

# Hemlock scale spreading among evergreens

An extensive survey for the hemlock scale by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station shows that the insect is more widespread and attacks a greater variety of evergreens than previously thought.

Dr. Mark McClure, an entomologist at the Experiment Station, said that all 16 towns within a triangle running from Greenwich to Danbury to Stratford are infested. In all, 279 locations in 31 towns were checked for hemlock scale.

The elongate hemlock scale, which throughout most of its life looks more like a fish scale than the insect it is, attacks the underside of needles and feeds on sap. It prefers new needles, and primarily attacks the bottom branches. It may kill a

hemlock within a few years.

McClure found the heaviest infestations in Greenwich, Stamford, New Cannan and Ridgefield. "There was not a single uninfested site among 52 samples in these towns," he said.

McClure said that the distribution of the hemlock scale is as would be expected for such a wind-dispersed insect. It was introduced in Queens, N.Y. in 1908, and has since spread slowly into southeastern Connecticut.

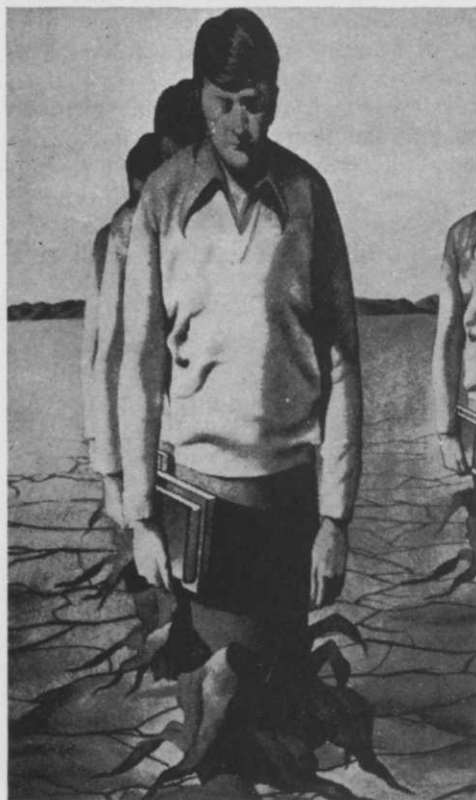
An exception is an isolated heavy infestation in a part of New Haven, which McClure says probably resulted from the scale being brought there by man rather than carried by the wind.

McClure spent last summer looking at insect parasites and predators that could possibly be used in biological control of the scale. In some towns, he found one parasite which commonly kills 40 to 50 percent of the scale.

But this winter in Ridgefield, where he was investigating an area of hemlocks that was heavily infested, McClure found another parasite that kills between 80 and 99 percent of the hemlock scales.

McClure and Michael Ferigione also found that exotic firs, spruces, pines and hemlocks that had not previously been reported as hosts for the scale were being successfully attacked. □

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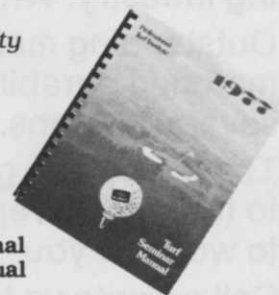
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