



Stubborn Pests

Even as I read through Colleen Heraty's tree care article (page 20), trees are making headlines in my own backyard once again. In April, I told you about the destructive Asian long-horned beetle infestation that surfaced in Chicago last year. I watched as the City systematically removed whole blocks of beautiful trees in an aggressive push to exterminate the pests.

Since then, the infestation has expanded beyond the original quarantine area. The number of trees removed has swelled from 450 to 925, and this figure continues to rise. Still, the City insists that its tactics have been highly successful, and that the problem is under control.

On the nightly PBS program, *Chicago Tonight*, a panel of City and County officials described their long-term strategy in the war on Asian beetles. The initial quarantine and disposal of affected trees was designed to strike at the heart of the problem, but it was simply the first step in a broad-plan.

With the beetles' core population eliminated, officials will continue to monitor trees in areas surrounding the quarantined Ravenswood neighborhood for signs of further infestation. Outbreaks are being handled on a case by case basis, and affected trees are being removed immediately on detection. While beetles have been found in two other communities in Chicago's suburbs, officials maintain that they are isolated incidents that are being watched carefully.

The *Chicago Tonight* panel suggested that total extermination could take years. However, panel members lauded early successes, and attributed the results to an extensive public awareness campaign and solid cooperation with the City of New York, another area that has felt the devastation.

Since they have no natural predators in this country, and effective insecticide programs are not available, public awareness is our best defense against the Asian beetles. In a *Chicago Tribune* commentary, New York State Department of Agriculture Commissioner Nathan Rudgers asserts, "The Asian long-horned beetle is thought to possess the greatest destruction potential of any plant pest previously introduced into North America." This is not a small bug problem, and it's not simply a concern for Chicago and New York.

Government regulations now prohibit China's use of untreated-wood shipping crates, which are believed to be the original source of the problem. However, the beetles are thought to have arrived in Chicago up to seven years ago, and they may have been in New York for a decade. We've got to do more than cross our fingers and hope the pests haven't spread any further.

Facilities in and around Chicago and New York should closely monitor trees for the beetles' characteristic quarter-sized bore holes. At the same time, facilities around the country must remain alert to prevent the problem from spreading.

At the first sign of a possible infestation, contact the Department of Agriculture immediately. Do not attempt to take on the beetles alone.

For further tree care information, visit *Arbor Age* at the Green Industry's comprehensive Web site: www.sportsturfonline.com. Take a minute to complete the *sportsTURF* reader survey while you're there.

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Tip o' the Month

First Defense

by Floyd Perry



Athletic facility safety issues extend beyond the fields of play. Management teams must alert all facility users, including visitors, spectators, and athletes, to potential dangers that surround them.

Well-placed, clearly marked signs can help protect your facility users, while protecting your facility from liability at the same time:

- Alert facility users to your rules and regulations as they first enter the grounds.
- Place your foul ball signs in key positions to keep facility users alert and aware of the danger.
- Remind individuals that they are personally responsible for their actions.
- Ask the community to help police the area to prevent destruction, vandalism, and inappropriate behavior.

Effective signs respectfully remind people to act responsibly. They can help keep your department out of the newspapers and away from the courtroom.

Floyd Perry is author of three books: *The Pictorial Guides to Quality Groundskeeping: I - Covering the Bases; II - There Ain't No Rules; and III - Maintain It Easy, Keep It Safe.* He also produces two videos: *The ABC's of Grounds Maintenance: Vol. 1, Softball; and Vol. 2, Baseball.* For more information, call: (800) 227-9381, or visit: <http://gms.simplenet.com>.