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## EMERALD ASH BORER in COLUMBUS

By: Kelly Feehan, Extension Educator

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With the recent confirmation of Emerald Ash borer (EAB) in Columbus by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, some ash tree owners might consider treating their trees now.

If so, wait until spring. Trunk injections and soil treatments made during fall do not work as well as treatments made during spring. April through June is the key time for EAB treatments as this is when trees most readily take up systemic insecticides.

Feeding by the larval borer will soon be done for this year and not much more damage will occur by waiting. And it can take up to 5 years for EAB to seriously harm or kill healthy, unstressed trees.

If you live outside of the Columbus area and plan to treat your ash tree, spring treatments are recommended where EAB has been found within 15 miles of an ash tree.

Now is the time to assess whether an ash tree should be treated and if so, to learn about treatment options. Consider the expense of treating an ash tree for its lifetime, the trees location, age and health, and the potential risks to humans, wildlife and the environment when making this decision.

For a tree to be a good candidate for treatment, it needs to be in good overall health with little or no thinning, branch dieback, or trunk damage. Healthy trees respond better to treatment and are better able to handle the damage treatment causes.

Consider the size of the tree. Removing and replacing a smaller tree now can be more economical than treating a tree for a number of years and then having the expense of removing a much larger tree. Trees will eventually die from the borer and/or treatment damage.

If a homeowner chooses to treat an ash themselves with soil treatments, know this is only recommended for trees no larger than a trunk circumference of 45 inches or a diameter of 15 inches.

Is the tree in a poor location such as under highline wires, too close to sidewalks or buildings or on a playground? These trees are best removed rather than treated. If a healthy tree is located on the south or west side of a home, it might be a candidate for treatment.

How has the tree been taken care of over the years? Was it provided supplemental water during dry periods or drought, mulched to protect the trunk, and protected from herbicides used to control weeds? Trees can appear healthy, but may be stressed if they have not been properly cared for.

On treatment options, trunk injections by experienced professional are considered most effective; especially for larger ash trees. Soil treatments on smaller trees can be done by homeowners but label directions need to be followed explicitly. And both work best when spring applied.

For information on emerald ash borer and treatment options, call or stop by the Nebraska Extension office in Platte County in downtown Columbus or call 402-563-4901.

We have publications from the Nebraska Forest Service we can provide to assist homeowners. These publication can also be found at [www.nfs.unl.edu/Nebraska-eab](http://www.nfs.unl.edu/Nebraska-eab).

To help slow the spread of emerald ash borer, burn firewood where it is cut and avoid transporting firewood into areas where EAB has not yet been confirmed.

If you live in a community outside of Columbus and suspect an ash tree may have EAB, report it to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351 or the Nebraska Forest Service at 402-472-2944.

## 21 August 23 PSAs

With the confirmation of Emerald Ash borer in Columbus, some ash tree owners might consider treating trees now. If so, wait until spring. Trunk injections and soil treatments during fall do not work as well as spring treatments. April through June is the key time for emerald ash borer treatments, as this is when trees most readily take up systemic insecticides. Larval feeding will soon be finished for this year and not much more damage will happen; and, it can take up to 5 years for the borer to seriously harm or kill a healthy, unstressed ash tree. If you live outside of the Columbus area, know that treatment is recommended when the borer has been found within 15 miles of a tree. Now is the time to assess whether a tree should even be treated; and if so, to learn about different treatment options. For information to help with this decision, stop by the Nebraska Extension office in downtown Columbus or call 563-4901.

As tomatoes ripen, fruit issues like growth cracks and zippering can appear. Circling fruit cracks near the stem occur when the inner growth of the fruit is faster than the outer skin growth. It is most often due to wide fluctuations in soil moisture, but can be related to over-fertilizing with nitrogen and temperature extremes. A heavy rain or deep watering after a dry period results in rapid uptake of water by tomato plants, leading to growth cracks. To reduce growth cracks, provide plants with a uniform moisture supply and mulch the soil with dried grass clippings or shredded leaves. Zippering is a very narrow brown scar or line that extends from the blossom end of the fruit up towards the stem. It usually occurs when the anther of the tomato flower sticks to the developing fruit, causing a scar as the fruit develops. Sometimes a hole appears alongside the scar. There is no way to reduce zippering, but the tomato is fine to eat.

If tomatoes have areas of the fruit near the stem that remain hard and yellow or green, while the rest of the fruit ripens, this is called yellow shoulder disorder. The exact cause is not known but has been associated with adverse weather and soils that do not promote active growth. Uneven or blotchy ripening is when any part of the fruit remains yellow or orange and fails to turn red. This is usually due to cool temperatures below 60 degrees Fahrenheit, compacted soils, or overly wet soils that restrict root function. Blotchy ripening may also be from yellow shoulder disorder, a viral disease, or a heavy whitefly infestation. There are no controls for virus diseases. White flies would be noticed and products like insecticidal soaps can be used to reduce them. Pay attention to soil and water management; and make note of tomato varieties grown each year. If one has issues each year, consider trying a different variety.

Late summer or fall fertilization of Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue lawns is the most important time to fertilize these cool season grasses. Fertilizer applied now promotes recovery from summer stress, increases density of thinned turf, encourages root and rhizome growth, and allows the plant to store food for next spring's growth flush. On older lawns, those that are 10 to 15 or more years old, that typically need only two fertilizer applications a year, make the fall application in late August or early September using fertilizer with all or some slow release nitrogen. On younger lawns, two fertilizer applications during fall are recommended. Make the first one in late August or early September, and the second in mid to late October. For the first one, select a fertilizer with all or some slow release nitrogen. For the later application, use a fast release nitrogen source so plants will take it up before going dormant.

Apples mature over a long period of time depending on variety. Some varieties such as Lodi can mature in July and others as late as October. Here are some guides to help decide when to pick apples. First, know that some apples develop red skins before they are ripe, so red skin color is not a reliable sign of maturity. A better indicator is stem base and fruit bottom color. As apples mature, the skin color on areas of the stem and on the bottom of the apple turns from green to light-yellow. Flavor is a good guide. Sample slices of a few apples to see if they have a sweet flavor. If not ready to harvest, they will taste starchy. Also, as apples mature the flesh changes from very light green to white. And the seeds of most apples change from light green to brown as fruit ripens. Use all of these indicators together for the best way to know when the best time is to harvest apples. (Source: Ward Upham, K-State)