

SOME BACKGROUND ON THE ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE

The beetles were first discovered in Brooklyn, New York in 1996 and spread to neighboring Queens, infesting areas in Sunnyside, Woodside, Astoria, Long Island City, Maspeth, Ridgewood and later in Bayside and Flushing. Small infestations were also found in Flushing Meadows Park, Forest Park in Woodhaven and Kew Gardens Hills. New York city has lost over 4,000 trees because infested ones have to be cut down, chipped and burned. There is no natural predator for the alien beetle, which it is believed were brought to this country inadvertently in wood-packing material from Asia about 15 years ago. The federal government fears spread of these insects because if left unchecked, their reproductive cycle eventually kills the host tree. In New York State, officials are concerned that the beetles will be transported upstate in cut wood, devastating the forests and maple syrup industry.

The only other areas affected are Chicago, a small area in New Jersey and Islip, Long Island, port areas where the beetles arrived from overseas. But Joseph Gittleman, co-director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Asian Long-horned Beetle Program is encouraged that the insects here are being kept in check. "We have found less pockets in Queens this year," he said, "and are concentrating heavily on outlying areas of quarantine areas." His agency is focusing on inoculation for trees in these previously infested areas. They are wither injected with a pesticide into the trunk or into the dirt around the trees, where it is absorbed by the tree roots. This year, 19,358 trees were treated in the borough, mostly in Western Queens and the Bayside area. Gittleman is looking forward to improved technology that will make the inoculations easier to apply and take less time.

The USDA is currently waiting for results on testing done on Long Island trees injected by using an air pressure technique. "It gets more ingredients directly into the trees," Gittleman said. The agency is studying whether the "tree shots" do any damage. If not, Gittleman believes it will be the primary tool used for inoculations. "It's quick and on the horizon. Our workers won't have to hang around a property for four hours." The Asian long-horned beetles are known for their long antennae and spotted bodies. They bore dime-size holes into trees to lay their eggs, which is the easiest way to detect if a tree is infested. The beetles favor maple, chestnut, poplar, willow, elm, ash, birch and sycamore. The insects can only be spotted in the warm weather, when they emerge from the trees. Infested areas remain under a five-year quarantine and residents may not transport wood in these areas. Fines can run as high as \$250,000. Those locations are inspected twice a year. After the five years, the area must be free of insects for three years before a quarantine is lifted. If you think a tree on your property is infested with the beetles, call the USDA hot line at 1-866-265-0301, or the Univ. of Vermont ALHB Hotline at 802-656-5434. More information about this nasty pest that threatens the maple industry can be found at www.uv.edu/albeetle.

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