

Emerald ash borer-What's the latest?

With recent finds of the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) in Anoka, and White Bear Lake and emergency quarantines in Anoka and Washington Counties; questions are being asked about the likelihood of EAB being in the community of Mahtomedi. To date no Emerald Ash Borer activity has been found in the city of Mahtomedi. Mahtomedi's forestry consultant and city staff are on the lookout for Emerald Ash Borer. Based on the known life cycle and the population curve for EAB, we know that it will often be in a tree for 3-4 years before being discovered. Large populations of EAB and wide-spread death of ash trees usually shows up 7 to 8 years after initial infestation. City residents can help by identifying their ash trees, inspecting them for damage and looking for evidence of Emerald Ash Borer and removing trees identified with the borer.

What should we be looking for?

When trees are first attacked by EAB, the symptoms of its presence are inconspicuous and difficult to notice. Because symptoms can be indicators of stress as a result of many other factors such as drought stress, soil compaction, diseases, insects, or mechanical injury, they can be easily missed by the homeowner at first. Adult beetles feed on ash foliage, but the damage seen along leaf margins is minimal. Ash trees can tolerate small numbers of EAB larvae, but are girdled and killed as more and more larvae feed on the phloem and outer sapwood beneath the bark. When populations increase, the winding tunnels made by the larvae cut off the supply of nutrients and water in the tree. **Thinning foliage and dieback in the upper crown of the tree become apparent after multiple years of infestation, eventually resulting in severe dieback and minimal foliage.** Infested trees are usually killed in three to four years.

Woodpeckers will feed on insect larva beneath the bark of trees so **woodpecker attacks on ash may also indicate the presence of EAB.** In general, EAB attacks higher in the tree at first, so woodpecker activity may go unnoticed until the infestation moves down the tree. Rough holes and strips of bark flecked away by woodpeckers as they excavate the tree looking for larvae may actually be the earliest symptom of infestation. If you were to remove the bark behind the woodpecker hole on the trunk of a tree showing symptoms you would likely find a larval gallery.

When adult emerald ash borers emerge, they create 1/8 inch, D-shaped exit holes that are characteristic of this insect but can be hard to see. Vigorous shoots, called **epicormic sprouts**, may also occur in clumps on the lower trunk and major branches as the tree responds to the EAB activity.

What should we do?

Identify any ashes in your landscape and determine the health status of these trees. If you have trees that have any of the above mentioned symptoms you should consult with a certified arborist and call the city forester at 651-747-3736. Preventative pesticide treatments can be done on healthy valuable trees by licensed tree professionals to limit the damage done by the boring larvae. If your ashes appear healthy you should examine the trees closely for any problems associated with spacing, poor structure or proximity to infrastructure. Any of these issues might make it appropriate to remove these trees. A list of tree companies licensed to do business in Mahtomedi is available at city hall.

It's wise to consider the value of your ash trees and their importance to you landscape before deciding on a course of action. All species of ash (Green, Black, White and Blue) are susceptible to infestation by the Emerald Ash Borer and all will be killed if preventative pesticide treatments are not done. The city allows residents to treat their own ash trees as well as any bordering trees in the city's right-of-way. Call the above number for the city forester to register your treatments and/or to discuss any questions you might have.