

# Project Instructions - Hemlock Sapling/Seedling Rescue

This document is for the leader of a charitable project approved by the SGH Board to rescue saplings or seedlings to be used for future planting, donated to schools or other nonprofits, or offered for adoption.

## Project planning

1. Secure property owner's or land manager's permission to dig and understand any requirements about digging site(s) and number of saplings to be taken.
2. Engage an adequate number of volunteers from SGH membership, Master Gardeners, students seeking service credit hours, and other organizations. Typically a group of 3 volunteers can dig 20 saplings or 30 seedlings in an hour.

When volunteers sign up, SGH will confirm their participation by email and send a copy of the *Project Details*. In addition, for any volunteers who are minors, SGH will send a permission form that must be signed by a parent or guardian and brought to the project.

3. Based on the number of volunteers signed up and saplings to be dug, SGH will ensure an adequate supply of appropriate tools. See *Checklist*. If volunteers bring their own tools, they should label them with their name.
4. Except for items volunteers will bring, have project materials, tools, and supplies on site prior to potting project. Be sure tools are clean, in good working condition, and marked with owner's name.
5. Arrange to get fresh water from a hose or faucet if possible or plan to bring gallons of water. If water will be taken from a stream, bring one or more clean containers to use for dipping. Chemical jugs must never be dipped into a waterway.
6. Make copies of the *Release / Waiver of Liability* on which volunteers will sign in as they arrive at the project and *Volunteer Instructions* to use during the digging.

## Orientation for volunteers

1. **Welcome volunteers** as they arrive. Ask each participant to sign the *Release / Waiver of Liability* form and fill out and wear a name tag.
2. **Make sure each participant is properly attired** -- Dressed for the weather and terrain with long pants and long sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes/boots with socks, work gloves. Provide work gloves for anyone who doesn't have them.
3. **Explain project significance** to natural and human communities (*adjust depending on audience*):
  - **Aesthetically**, hemlocks contribute greatly to the enjoyment of those who live, work, and play among them, as well as the many people who come to north Georgia for tourism and recreation.
  - **Ecologically**, hemlocks help maintain the health and biodiversity of our forests and provide food and habitat for a diverse population of birds and other animals, shade for native plants, and cool temperatures for trout streams.
  - **Environmentally**, hemlocks are vital for protecting the quality of our waterways and watersheds, preventing soil erosion on mountain slopes and around waterways, and maintaining our air quality.
  - **Economically**, healthy mature trees such as hemlocks support jobs and local tax revenues associated with tourism and recreation and supporting the value of private properties and the community as a whole.
  - **And on a personal note**, hemlocks are the favorite tree of so many people who grew up visiting the woods, taking their children and grandchildren to the woods for memorable family outings, and teaching lessons of respect and personal responsibility, wise use of resources, and environmental stewardship.
  - **But they are under attack** by an invasive insect, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), and most will die unless action is taken to prevent it. Even with our efforts to chemically treat as many trees as possible and to support the establishment of biological controls, the overall number of hemlocks in the landscape will be greatly reduced over time.
  - **And that's where we come in**. By digging these saplings that are not designated for treatment by their owner or public land manager, we're rescuing them from almost certain death. And once they're potted and treated for adelgids, they can be used for future replanting, donation to schools and other nonprofits, or offered for adoption, we are helping to ensure there will be a population of healthy hemlocks for future generations.



## Project preparation

1. Explain that volunteers will be working in teams of three to locate, dig, and bag a total of \_\_\_\_ saplings. Make team assignments.
2. Ensure that each team has one or two shovels and an adequate number of plastic grocery bags.
3. Point out the area in which each team will be working and explain the parameters about the number of saplings that can be dug.
4. Explain the rescue tasks: choosing trees to rescue, digging and bagging the trees, repairing the digging site, and bringing bagged trees to the collection or potting station. Demonstrate with one sapling. Then ask if there are any questions, and get started.

## Sapling Rescue Tasks

### Choosing trees to rescue

- Seedling Size: 6 to 12 inches
- Sapling Size: 12 to 36 inches tall, preferably in the 18 to 30 inch range
- Condition: healthy, no (or very few) adelgids visible, free of *Rosellinia* needle blight and tip blight
- Shape: straight and well branched, preferably single stems rather than clusters

### Digging and bagging trees

1. Dig root ball about as wide as drip line and 4 to 8 inches deep, depending on the size of the tree.
2. Keeping root ball intact, lift it with both hands and place it in plastic grocery bag. Several small trees can be bagged together.
3. Tie handles of bag one time (not a square knot) around base of stem(s) and place bag in shade.
4. Also dig extra native soil to be combined with soil amendments to make the planting mix.

### Repairing digging site

1. Leave No Trace: Re-contour and press down the dirt where the native soil and little trees are removed so as not to leave unsightly or hazardous holes.
2. Replace needle duff and leaf debris to restore site to its original appearance.

### Bringing bagged trees and native soil to collection / potting station

1. It is best to minimize the time between removing the tree from its original growing site and repotting it so as to prevent the roots from drying out.
2. Bring bagged trees and native soil to the collection / potting station once every half hour or whenever the tub / cart is full (whichever comes first) and place them in the shade.
3. If the little trees will not be potted on site immediately, moisten the root balls and re-tie the plastic grocery bag.
4. If they must be taken to another site for potting, it is best to transport them in the cargo area inside vehicle. If transporting them in the open bed of a pickup truck, cover them with a tied-down tarp to prevent wind burn.
5. At their destination, place them in a shady location to await potting.

## At end of sapling rescue project

1. **Collect SGH tools** and other supplies from volunteers and make sure all are accounted for. Tools/equipment should be cleaned on site or bagged and taken home for cleaning. Make note of anything that needs repair or replacement.
2. **Forward original** signed *Release / Waiver of Liability* forms to Donna. Project leader may retain a copy.
3. **Thank volunteers for their good work** and wish them safe travel home.