

CONFIDENTIAL



2021-2023

Forest Health Volunteer Program

Town of Pelham

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Overview

The purpose of the Pelham Forest Health Volunteer Program is to increase knowledge and awareness of forest health issues among Pelham residents, build a group of motivated community volunteers, and engage the volunteers in activities that assist the Town of Pelham with forest health and pest management. The primary pest this program will focus upon is gypsy moth, but other pests, such as oak wilt, may also be included according to the risk they pose to the Town's urban forest. The program will take a phased approach, using the first year (2021) as a means of building community awareness and recruiting volunteers. The second and third years (2022-2023) will build on the momentum of the first year and will focus on developing a structured method of tree assessment and data collection, as well as the implementation of a downtown tree watering program.

Phase 1 (2021)

Objectives

The objectives for Phase 1 of the volunteer program are 1) generating interest in forest health among Pelham residents, 2) building an enrollment list of volunteers, and 3) educating community members on the health of Pelham's trees, with a focus on the issue of gypsy moth.

Outreach

The Voice of Pelham

BioForest will prepare a written content (400 words max) with a picture for the Voice of Pelham about gypsy moth and the upcoming egg hatch by April 2nd, ready to print for April 14th or 21st. The content will be general but will offer further opportunities to learn more about gypsy moth and will encourage volunteers to sign up to the program. BioForest will provide and maintain an email address to direct questions from interested residents and to manage volunteer recruitment. BioForest will produce 2 additional written pieces on subsequent life stages of gypsy moth (at peak defoliation, pupation/moth emergence, egg laying) ahead of the deadlines for future print dates. Each of these releases will also include an email address to encourage volunteers to sign up. BioForest will coordinate with Town staff on the timelines for these future pieces.

Social Media

BioForest will produce content (with pictures and/or videos) for social media posts (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) for periodic release. Included in each social media posting will be an email address (provided and maintained by BioForest) for interested residents to join the program and receive more information about gypsy moth and the volunteer program.

Timeline of Activities

April/May

BioForest will produce written content (including a video demonstrating how to install a burlap band) for a social media piece with similar content to the piece printed in the Voice of Pelham, focusing on egg hatch and the importance of signing up as a volunteer to show their interest and receive additional content (e.g. Lists of stores that sell materials for burlap bands). BioForest will be able to include a prediction for the approximate days of egg hatch, based on BioSIM modeling. BioForest will also draft a welcome letter for volunteers who sign up for the program that outlines the scope of the program. In mid-May, BioForest will draft an email to residents who have signed up as volunteers that will include more information on when to expect to see egg hatching and instructions on how to set up burlap/sticky bands. A social media post will be prepared for Pelham staff when BioForest crews see egg hatch and will include a picture of early instar caterpillars emerging.

A week prior to the estimated aerial spray (end of May/early June), BioForest will produce content for a post about the aerial spray program, providing a link to the Town's website where people can go for more information on program. On spray days, BioForest will provide images/video of the spray in action.

June

BioForest will produce content for social media posts with photo updates of the caterpillars and of burlap bands that have been spotted around Pelham. BioForest will draft an email for volunteers as a reminder to install and check their bands and to ask volunteers to document their activities to help control gypsy moth (photo, video, etc.). Volunteers will be encouraged to tag friends who may be interested in joining the effort, as a way to boost awareness and resident involvement. BioForest crews will also prepare a social media post for when caterpillars begin to pupate.

BioForest will produce the second print article for the Voice of Pelham ahead of the deadline in July. The topic of this piece will focus on the emerging adults and provide information about the timeline of the adult life stage, and peak defoliation and re-foliation. As with the first print article, the second piece will encourage residents to sign up to the volunteer program through the dedicated email address.

July

BioForest will produce content for a social media post on how to identify adult gypsy moths, including photos. BioForest will draft an email to volunteers including more details on the difference between female and male moths. Both social media posts and emails to volunteers will mention an upcoming egg mass scraping contest and encourage more volunteers to sign up to participate.

August

The egg mass scraping contest will begin, which will include a social media post to kick-off the contest. Both enrolled volunteers and other residents can participate in the contest. Rules would stipulate that residents scrape and collect as many egg masses as they can, keep a running tally of egg masses they have scraped, and take photos linked to a specific hashtag to document their activities. By the end of August, BioForest will help determine the winner with Town of Pelham staff. BioForest will liaise with Town of Pelham staff to award Pelham Bucks as a prize to the contest winner.

Fall Season

During the fall and winter, BioForest will produce content for social media posts highlighting that the best time to look for egg masses is when trees lose their leaves. Volunteers and residents will be encouraged to look for signs of gypsy moth egg masses and to continue scraping egg masses in this slower part of the season. Volunteers and residents could be encouraged to post photos of their finds and of their favourite trees in winter, using a specific hashtag. BioForest will also draft an email during the fall/winter months expanding on the social media post and providing additional information about the winter phase of the gypsy moth life cycle and encouraging residents to sign up for Phase 2 of the program in the spring.

The 3rd and final print for the Voice of Pelham (prior to November's deadline) highlighting the winner of the egg scraping contest and that now is the best time to spot egg masses and to continue scraping egg masses.

BioForest will prepare a brief summary report for the Town of Pelham on Phase 1 of the volunteer program. The report will provide an overview of the year's activities, an assessment of successes and areas for improvement, and recommendations for Phase 2.

Phase 1 cost = \$2,955

Phase 2 (2022)

At the beginning of 2022, an assessment of the previous year will take place using feedback gained from the public and thoughts from Town staff and BioForest. Phase 2 can be adjusted based on the previous year's participation and review.

While Phase 1 focused heavily on communication and generating interest among the public in the volunteer program, Phase 2 will shift the focus more toward training volunteers to monitor trees and collect data.

Objectives

The objectives for Phase 2 of this program are to: 1) expand volunteer membership, 2) teach volunteers in person on general tree health and specific pests that are a threat to the Town of Pelham's trees, and 3) provide volunteers with a formal survey method they can use to collect data on tree health and the presence of pests.

Outreach and Training Session

To launch the second phase of the program, BioForest will produce a piece for the Voice of Pelham as well as social media posts announcing the start of the program. Outreach will include general information about gypsy moth, successes of Phase 1 of the program, and details on how to sign up to volunteer for Phase 2. Specialized outreach will be targeted toward high school students who are looking for opportunities to accrue community service volunteer hours.

BioForest will conduct volunteer training sessions in Pelham for members of the public who sign up to participate in the program. Two training sessions will be set up for late May to early June. The training sessions will provide volunteers with information on how to visually assess street or park trees for various structural and health issues and for signs of invasive species. The sessions will include an indoor presentation followed by an interactive outdoor component to demonstrate and practice the survey method.

Volunteer Program

Trained volunteers will then be given data sheets and maps of local street trees for them to evaluate. The content of the maps and data sheets will be developed by BioForest in consultation with Town of Pelham staff. Some features of the material may be dependent on data available from the Town of Pelham. Volunteers will assess trees and collect data on their own time throughout the assessment period (June-August). Volunteers will be asked to return data sheets when completed. BioForest staff will be available throughout the assessment period to answer questions from volunteers and assist them with any issues, as required. Assistance will be provided by phone, email, or on-site visits, if necessary. All inquiries from volunteers forwarded to BioForest staff by Town staff will receive a response within 24 hours (Monday – Friday).

BioForest will promptly investigate any urgent findings reported by volunteers, such as potentially hazardous trees or suspected finds of high-risk pests (oak wilt, Asian longhorn beetle, spotted lanternfly, hemlock woolly adelgid, and beech leaf disease) not already known to be present in the Niagara Region.

BioForest staff will conduct quality assessment audits on trees assessed by volunteers to ensure that data received from participants is accurate and complete. At least one data sheet per volunteer will be audited. Any issues with the data will be communicated to the volunteer in order to ensure that subsequent submissions are completed correctly.

Appreciation Night

BioForest will collaborate with Town of Pelham staff to host a volunteer appreciation event. The event will feature a presentation of the results of the volunteer data collection from each year and will include a summary of significant trends reported by volunteers. BioForest will provide items to give as tokens of appreciation for volunteers (such as notebooks, water bottles, etc.). At this event and in the period leading up to it, BioForest will distribute a feedback survey to volunteers, both electronically and on paper, for the volunteers to provide input that may inform future improvements to the program.

BioForest will prepare a brief summary report for the Town of Pelham on Phase 2 of the volunteer program. The report will summarize the volunteers' findings, assess the program's successes and areas of improvement, and provide recommendations for Phase 3.

Downtown Tree Watering Program

BioForest will work in collaboration with Town staff and/or the local BIAs to contact businesses located in the urban areas of Fonthill (along Pelham Street between Highway 20 and College Street) and Fenwick (at the intersection of Canboro Road and Maple Street). BioForest will visit all eligible business owners during the spring of 2022 and advertise the opportunity to participate in this program and “sponsor” their sidewalk tree. BioForest will prepare a digital and physical one-page pamphlet describing the objectives and benefits of the program, as well as the commitment required by the business owner. This pamphlet will be given to all interested business owners. BioForest will collect the name and email address of all willing participants and will collect species, diameter, and baseline health data for their sidewalk tree(s). Over the growing season, monthly emails will be sent out to enrolled businesses to remind them to water their trees, especially during the summer months and other care tips. Each business would receive a window decal describing how their efforts are an important contribution to taking care of Pelham’s downtown trees, along with specific information (species, attributes, history, etc.) about the tree that is under their care and a small sign to be located at the base of the tree with the sponsoring business’ name. Each tree will be assessed and measured again at the end of the growing season by BioForest to monitor the health and growth and the results will be shared with Pelham staff.

Phase 3 (2023)

Phase 3 will continue with an assessment of the previous year gained from feedback received from volunteers and can be adjusted based on previous two phase’s participation and review.

Objectives

The objectives for Phase 3 of this program would be to continue to implement the program using the structure established in Phase 2, with amendments made as required.