



November 8, 2013

PLAN AHEAD WITH TREES AND EAB

In planting a new, landscape tree, if you do it right, you can plant about any month of the year except at total freeze-up in January. It's still not too late to plant a landscape tree and to mulch it down. There is an excellent new website for Eastern Nebraska tree planting recommendations at: <http://retreenebraska.unl.edu/planting-diversity> It's time we start planning ahead for a loss that is coming our way from the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB).

Diversity is a common measure of a town's tree's overall health. For instance, in Wilber I was involved in a Nebraska Forest Service inventory of street side trees a few years before the tornado hit. The city had 80 ash trees on public property they control; 20 at Legion Park (more were planted since then), 24 in Franklin Park and 7 at the Wilber Care Center. So prior to the tornado there were 131 green and white ash trees. If Emerald Ash Borer destroys these, that's a lot of quarantined firewood just on public property alone to deal with. Many towns have a higher percentage than this and EAB will be more of an issue.

We have suffered through Scots Pine Wilt and Dutch Elm Disease on American Elms and after Dutch Elm Disease we planted more ash trees. Now everyone is expecting the Emerald Ash Borer to rear its ugly head our direction. It's probably already started somewhere in Nebraska, it's just not confirmed yet. Here is a time lapse of how fast it is spreading, mainly due to human activity with firewood at <http://goo.gl/zDzgAR>

The end of October, one of our group stops on a fall Ag Agents Tour, was meeting with Community Forester and Certified Arborist, Graham Herbst in Omaha. Graham explained there is no known variety of ash tree that is immune to the foreign invader, Emerald Ash Borer, (Mountain Ash is not a true ash and is not affected) and when it arrives in our county it will leave a lot of empty spaces in yards and along streets.

With no natural predators on this continent, the borer quickly started to thrive, moving well beyond the port city of Detroit, Michigan and into other neighboring states. It's now expected to make its way throughout the country. The closest known infestation to Saline County is in Kansas City and a new confirmation in Denver, Colorado. He expects the I-80 corridor to be affected first. Because Emerald Ash Borer are terrible flyers, their main movement is from larvae in infested firewood that should never be brought here.

Just like Dutch Elm Disease, Emerald Ash Borer is showing the ability to almost eliminate the entire ash species and it's going to be an expensive loss. While most native borers kill only severely weakened trees, Emerald Ash Borer kills healthy trees as well, making it especially devastating. They make a very distinct "D-shaped" exit hole from the trunk and limbs on a tree and tend to work top down, regardless of age of the ash tree. There are destructive "S" shape tunnels in the cambium layers (girdles the limbs and trunk on the tree).

Do not do what a homeowner in Omaha did. He cut his huge ash tree down and started over already in advance of the doom and gloom scenario. Graham indicated homeowners could choose



to treat ash trees, when the problem is confirmed in a county next door. Insecticide treatments can be effective in protecting trees from EAB. One treatment available for homeowner use is a soil application of imidacloprid (such as Bayer Advanced Garden® Tree and Shrub Insect Control or Merit - the mention of trade names is not an endorsement by the University). The application should be made in May and is most effective on small trees. Tree care professionals are able to use additional commercial use products as trunk injections and trunk and foliage sprays. Unfortunately there is no silver bullet. You can expect 40 to 80% effectiveness.

The Nebraska Forest Service has an excellent resource website for homeowners and communities to begin preparing for EAB at: <http://nfs.unl.edu/eab-faq#14> There is a working group that is determining who will be impacted by EAB the most in Nebraska. They are planning how to help town boards and exploring opportunities how to utilize a large amount of wood destroyed by EAB.

Look at the planting tree list I provided. There are some awesome cultivar recommendations you may not have thought of. The positive part is we can increase diversity for the future.

Randy Pryor, Extension Educator
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Saline County
306 West 3rd Street, Wilber, NE 68465

Phone (402) 821-2151 • Fax (402) 821-3398 • e-mail: randy.pryor@unl.edu