

City asks NYers to help stop Asian beetle

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The city is asking New Yorkers to help stem the spread of the Asian long-horned beetle.

"The Asian long-horned beetle poses a potentially devastating threat to our urban canopy," said Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe Wednesday before the last of the two infected trees was cut down along Fifth. "I urge all New Yorkers to do their part in stopping the beetle."

In April, larvae of the inch-long bug were found in two American elm trees along Fifth Avenue on Central Park's edge. So far this year, 11 trees in Brooklyn and one in Queens were found to be infested. The bug is a shiny black beetle with white spots and two antennae that are as long as its body.

Benepe asked that residents of Queens, Manhattan and Brooklyn not dispose of backyard debris, such as trees, stumps, branches and fire wood on their own, but instead call 311 so the city can trash it properly to stop the inadvertent transfer of the bug's larvae to a healthy tree.

"You don't want your backyard tree to be the typhoid Mary of the Asian long-horned beetle," Benepe said.

Residents are also asked to allow city inspectors to access their property so trees can be inspected, and simply to be on the lookout for the bug itself.

"This is how you can get kids involved, it's extremely easy to spot, if you see it once it's so unlike any other insect in this area," Benepe said. "If you see a hole the width of pencil and a fine sawdust that is also a sign of infestation."

He also suggested residents contact their senators or congressional representative to make sure funding for a program to eradicate the beetle is properly funded.

The Asian long-horned beetle was first discovered in the United States in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn in 1996. Since mid-March, 1,315 trees in Central Park have been surveyed.

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