

Media Release

Friday, 23, January 2015 | Media contact: Matilda Abey 0427 355 528

Search begins for tree pest in Melbourne's south east

Victorian Government tree experts are on the look-out for a sap-sucking insect that can kill pine trees and which has been detected in Melbourne's south-east for the first time.

Giant pine scale (*Marchalina hellencia*) is an exotic insect pest that lives on the sap of pine, fir and spruce trees and is covered by white, waxy, cotton-like secretions.

Over the next two months, tree experts from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources will be on the hunt for giant pine scale to assess the spread of this pest - and they could be knocking on your door.

Landholders are asked to be on the lookout for signs of giant pine scale infestation, including severe dehydration and dieback, which can lead to the eventual death of the tree.

To date approximately 480 infested trees have been detected in the Harkaway area, while a further 50 infested trees have been detected in the Mount Waverley area.

Tree experts will visit Mount Waverley as well as the surrounding suburbs of Ashwood, Ashburton, Glen Iris, Chadstone, Carnegie, Murrumbeena, Bentleigh East, Oakleigh, Clayton, Clarinda, Heatherton, and Moorabbin.

They will also be visiting Harkaway and parts of Berwick, Narre Warren, Hallam, Endeavour Hills, Lysterfield, Belgrave, Emerald, Dewhurst, Beaconsfield Upper and Beaconsfield.

The majority of infested trees will be safely treated using an insecticide stem injection, which is suitable for urban areas.

Residents can help with eradication efforts by reporting any white and waxy secretions they see on their pine, fir and spruce trees to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881.

Alternatively, residents can email photos of the suspected pest, with their contact phone number and location to plant.protection@ecodev.vic.gov.au

DEDJTR Chief Plant Health Officer Gabrielle Vivian-Smith said community support and assistance was integral to the success of the eradication program.

"To minimise further spread, we're asking people not to touch, move or collect suspected samples or parts of infected trees," Dr Vivian-Smith said.

"An urgent eradication program is underway to help protect Australia's \$1.16-billion softwood plantation industry and to help maintain the health and safety of host trees."

To find out more about giant pine scale and view some photos of what an infested tree looks like, please visit www.vic.gov.au/giantpinescale.

Media Release

Friday, 23, January 2015 | Media contact: Matilda Abey 0427 355 528

DEDJTR staff and contractors conducting property visits will carry official identification and will only need to view garden areas.

Locals are urged to be vigilant in case of any potential hoax callers.