

State Plant Inspectors Advise Consumers to Properly Dispose of Holiday Greenery

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High-resolution photo: [Evergreen with EHS](#)

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) advises consumers who purchased evergreens this holiday season to check for an invasive pest called elongate hemlock scale (EHS) and properly dispose of any holiday greenery that may show signs of infestation. Plant health inspectors found EHS this year at multiple Wisconsin retailers who imported and sold the evergreens that came from other states.

“You can leave decorations up for the holidays, but we want to make sure consumers are disposing of infested evergreens properly to prevent this pest from establishing itself in Wisconsin,” said Brian Kuhn, Director of DATCP’s Bureau of Plant Industry. “If you know your evergreen did not come from Wisconsin, or it is showing signs of EHS, make sure you dispose of it properly. Proper disposal protects our state’s forests and Christmas tree producers from EHS.”

What to Look For

Consumers can identify whether their evergreens have EHS by looking at the underside of the branches. Brown spots on the underside of the needles are a sign of the pest.

This season, infested stock was comprised of fir trees, wreaths, and décor from suppliers in North Carolina with some material labeled as “fresh from the Blue Ridge Mountains.” All Wisconsin retailers that sold these products cooperated with DATCP, removed the items from their shelves and destroyed them. However, many items had already been sold, and it is possible other uninspected retailers also received and sold infested items.

DATCP is working with regulatory staff from other states to prevent infested fir from going to areas where this pest is not established, as pesticides are not effective at killing EHS. EHS attacks over 40 evergreen species, including hemlock, fir, and spruce.

How to Dispose

The preferred method is to burn an EHS-infested evergreen to kill the pest. Prior to burning, check the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website at <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ForestFire/restrictions.html> for any burning restrictions in your area.

The other method is to bag your evergreen wreaths or décor separately and put them in the trash. If your municipality picks up Christmas trees, you may put an infested tree out for municipal pick-up.

To prevent the pests from spreading, **do not** compost or place infested evergreens in a forest.

More Information

To learn more about EHS visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/EHS.aspx.

DATCP’s Bureau of Plant Industry licenses about 2,000 nurseries and Christmas tree farms annually. The bureau works to control serious plant pests, diseases, and exotic species that threaten Wisconsin’s crops, forests, and plant communities.

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