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The Balsam Woolly Adelgid is Not a Threat to Humans, Animals or Homes

THE FACTS:

- The balsam woolly adelgid is a tiny wingless, sap-feeding insect native to Europe that feeds on true fir trees, including balsam, concolor (white) and Fraser fir. The balsam woolly adelgid does not feed on Douglas fir trees, which are not true firs.
- While the balsam woolly adelgid can infect some varieties of fir trees, it is not a threat to humans, animals or homes.
- According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, the balsam woolly adelgid was likely introduced accidentally into the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada on nursery stock around 1900. Since then, the insect has become established in areas of the Pacific Northwest, as well as in the mountainous regions of Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee.
- Recently, in July 2021, the balsam woolly adelgid was detected for the first time near Grand Rapids, Michigan, in a few fir trees planted in a lawn in a residential area. The infested trees have been removed from the property and destroyed. Fir trees are uncommon in the area and to date, there is no indication that the adelgids spread beyond this location.
- Officials from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will, however, continue to survey fir trees in the vicinity of the original infestation to ensure that this invasive pest does not become established.

BALSAM WOOLLY ADELGID AND CHRISTMAS TREES:

- While balsam woolly adelgid can only colonize true fir trees, such as balsam fir and Fraser fir, it is highly unlikely that consumers will observe one in their Christmas tree.
- “Christmas tree growers regularly examine and monitor their trees and would notice if a balsam woolly adelgid population became established. Even in the highly unlikely scenario that a Christmas tree was infested with this pest, the adelgids would not pose any risk to your home, your family or pets,” said Dr. Deborah McCullough, a professor of forest entomology at Michigan State University, with expertise in forest insect ecology and management.
- Christmas tree growers follow integrated pest management practices, including regular scouting and inspection of the trees, to minimize threats posed by insects like the balsam woolly adelgid.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BALSAM WOOLLY ADELGID, PLEASE VISIT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

- <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/balsam-woolly-adelgid>
- https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev2_043667.pdf