in Portugal for this use, applied by a licensed professional following the label.
- **Pheromone traps (summer):** catch males during the flight and help time the later work. They do not remove larvae or nests, so they are not enough on their own.
- **Nest boxes and bat boxes:** tits, hoopoes, cuckoos and bats are natural enemies. The boxes help over several years but do not replace the other measures. In the Algarve, place them where they will not overheat.
- **Protect natural enemies:** avoid unnecessary broad-spectrum insecticides and keep the garden diverse.

3 Physical removal

Nest cutting

- Best in autumn and winter, by day, while larvae are in the nest and before processions start.
- Cut off the branch tip with the nest. Do not shake, crush or tear the nest.
- Full protection: long sleeves, gloves, neck cover, goggles and a mask. Leave tall trees to trained professionals.
- Bag and seal the material at once. Do not compost it. Do not burn nests in the garden.
- No leaf blowers, pressure washers or household vacuums: they spread the hairs.

Trunk collar traps

- Fit in autumn, before processions, on priority trees near paths, play areas or where pets go.
- A close-fitting collar leading into a sealed bag. Simple glue bands are not enough.
- Seal it to the bark and remove any way round it, such as low branches or objects touching the trunk.
- Check weekly and after wind or rain. Keep bags out of reach of children and dogs.
- A collar only stops larvae coming down that trunk; it does not make the garden safe on its own.

⚠ **Safety:** never touch larvae, nests or trails. Keep children and pets away, especially on windy days. Old or empty-looking nests still hold hairs. Call professionals rather than improvising.

4 Chemical control: last resort only

- Only when a licensed technician judges that biological and physical measures are not enough.
- Only a product currently authorised in Portugal for that use and tree species, applied by a licensed applicator from an authorised company, following the label.
- Urban gardens, schools, playgrounds and similar sites have extra legal restrictions.
- Never use household insecticides, bleach, diesel or homemade mixes. Mosquito products (Bti) are not the same as Btk.
- A treated tree is not automatically safe, because hairs and old nests can remain.

5 Symptoms and first aid

First aid only, not a diagnosis.

People

- **Signs:** itching, burning, redness, swelling and sometimes blisters on the skin; red, itchy, swollen eyes; coughing or difficulty breathing if hairs are inhaled.
- Move away from the area. Take off contaminated clothes without shaking them. Rinse skin or eyes with running water and do not rub. Lift hairs off the skin with adhesive tape. Wash clothes at 60 °C or above.
- Eyes affected: get a medical check. Severe allergic reaction or difficulty breathing: go to emergency care.

Pets (especially dogs)

- **Signs:** the tongue changes colour or swells, drooling, vomiting, a swollen muzzle, difficulty eating or swallowing. The tissue can die, and the reaction can be fatal.
- Rinse the mouth and muzzle with clean water or saline, without rubbing, and protect your own hands and eyes. Do not make the animal vomit.
- **Go to a vet immediately, even if the signs look mild.**

Emergency contacts in Portugal

112	emergencies (free)
SNS 24: 808 24 24 24	health advice and triage
CIAV: 800 250 250	Poisons Information Centre run by INEM (free, 24 hours a day)

Tap a number to call.

Need professional help? Contact us.

ECOLANDSCAPE
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geral@ecolandscape.pt
+351 937 310 777
www.ecolandscape.pt
Travessa Vera Garb Nº 2, 3 Dto, 8005-139 Faro