

Blackberry Mountain's Hemlock Treatment Program



The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, an aphid-like insect, less 1/32" long, lays eggs semi-annually in white cottony sacs. After hatching, the HWA attaches to the base of the hemlock's needles where it sucks the sap. Unless treated, the HWA will kill every hemlock in the eastern US including Blackberry Mountain.

The HWA arrived in Georgia in 2003, and has infected the state's hemlock range at an unprecedented rate. The HWA is spread primarily by deer, birds, wildlife, wind, pets, humans and the transplanting of infected hemlocks. The HWA is now throughout the north Georgia mountains. Most of the untreated hemlocks in Georgia's northeastern counties are already dead.

In addition to the obvious environmental value to wildlife and plants, hemlocks are an integral part of protecting our waterways. Their extensive root systems prevent bank erosion, protect water-quality and prevent build-up of harmful bacteria. The loss of hemlocks will reduce shade, thereby raising the water temperatures and damaging the entire aquatic ecosystem. A rise in the Cartecay's temperature will make the river uninhabitable for many of its current species.



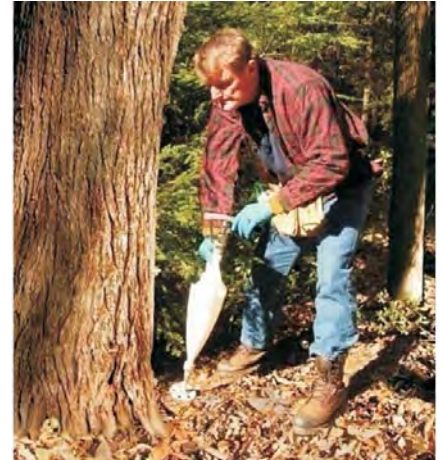
Several negative outcomes can be expected if we lose our hemlocks:

- Threat of falling trees
- Accumulation of dead trees
- Decline of aesthetic value
- Loss of privacy
- Risk of personal injury
- Damage to property
- Increased soil erosion
- Increased fire hazard
- Rise of invasive plant species
- Cost of removing dead trees
- [Decline in property values](#)



Over the past few years, Blackberry's hemlocks have been monitored for infestation, the common area trees have been treated as have a few property owners'. Normally the HWA does not begin reproducing until early April. but this year, because of the warm winter/early spring, the HWA is already reproducing in large numbers throughout Blackberry. At this rate, every hemlock in Blackberry will be infected within the year, and untreated, they will be dead within 3 to 5 years.

Accordingly the Blackberry board has elected to begin treatment of all Association common area and property owners' hemlocks. The treatment will be performed by a professional, state licensed, commercial pesticide applicator. The most environmentally-friendly and cost effective method for treating hemlocks against the woolly adelgid is chemical control — soil-injected Imidacloprid, a neo-nicotinoid, systemic insecticide used in household bug killers and pet flea control products.



When applied professionally, Imidacloprid is a safe product for humans, wildlife, plants, wells and waterways. An on-going USFS study of treated trees within 50 feet of streams shows that only trace amounts of Imidacloprid enter the streams, not enough to impact aquatic organisms, and it has no effect on macroinvertebrates. Imidacloprid has been used throughout the Appalachian mountains with no ill effects. The Blackberry board has voted to allocate \$6000 from

the reserve fund for treatment this year. There will need to be an ongoing HWA treatment program, if Blackberry is to save its hemlocks.

What We Can Do Now

- Don't encourage deer to feed or be on your property
- Don't encourage birds to feed or roost in your hemlocks
- Don't transplant hemlocks
- Don't plant nursery-grown hemlocks into your landscape
- Use caution not to brush against hemlock branches when walking and working on your property
- Wash any clothes that might come in contact with hemlock branches immediately
- Park vehicles in areas clear of hemlock branches