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Contributed photo

Trees infested by hemlock wooly adelgids are easily recognized from November to June by these white, waxy sacs. If no steps are taken to treat this tree, it will die. Photo by Michael Montgomery, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

## Dead hemlocks can become costly

### Save Georgia's Hemlocks

It may seem a stretch between the death of trees and damage to a way of life, but it's really not. You're probably aware that hemlock trees are being attacked by an invasive insect, the woolly adelgid, which can kill them in as few as three to six years after infestation. The hemlocks in most north Georgia counties are infested; many trees are in decline, and some have already died.

Aesthetically, these beautiful trees contribute greatly to the enjoyment of those who live, work, and play among them, as well as the many people who come to north Georgia for tourism and recreation. Environmentally, they are vital in providing food and habitat for birds and other wildlife, shade for native plants, cool temperatures for trout streams and protection for

watersheds and water quality. And economically, healthy mature trees such as hemlocks can add 7 to 10 percent to private property values and save communities enormous amounts of money through the water purification and air filtration they perform.

Following these threads in more detail, if the area's attractiveness and environmental health decrease, so may the income, jobs and tax revenue associated with tourism, recreation (especially trout fishing), property sales and property values — worsening the revenue shortfall for the county and state. Adding the possibility of increased community costs to deal with water and air quality degradation and the personal costs of tree removal and loss of property value, the picture is gloomy indeed.

But there is good news.

In most cases, property owners and public agencies can still save their hemlocks for much less than the cost of losing them. Reliable chemical treatments are

available, and the process is simple enough for most individuals to do it themselves; there are also qualified local professionals who provide this service.

The public is invited to a free Hemlock Help Clinic about the hemlock problem and solutions at 10 a.m., Saturday, June 25, at the Gilmer County Library, located at 268 Calvin Jackson Drive in Ellijay. The Clinic is offered by Save Georgia's Hemlocks, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, conserving and restoring endangered hemlocks through education and charitable service.

To learn more, visit [www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org](http://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org) or call 706-429-8010.