

# Greenwich Time

## More weevils unleashed to attack invasive vines in Greenwich

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Another batch of tiny weevils was unleashed Thursday in an effort to stem the growth of the mile-a-minute vine in Greenwich.

About 1,000 weevils join the 500 that have been busily chomping through the vine's leaves since they were set free to attack the invasive plant on July 10 in Audubon Greenwich's Gimbel Sanctuary.

Thursday, scientists involved in the effort to stem the vine's advance, joined Audubon Greenwich's Jeff Cordulack and town employees Aleksandra Moch, an environmental analyst, and Tina Hartley, assistant wetlands compliance officer, to see how the weevils have done their work during the last three weeks.

The weevils have been busy in that period, punching big holes in the vine's triangular leaves, progress that has encouraged scientists.

"We didn't know what we were going to get," Todd Mervosh said. "They (the weevils) are big eaters, but they are small."

Mervosh is a weed scientist at the Windsor-based Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, which is coordinating the weevil campaign

Mervosh was joined Thursday by fellow scientist Carole Cheah, a research entomologist, Donna Ellis, of the University of Connecticut's Department of Plant Science and co-chairman of the Connecticut

Invasive Plant Working Group, and Logan Senack, the state's invasive plant coordinator.

Later Thursday, they were to travel to Newtown, North Haven, Bridgewater and New Milford to spread the weevils in those areas.

The vine is believed to have arrived in the country mixed in with a delivery of holly seeds from Japan to a now-defunct nursery outside of York, Pa., in the 1930s. It grew quickly because it has no natural predator in North America. The vines grew over and around native plant species, stunting their growth by cutting off sunlight.

Five years, ago the weevils were introduced in Delaware as part of an effort to control the mile-a-minute vine by natural means. The weevils are found in China and research had to be done to ensure they could safely be unleashed in North America.

Weevils eat the vine's leaves and lay their eggs, or larvae, in the vine's stem, Cheah said. The developing larvae then eat the stem and either stunt the vine's growth, prevent it from producing seeds, or in some cases kill the vine if they can cause enough damage.

The weevils are raised at the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Laboratory in West Trenton, N.J.

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