

# Invasive species cause concern in Dutchess County



*The emerald ash borer is so small it fits on a penny, but the danger it poses to the environment is serious. / Courtesy photo*

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*The Dutchess County Environmental Management Council recently completed a State of the Environment report for the county. This is the third in a series of articles from the report. The entire report can be found online at <http://dutchessemc.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/dcsoereport2012.pdf>.*

New York State defines "invasive species" as follows: (a) Non-native to the ecosystem under consideration; and (b) whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, invasive species are a threat to our biodiversity and are judged second only to habitat loss. Invasives hail from around the world and the rate of invasion is increasing at an alarming rate with the increase in international trade.

Invasive species have been problematic in the past and are certainly a problem now, as they threaten our ecosystems, including all natural systems, managed forests, our food supply, including not only agriculture, but also harvested wildlife, fish and shellfish. Invasives are a threat to our built environments including landscaping, infrastructure, industry, gardens and pets. Invasives can affect recreational areas and human health.

New York has three categories of non-native plants and animals. The most restrictive category "Prohibited Species" bans the transportation and introduction of non-natives that pose clear risks to New York's economic, ecological and/or human health. The second category, "Regulated Species" restricts though does not prohibit transportation or other uses that have the potential to cause significant harm but can effectively be managed by regulation. The third category, "Unregulated Species" identifies those that expect to pose no significant threat and allows usage. Climate change was a factor in creating these assessments of invasive species, as it is likely that invasive species found in more southern states will be able to survive in a warmer New York.

Two recent arrivals in Dutchess County are noteworthy:

Emerald ash borer (*agrilus planipennis*), a serious threat to native ash trees, was confirmed in Dutchess County in March 2012. This exotic beetle was first discovered in southeastern Michigan in 2002.

It has since spread across the Midwest, the Mid-Atlantic and eastern states. The emerald ash borer was first discovered in western New York in 2009. In 2010, it was discovered in Ulster County and has since spread to other counties in the state. Steps are being taken to slow the spread and prepare communities for action steps. There are important quarantines regarding the movement of firewood in New York, the primary means by which this pest is transported. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation "A regulation is in effect that prohibits the import of firewood into New York unless it has been heat treated to kill pests. The regulation also limits the transportation of untreated firewood to less than 50 miles from its source."

Brown marmorated stink bug (*halyomorpha halys*) is from Asia and was first documented in Allentown, Pa., in 2001 and has spread across a number of eastern states. It is currently wreaking havoc in the Mid-Atlantic states and was first confirmed in the Hudson Valley in 2008.

It is a serious pest for a wide variety of agricultural crops and has caused significant economic damage to commercial fruit orchards in the Mid-Atlantic states during 2010.

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*Stephanie Radin / Courtesy photo*