

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid at the Preserve

By Tate Bushell, Director of Natural Lands

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), an introduced, aphid-like insect from Asia, was recently found near Little Long Pond at the Land & Garden Preserve. Preserve staff observed the diagnostic white, woolly substance on branches of giant hemlock trees at the Cobblestone Bridge area. HWA has been spreading for decades through the southern Appalachian and mid-Atlantic states and more recently into New England. In 2003 HWA showed up in southern Maine and has been slowly spreading along the Maine coast. HWA is capable of killing its host hemlock tree and once infestation levels in an area reach a certain threshold, widespread hemlock dieback is common, especially without intervention.

Management options include treating individual trees with pesticides, spraying trees with horticultural oil which suffocates the adelgids, and using a bio-control strategy that relies on releasing beneficial insects that feed on HWA to HWA-infested areas. It is too early to know which management strategy the Preserve will pursue but we are currently researching all options. The Cobblestone Bridge area is at the border of the Little Long Pond natural lands and Acadia National Park, so the Preserve will likely coordinate a management effort in that area.

For those interested in learning more and seeing photos of infested branches, the state of Maine's HWA resources are here:

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/insects/hemlock_woolly_adelgid.htm

The Preserve recommends that people monitor the hemlock on their properties for HWA, especially where homeowners and gardeners are planting hemlock trees trucked in from points south. It is possible to slow the spread of this deadly insect which hitchhikes on live hemlock material or clothes and vehicles. HWA is subject to a quarantine in the State of Maine for which information can be found here:

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/quarantine_information.html#hwa

Since confirming the infestation at the Cobblestone Bridge, the Preserve staff have pruned back all the hemlock branches hanging over the carriage roads to slow its spread. Vehicles that make contact with infected branches can pick up the insects and move them to new areas, which is what we are trying to prevent. Work trucks are regularly used on the carriage roads as well as horse drawn carriages, both of which may help move HWA. Even trimming an infected hemlock at your house and trucking the material to the local dump can inadvertently spread HWA. It is best to keep infected material onsite. If you find any HWA, contact the state of Maine through this link:

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/insects/hemlock_woolly_adelgid_overview.htm

Most of the trees visible from the Preserve's Cobblestone Bridge are hemlock and they make the ravine along Jordan Stream a unique place. Hemlock that live along streams cast deep shade on the water, which has been shown to moderate stream temperature in the summer to the benefit of fish and other aquatic animals. If we lose our hemlock, it will certainly impact the ecosystem around the Cobblestone Bridge and will act as a stressor on the forest.

If you have any questions for Tate, email him at tbushell@gardenpreserve.org.

