

**June 17, 2016**

## **EUROPEAN ASH BORER – MAKE PROACTIVE PLANS**

The destructive European Ash Borer (EAB) was confirmed in Omaha this past week. It was by accident nearly live on television at a press conference on municipality plans about the foreign pest. Mark Harrell at UNL says now is the time to take proactive steps to deal with EAB. EAB is able to kill all ash trees, regardless of their health, age or size. It has killed more than 50 million ash trees already in the U.S. and will be a serious threat to Nebraska's 54 million ash trees.

I talked to a homeowner in Wilber last week that has 5 ash trees in their yard over 14 inches in diameter. They are awesome shade trees for their family. There is no way once EAB hits Saline County he will be treating all 5 trees with injections, it would be too costly. Even if he went to classes and treated the large trees himself with injections, that isn't a good long-term solution. Trees in poor condition or located under wires or too close to sidewalks or buildings generally should be removed now rather than be treated and then plant diverse species of trees for the future. The homeowner may want to plant other tree species nearby to replace the ash trees that will be lost someday if he chooses not to treat.

We have had quite a few calls the past two years on ash trees with native borer and bark beetle damage and declining ash trees since the drought of 2012. So far we haven't seen the emerald ash adult beetle or the "D" shaped exit holes or the destructive "S" shaped tunneling from the larvae in the cambium layer below the bark.

Professionally applied trunk injections are the most effective treatments, especially for large trees. Their main drawback is the damage they cause to the tree and therefore are best applied by certified arborists well-trained in the procedure. The most common products available to the homeowner are soil applications, but they can be less effective than injections and have a greater chance of harming beneficial insects, such as bees.

Treatments need to be applied every one to two years and must be done for the remaining life of the tree. Owners of ash trees outside of the Omaha area may be anxious to begin treatments, but the recommendation is still to wait until EAB has been found within 15 miles of your trees. The chances that your tree will be the first one infested is very low, especially if it is being well cared for. The current treatment consideration zone extends from Fort Calhoun to Plattsmouth and from Gretna to east of Council Bluffs. They are poor flyers, they leap frog to a community via infested firewood.

Upwards of 80% of the ash trees will die within 8 years after EAB is found in a community if nothing is done to manage the pest according to UNL Forester Eric Berg. This can put a strain on city budgets and staff and create liability issues if dead trees are left standing. Nebraska municipalities need to be proactive in dealing with EAB. Removing poor quality trees in a community even before EAB is discovered will help spread removal costs over more years. A bill in the legislature to start a cost share fund with communities stalled last year, called LB461 The Tree Recovery Act.

Municipalities and anyone else managing large numbers of ash trees, even if they are outside of the Omaha area, should take steps now to prepare for EAB. Town leaders should gain an understanding of the number, locations, sizes and conditions of their ash trees and develop a management plan.

Some really good information is on the Nebraska Forestry website. <http://nfs.unl.edu/nebraska-eab> This is our one stop shop for information as the EAB situation develops in Nebraska. The website has Emerald Ash Borer: Frequently Asked Questions, Guidelines for Nebraska Homeowners, Selecting Trees for Emerald Ash Borer Treatments, Ash Tree Identification Guide, EAB Key Points and Recommendations, EAB Community Readiness, Emerald Ash Borer Treatment Options and Misconceptions About EAB Treatments. There are some really good guidelines for homeowners and town leaders to see. As the Nebraska situation changes, expect timely updates to this website.

Randy Pryor, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Saline County • 306 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Wilber, NE 68465

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