

Firewood Alert - Script

Hello, I'm Dr. Wayne Dixon with the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

Camping is one of Florida's great outdoor pleasures many people enjoy watching nightfall, telling jokes and stories, toasting marshmallows and listening to a crackling fire.

But did you know that your firewood might contain unwanted undesirable pests?

Several species of destructive wood-boring beetles and diseases can inhabit popular firewood varieties. Often, out-of-state campers will bring their own firewood to Florida. Any wood-boring beetles and disease that may have come along for the ride could escape and infest Florida plants and trees.

States including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois have been battling wood-boring insects for some time. You may have heard of the Asian long-horned beetle infestation that has resulted in the destruction of thousands of maple, elm and other trees in New York and Chicago. The Emerald Ash Borer has killed millions of ash trees in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and other states. Another exotic pest is the Sirex wood wasp in New York and Canada.

Another frightening example of what the introduction of a wood-boring insect can do is Dutch elm disease which was first found in Ohio around 1930. Dutch elm disease is caused by a fungus which is transmitted by two species of bark beetles. It has now spread throughout North America and has destroyed over half the elm trees in the northern United States. The disease has been reported in all states except the desert Southwest.

Now, Florida forests are threatened by a fungus that causes a fatal disease called Laurel wilt. The fungus is spread by a non-native insect, the red bay ambrosia beetle. Laurel wilt disease kills red bays, sassafras, pond spice and even attacks one of Florida's most important fruit trees, the avocado. This destructive beetle was introduced into Florida through infested wood.

Most of us don't realize how many invasive pests and diseases are introduced into Florida each year. At a rate of at least one new pest a month, they come in on cargo shipments, weather systems, infected plant material and in the luggage of the millions of annual visitors to Florida.

There are ways Floridians can protect against the introduction of invasive pests and diseases into Florida is to:

- *Be vigilant - if you see signs of disease or an unusual pest, contact your county extension office or the FDACS/DPI helpline*
- *Don't pack a pest. When returning home to Florida from a trip, don't bring plants, fruits, vegetable or illegal animals.*
- *Purchase only certified plants from registered nurseries*

And remember, you can help prevent the introduction of unwanted insects and diseases. Just follow these simple instructions:

- *Use local sources of firewood*
- *However, if you've have brought firewood in from out of state, burn it all before you leave*
- *And, don't take any firewood home from your campsite.*

Thank you and I hope you to see you soon around the campfire – burning only local firewood, of course.