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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **WVDA PLANTS 78 BEECH-SCALE RESISTANT TREES IN WV ORCHARD**

**Charleston, W.Va.** – The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) Forest Health staff planted 78 new beech scale-resistant trees at the U.S. Forest Service Watershed and Timber Laboratory in Parsons, WV, in April. The orchard was established in 2015 to house the trees to generate resistant seedlings for restoration planting.

“Beech scale can be observed on the trunk and limbs of the tree as woolly, white tufts that first appear as tiny spots or patches and later build up in population to cover the majority of the tree,” explained WVDA Forest Health Protection Manager and State Forest Pathologist Jill Rose. “The tufts are the colonies of the beech scale insect (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*) that form in tiny crevices along the bark. The insect creates wounds that act as entry points for pathogenic fungi. It is the fungal component of the disease that weakens and kills the tree.”

Beech scale was first detected in West Virginia in Randolph and Pocahontas Counties in 1981. Since then, it has spread into 19 counties and the beech bark disease (BBD) that follows is found in 13 counties.

The objective of this project is to propagate resistant beech trees for the establishment of regionally adapted seed orchards. These orchards will grow healthy American beech trees that can populate the forest.

Researchers found levels of resistance to the insect in a small number of beech trees in the Monongahela National Forest and in areas of the state where the beech resource has been impacted by this disease complex. Beech scale was then introduced to those trees to see if they would continue to show resistance. After a year-long test (with continued resistance), the flowering part, or scion, of those trees was taken and grafted to the rootstock of other beech trees in the hopes of creating a beech-scale resistant variety. In the absence of feeding activity by the beech scale insect, there is little opportunity for the fungi to invade, minimizing the impact to the trees. WVDA Forest Health staff has been locating, mapping and conducting these artificial challenges to the potentially-resistant beech since 2008.

“It is vital that we protect one of West Virginia’s most precious, natural resources - our forests. This is another example of how the WVDA’s work is having a positive impact on the future of our state’s forest health,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. “Our dedicated Forest Health staff is to be commended”.

The project is a joint effort between the WVDA, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service: Northern Research Station, USDA Forest Service: Monongahela National Forest, USDA Forest Service: State and Private Forestry.

For more information on the project, contact Jill Rose at 304-558-2212 or [jrose@wvda.us](mailto:jrose@wvda.us).

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