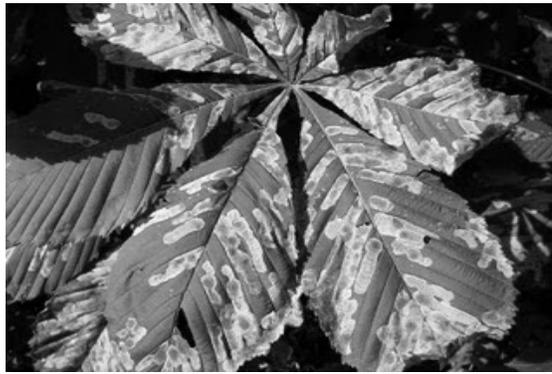


Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner Moth



In summer you will almost certainly have seen Horse Chestnut trees with their leaves severely marked, shriveled and turning brown at a time when you would expect them to be green and healthy. Badly affected leaves will drop from the tree well before natural leaf fall in the autumn. The damage is caused by caterpillars of the *Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner Moth* which have burrowed into the leaves, feeding as they go.

The moth is small, only 5mm (less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch) long, and its forewings are shiny, bright brown with thin, silvery white stripes whereas the hindwings are dark grey with long fringes. Female moths lay 20 - 40 eggs on the upper surface of leaves, and these hatch two to three weeks later into tiny caterpillars (larvae) which bore through the surface and create a mine or burrow within the leaf. The caterpillars create larger and larger mines as they grow until these may extend for several centimeters. Four weeks after it hatches, the caterpillar pupates and two weeks later it emerges from the leaf as an adult moth.

In this country the moth has three generations a year but the autumn generation does not complete its development until the following year, passing the winter as pupae in fallen leaves. Pupae are extremely cold tolerant and can endure temperatures as low as -23° , allowing them to survive the harshest of winters. With the onset of warm weather in spring, the overwintered pupae develop to moths, ready to infest Horse Chestnut trees again.

The Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner has spread rapidly throughout Europe over the last few decades and soon may well affect all Horse Chestnuts in this country. It was first recorded in northern Greece in the early 1980s, and reached our shores about ten years ago. Although its caterpillars severely affect the appearance of the leaves, there is no evidence that they have an impact on the trees' general health; trees survive repeated infestations and produce new leaves quite normally in the following year. Consequently, there is no reason to fell or remove trees just because they are attacked by this moth. Instead, in the long term we need to be able to keep the moth under control.

Caterpillar and moth

