

Destructive Insects: Bagworms, Borers, and Adelgid

Growing up I had some unbelievable [White Pines over 100 years old](#) in the side yard towering over the chimneys of my colonial house. We decided to add a few Spruce trees to create a natural barrier between my house and the neighbors. They were nice people, but we'd rather have them see our trees than what we were grilling for dinner. About 15 years after planting the Spruce trees, we noticed some weird looking pine cones growing on them but thought nothing of it. A few weeks later, some branches had turned brown. Before we knew it, half of the trees were dead while the rest were so infested, there was nothing we could do. So with my brother and dad, saws and chainsaws in hand, took them down one by one. We later found out that the culprit of this heinous crime was none other than the devious [Bagworm](#).

We were petrified the white pines would be next. Thankfully an [ISA Certified Arborist](#) came out and confirmed they were okay. If not, we would have been out a couple thousand dollars in tree removal costs, along with four 100 plus year old trees. All of this though, from trying to figure out what's going on and removing the dead trees, to worrying about the



possibility of having to remove even more trees, could have easily been avoided if we had just called at the first sign of a problem.

Bagworms are found all over the world and can have devastating effects on whatever host tree they cling to. The demise of your trees starts when the female bagworm lays as many as 1,800 eggs in a sac made of silk and local environmental materials such as pine needles, sand, pebbles, among others. Once the sac hatches [the larva begin to devour its host tree](#), eventually leading to the host tree's demise. One of the biggest infestations over the last few years has been in Florida where thousands of orange trees have perished, leading to a massive shortage recently. If you happen to see one or two on your trees, simply remove them and destroy the sac. If more are present, it's recommended to call a Certified Arborist to set up a time to spray your trees and shrubs to avoid an infestation on your and your neighbor's property.

Of course, Bagworms aren't the only threat. There are a whole slew of [destructive insects](#) that are out to ruin your trees and shrubs.

Next on the list is a true terror, responsible for committing mass murder of the highly cherished, Eastern Hemlock. Of course I'm talking about the extremely deadly Woolly Adelgid. Introduced to North America by accident from Japan, these little critters survive by clinging to Hemlock and Spruce trees, and sucking the sap from their branches. They have taken a particular liking to the Eastern Hemlock where it is predicted 90% of the geographical range has been affected by these tiny terrors, threatening to push [Pennsylvania's State Tree to the brink of extinction](#). If you have Spruce or Hemlock on your property, it is highly recommended to get them treated to stop the spread of the Woolly Adelgid. If you choose to wait for a warning sign, it's recommended to look at the underside of your tree's branches to see if you can see any small white tufts that resemble cotton. These are the Adelgid's egg sacs. Once they hatch in the spring, it can already be too late.

The last culprit on our list is the boring beetle, in particular, the [Emerald Ash Borer](#). Any boring beetle is absolute trouble for your trees. But recently, the greater Philadelphia area has been overrun by the Emerald Ash Borer. Infestation can happen in a flash, with little or no signs of initial contact between your trees and these beetles. First they'll simply hop on your trees to snack on some foliage. But once they lay their eggs, that's when the problems start. The eggs will hatch and the larva will burrow into the trees to feed on the heartwood. Once these larva come of age, they will repeat this process in the same tree or another nearby Ash tree. Since 2002, the Emerald Ash Borer has been responsible for killing hundreds of millions of Ash trees in North America alone and costing homeowners hundreds of millions of dollars in the process, and they're only picking up steam. I only mention Emerald Ash Borers, but if you have other soft wood trees like birch, dogwood, pine, poplar or the like, keep on the lookout for tiny holes in your tree. This is where any number of borers have entered or exited your tree, meaning larva are camping out inside. Another sign of infestation is increased woodpecker activity trying to snack on the borers.

Of course there are other pests you have to worry about as well, but these incredibly destructive insects are on the top of our most wanted list. All three are extremely lethal, killing your tree in a matter of a few months to a few years. If you see any signs of these extremely invasive insects, it is highly recommended to [call Giroud Tree and Lawn](#) to come out for a free consultation. Our ISA Certified Arborists are highly trained to identify the warning signs of any infestation, and can recommend a treatment plan to ensure the longevity of your trees, and save you thousands of dollars down the road by avoiding a costly tree removal.