

Focus on Forest Health 2012: A Forest Health Update

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2012 has been an interesting year in the forest health realm. The weather seems to have gone from one extreme to the other from last year until now, and the impacts of this can be seen across the state in both woodlands and landscapes. With a warm winter and early spring, common forest pests were seen earlier than normal this year, including emerald ash borer, eastern tent caterpillars, locust leaf miner, and others. Many landscape trees, especially conifers, are suffering from the heat and drought, and in some cases are dying due to the extremes after the last few years' abundance of rain.

This year also saw several widespread pests that have gotten a lot of attention from woodland owners. Tuliptree scale, an insect that attaches itself to the stems of yellow-poplar, was especially bad in southern and central Ohio. This insect secretes a sweet sap called honeydew that falls onto anything below where the insects are attached to the tree. This honeydew is then colonized by black sooty mold fungus. Between the fungus and damage to the poplars themselves, many people have been concerned about the health of these trees. In general, one year of scale infestations will not cause significant damage to them, but it is something to keep an eye out for next year.

Another widespread pest seen this year was jumping oak gall. The insect responsible for the small, brown, circular galls on the leaves of white oaks is a wasp which lays its eggs on the newly developing leaves in the spring. This pest has been prevalent throughout southern Ohio, and combined with the drought and several other insects that defoliate white oaks, has really hit the white oaks hard. For the second summer in a row, scarlet oak sawfly has also been reported on pin oaks in northeastern Ohio.

In addition to the normal forest pests we have been seeing this year--even if they have been abnormal in timing or severity--another important note in Ohio was the discovery of the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) in southeastern Ohio. More information on this insect can be found in the summer 2012 edition of *The Ohio Woodland Journal*. So far, HWA has been found in two counties – Meigs and Washington, but all landowners with hemlock on their property are encouraged to inspect their trees regularly for adelgids.

On the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) front in Ohio, a new satellite infestation was discovered in July. This infestation is still within Clermont County, but is located in Stonelick Township, two townships north of the main infestation discovered in 2011 in Tate Township. The property where this infestation was found had received infested firewood in 2010, prior to the discovery of ALB in Ohio last year. Survey efforts continue both in the main area of infestation as well as in Stonelick Township. As of the writing of this article, a total of 8,860 infested trees have been detected, and of these, 8,489 have been removed. The Environmental Assessment released to address further plans for ALB eradication in Ohio was open to the public for comments this spring, and at this time, that comment period has ended and the comments received are being reviewed. The results of this comment period should be released sometime this fall.

Ohio's forests and woodlands are some of the greatest natural resources we have in the state. Frequent inspection of your woods and proper forest management will help keep your woodland

healthy. Invasive insects are more easily controlled if caught early on, and most native pests primarily attack stressed trees, making good forest management important for more than timber production and wildlife habitat.

More information on forest health issues can be found on the ODNR Division of Forestry web site at www.ohiodnr.com/forestry or the Ohio Department of Agriculture web site at www.agri.ohio.gov.

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