



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HEMLOCK WOOLY ADELGID

Is the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid a serious pest?

The feeding activity of this pest injures the host plant by withdrawing plant sap. It is also believed that the pest introduces a toxin into the plant that eventually damages the vascular system, thus incurring plant death. Hemlocks that are suffering from previous stresses, such as drought, may succumb to this pest in 3-5 years. Hemlocks that are healthy, prior to attack, and are growing in good sites (excellent soil, drainage, adequate rainfall, etc) may tolerate the pest presence for 7-10 years before showing decline. Once found, the hemlocks should be treated.

How do I know if my Hemlocks have an infestation?

Egg masses are surrounded by ribbons of a white, waxy & wooly material at the base of the needles. These eggs will hatch and a new generation will begin feeding. They are particularly noticeable on the undersides of the new twigs.

What is the life cycle of the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid?

The adelgid settle on the twigs. They prefer to feed on the youngest available twigs. During March & April, adults of the generation that overwintered lay 50 to 300 eggs each on the young twigs. This generation matures usually by the middle of June. Then these adults lay another 50 to 300 eggs each, which hatch in early July, settle on new growth, and soon become dormant until the middle of October when feeding resumes. They overwinter and start the egg laying cycle again the following spring.

What can I do to help my Hemlocks?

It is important to note that this pest is manageable if found early & treated. The best strategy is to be aware of its' signs and to monitor for it on a regular basis. Non-toxic oil sprays work extremely well when and where they can be properly utilized, and kill all life stages of the adelgid. These sprays can generally be applied from late March, until freezing temperatures prevail in the winter. Spraying cannot be done when the temperature is hot and humid, or below freezing. We have gained effective control by one very thorough drenching of hemlocks, with oil, from March to June, if possible, but Hemlocks can be treated at anytime in the growing season. In rare instances, a second seasonal spraying is needed.

Another alternative treatment is to inject the soil with a chemical commonly known as Merit. The condition of the tree has to be evaluated to ensure its vascular system is not compromised. Otherwise the treatment will not be effective. Yet another alternative is to inject a chemical right into the trunk of the Hemlock. This treatment is used when there is no other alternative, and generally when the trees are located near waterways.

Further recommendations

We always recommend that you water your hemlocks. They are shallow rooted and are prone to stress when rainfall is low. We recommend that you water as often as needed to ensure they receive one inch of water per week, including rainfall, over the dripline of the crown. Water should be applied slowly.

We also highly recommend fertilizing. We do not use a high-nitrogen fertilizer. Our fertilizer amends the soil, stimulates root growth, and boosts the trees' "immune" system. It helps the tree offset stresses from drought, insects & diseases.