

Hemlock Facts and Fiction

Part 1: The Hemlock Crisis

Fiction can be fun, but in the case of the hemlock trees vs. the hemlock woolly adelgids that threaten to wipe out the species, fiction can be fatal. So for the sake of the trees and everyone who loves them, Save Georgia's Hemlocks would like to offer a reality check.



Fiction: Hemlocks are like any other trees. If one kind dies, another will take its place so the loss won't really matter.

Fact: Hemlock is a keystone species, and there is no other tree that performs the same vital functions. With a massive die-off of these majestic evergreens, wildlife will lose habitat; shade-loving plants will suffer; water quality in rivers will deteriorate; rise in stream temperature will adversely affect trout populations; soil erosion and danger of forest fires will increase; property values and revenue from tourism and recreation will decline.

Fiction: If you can't see adelgids or their white cottony egg sacs on your hemlocks, there's no need to worry.

Fact: Adelgids and their egg sacs are very tiny and easy to miss. The infestation spreads rapidly, so if adelgids are within 25 miles of your property, take action to protect your trees. Actually, at this point in time, if you have hemlocks on your property, it's best to assume they either are or will be infested and plan to treat them as soon as possible.

Fiction: If your hemlocks already have adelgids, there's nothing you can do. Just cut them down.

Fact: There are many inexpensive and effective treatment products available, so you can save as many of your trees as you wish, often even if they're heavily infested.

Fiction: Only small hemlocks less than a foot in diameter can be saved.

Fact: Trees of any size can be treated. Try to save as many large ones as well as some middle-sized and small ones to allow for generational succession.

Fiction: Spring is the only time to treat hemlocks.

Fact: Researchers now say that in the South you can treat year-round; soil treatments can be done any time the ground isn't saturated or frozen. Since adelgids can kill hemlocks in just 3-6 years, ASAP is really the best time to treat!