

## Battle against beetles

A longtime pest's re-emergence on Long Island and the city sparks a concerted effort to eradicate it

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After a one-year hiatus, the Asian long-horned beetle has made its presence known again on Long Island, and federal officials are looking for help. The bugs have infested 34 trees in Massapequa, federal officials said. Those trees, along with 190 others nearby that could be affected, will be cut down. The plagued trees, at the intersection of Carman Mill Road and Old Sunrise Highway, were discovered starting in early April, said John Dodd, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. More beetles could be found as workers continue surveying the area.

The infested trees are "part of the nature of the battle," Dodd said, adding that the good news was they were spotted before the "flight season," from June to October, when grown beetles typically crawl out of the trees and lay more eggs. Officials also are chopping down 190 trees nearby that are considered to be high-risk host trees, such as maples, the type that beetles like to lay their eggs in.

"The best way is to take the source of the food out," said Dodd, of the department's Asian long-horned beetle cooperative eradication program, which works with state and local governments to destroy the beetles.

The trees were within the established quarantine zones where the beetles have been previously seen.

No sightings were reported last year, but in 2003, flare-ups were found in Amityville, Copiague and Massapequa.

The shiny, jet-black beetles with long antennae and blue-hued feet were found in the United States in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn in 1996. They destroy the sap flow of trees, weakening them from inside. Females can lay as many as 100 eggs at a time in the trees, and the offspring eventually chew their way out as adults.

Among the infested Massapequa trees were some that were riddled with exit holes, a sign that they had been attacked more than a year ago, Dodd said. This year, 11 infested trees have been found in Brooklyn, one in Queens, and one in Central Park, according to the USDA.

As part of the annual precautionary measure, about 4,900 trees in Lindenhurst are being treated with insecticide. Trees in Islip were treated last year.

The USDA is asking the public for help in identifying affected trees. The beetles favor maple, willow, ash, birch, horse chestnut, poplar, elm and sycamore trees, among others. People should be on the lookout for sawdust on the tree, discolored leaves and exit holes. Anyone with information can call 866-265-0301.

# Meet the beetle

Asian long-horned beetles, first spotted in the area in 1996, can destroy forests of healthy hardwood trees. The shiny, jet-black insects have no known predators and cannot be killed by pesticides.

1. A female beetle chews a small tunnel into a tree and deposits about 20 eggs behind the bark.
2. After eggs hatch, larvae feed on the wood, boring deeper into the tree as they grow, eventually killing it.
3. When they are fullgrown, the beetles burrow out of the tree, creating holes 3/8" in diameter.

What to look for

- o Large piles of sawdust around tree
- o Sap flowing from trees
- o Dying leaves

Some other epidemics

- o Greenpoint, Brooklyn, 1996
- o Amityville, 1996
- o Manhattan, 1996
- o Flushing, 2000
- o Amityville, Copiague, Massapequa 2003

SOURCES: USDA FOREST SERVICE, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

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