

New pests might be heading to North Carolina poolside

Lloyd Singleton

Guest columnist I enjoyed my time by the pool this weekend; Memorial Day seems to mark the beginning of swim season. The fresh air, sunshine and exercise can be accompanied by some useful citizen science too. 'Poolside Pests' is a program aimed at increasing awareness of Asian longhorned beetle and spotted lanternfly. These pests are attracted to water, and pools and pool filters across the state can serve as traps for these non-native invasive pests. We want you to be on the lookout and report any sightings.

Non-native invasive pests are an increasing threat to our agricultural systems and forests. In recent years, invasive species have caused widespread mortality. Laurel wilt disease is killing redbay trees, the emerald ash borer is devastating ash tree populations, and hemlock woolly adelgid is killing hemlocks.

North Carolina's Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler tells that 'Two more non-native invasive pests are at North Carolina's doorstep — the Asian longhorned beetle recently found in South Carolina and the spotted lanternfly recently found in Virginia. Both insects could cause devastating losses to North Carolina's forests, agriculture and landscapes.'

N.C. State researchers are working with experts from the N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Plant Industry Division and the N.C. Forest Service for reports of these two devastating insects that might now be in our state. (Insects do not respect state borders!) Early detection is critical because management tactics are most successful when a new invasion is detected and reported quickly.

While the 'Poolside Pests' program targets pool owners and managers, it's important that everyone keeps an eye out because these insects can be found anywhere. N.C. State's research blog 'The Abstract' spoke with Kelly Oten, N.C. State assistant professor and extension specialist in forest health. 'People from other states have posted photos of these pests in their coffee cups or in their dogs' water bowls. They've been recovered from pool filters as well.'

The Asian longhorned beetle is native to Asia; its favorite tree is the red maple, the second most common tree in North Carolina's forests. The larvae of this tree killer feed on the internal parts of the tree, degrading the integrity of the tree's structure. With branches breaking off, the trees just start falling apart.

The spotted lanternfly is a planthopper native to China, India, and Vietnam and was first found in the U.S. in Pennsylvania in 2014. It is quickly expanding its range. Recently detected in Virginia, it continues to march toward North Carolina. It is a major pest of agriculture, specifically grapevines, fruit trees, hops, and many tree species. As a major nuisance pest, its excrement of a clear, sticky honeydew is a nasty coating on cars, decks and outdoor furniture.

All North Carolinians are encouraged to learn how to recognize and report these pests, by going to

<https://www.poolsidepests.com/> . If you suspect you have found one of these pests, click on the Report a Pest link on this page. 'Poolside Pests' is a collaborative effort between the Plant Industry Division, N.C. Forest Service and N.C. State University Cooperative Extension.

This pool season, please don your citizen science hat as you sport your swimsuit; be on the lookout for these insect pests. And as a reminder, our Cooperative Extension center is located at the New Hanover County Arboretum, free and open daily from 8 a.m.- 5 p.m., 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. We'll be on the lookout too.

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