

## What you need / Caring for silkworms

- Shoe box with holes in the lid for air circulation. Store in a cool, dry, quiet, covered place, not in sunlight.
- Newspaper at the bottom of the box which should be renewed daily to remove droppings. All waste is good plant fertiliser.
- Silkworms – around 10 per box. Take care removing the silkworms when the leaves and newspaper are being renewed. Silkworms originally came from China.
- Mulberry Leaves – Silkworms eat and drink nothing else. Remove old leaves from box. Replace with moist leaves (dampened with water) daily when silkworms are small, replace twice or more daily when they are larger. Moist fresh leaves can be stored in a zip lock bag in the fridge for one week and used as required. Silkworms eat a lot and then slow down just before they spin their cocoon.
- Water sprayer – lightly spray leaves with water at least twice per day to keep leaves moist. Use fresh water in sprayer twice per week. Spraying silkworms on the leaves is ok if spray is a mist not a jet of water which may drown the silkworms.
- When the silkworms emerge from their cocoon they require no food or water.

## Silkworm Lifecycle

- Caterpillar hatches from an egg. It looks like a 1mm long black line drawn with a sharp pencil.
- Lives for around 25 (?) days. Changes to a white coloured worm. Grows to around 7cm long - 70 times its original size. Has a heart that pumps yellow blood around its body – look closely and you can see the blood moving under the skin. Silkworms have breathing holes on the sides of their body instead of lungs.
- Weaves their cocoon and then stays inside the cocoon for around 25 (?) days. The cocoon protects the worm during metamorphosis into a moth. The cocoon is made from one continuous thread of fluid silk which hardens with contact with air. The silk thread comes from the worms modified salivary gland.
- Emerges from the cocoon as a flightless moth. The moths exude a chemical to break open the end of the cocoon. Cocoons can be soaked in hot soapy water to unravel the strands of silk. Silk can be spun and made into cloth. About 250 cocoons make a silk scarf. Silk moths require no food or water.
- The moth lives for around 10 days. They flap their wings at high speed but do not fly. They mate.
- Lays their eggs on any surface in the box. Eggs can be kept in a dark dry place, they will hatch next year when the mulberry leaves start growing on the deciduous mulberry tree. Give the eggs to someone that wants silkworms next year.
- Silkmoth dies around 5 days after laying eggs. Often lays on its back without movement. Remove dead moths from box.