

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid: The bug that is eating the forest

by Jenni Veal on April 21, 2010



A giant eastern hemlock

The **eastern hemlock tree**, a keystone species in the stream-side forests of the southern Appalachian region, is one of the most beautiful trees found in the Southern landscape. However, the hemlock is experiencing widespread decline and mortality because of hemlock woolly adelgid (a tiny non-native insect) infestation.

New research (published in the journal *EcoSystem*) by U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station (SRS) scientists and partners suggests the hemlock woolly adelgid is killing hemlock trees faster than expected in the southern Appalachians and rapidly altering the carbon cycle of these forests.

According to the study: “The woolly adelgid has the potential to kill most of the region’s hemlock trees within the next decade. As a native evergreen capable of maintaining year-round transpiration rates, hemlock trees play an important role in the ecology and hydrology of mountain ecosystems. Hemlock forests provide critical habitat for birds and other animals; their shade helps maintain the cool water temperatures required by trout and other aquatic organisms in mountain streams.”

The nonprofit group **Save Georgia’s Hemlocks** has organized to help save the hemlocks by providing information, resources and workshops to help citizens protect hemlock trees. The group offers “Hemlock Help for Homeowners” workshops and has a fantastic Web site that offers information and resources if you have hemlock trees on your property and want to protect them.

I recently attended a workshop at the Chattanooga Nature Center and had the opportunity to speak with Carl Absher, an arborist and owner of ABC Tree Service in Chattanooga, Tenn., who instructed participants in how to treat hemlock trees that are infested with the woolly adelgid.

Click on the link to the right to see our video interview with Absher as he provides a status report on the hemlocks of the South. *Please be patient. It may take a few moments for this video to load.*

I also recommend looking at the [Save Georgia’s Hemlocks](http://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.com/) web site for more information and for “Hemlock Help for Homeowners” workshop schedules.



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aY4D_DpRPpk&feature=player_embedded

Comment by Jim [April 26, 2010 at 3:45 pm](#)

Your town council can make a big impact! Go to your local council meeting and do a quick 5 minute presentation with the information from Georgia's Hemlock's website. It doesn't take an expert, just some enthusiasm. Small communities can work together and do a mass treatment to protect these wonderful conifers. There is a Lorax deep inside all of us!