



## Spring is time for treating hemlock trees

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The hemlocks in Lumpkin County are being threatened by a spreading infestation of the hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive insect from Asia with no local natural predator. You can identify it by the tiny white woolly egg sacs that appear on the underside of the hemlock branches.

If infested trees are not treated, they will almost certainly die within as few as 3-6 years. The good news is that homeowners can save as many of their hemlocks as they want with safe, easy-to-use, and inexpensive chemical controls. Here's how.

**Doing it yourself.** Treating your own hemlocks is the most cost-effective option. The recommended product for mild to moderate infestations is a water-soluble powder containing 75% Imidacloprid, a nicotine-based substance (the same one used in pet flea collars). The recommended application method is soil injection, which places the material directly into the feeder root mass. The preparation steps are to measure the trunk diameter of the trees you want to treat and add them up for a total, acquire the treatment product, borrow a soil injector, and then read and follow the instructions. The treatment process itself is easy, using an injector to make small holes in the soil close to the trunk and pumping a specific amount of treatment solution into each one. In Lumpkin County, soil injectors for the public to borrow have been furnished by the Lumpkin Coalition and the Georgia Forestry Commission.

**Hiring a professional.** If you aren't into doing it yourself, you can contract with a qualified local professional for the services. "Qualified" means the company is properly licensed and insured, specializes in treating hemlocks, will travel to your property to provide a free estimate, and charges reasonable rates.

**Figuring the cost.** The cost is based on the treatment product used and the size (trunk diameter) of the tree. For example, treating your own trees with Imidacloprid can cost as little as \$.18 to \$.54 per inch, so you can save a large hemlock 16 inches in diameter for about \$4.32. If you hire a professional, saving that size tree might cost around \$24. For badly infested or very large trees that need a faster-acting product called Safari, the cost is about three times higher.

If you're considering not treating your trees, here are some "hidden" costs to think about. Having one large tree removed can cost anywhere from \$300 to \$1,500. Healthy mature trees such as hemlocks can contribute 7-10 percent of the property value; so on a \$200,000 property, losing all the hemlocks could cost the homeowner \$14,000 - \$20,000 or more.

For information on where to borrow soil injectors (free with a refundable deposit), advice on purchasing treatment products economically, instructions for the treatment procedure, list of qualified local professionals, and other locally available services, please call the Hemlock Help Line 706-429-8010.