

In June of 2007, I wrote my first article about the green menace. Then I reported that the emerald threat had yet to arrive in Nebraska; thus, there was no reason to panic. Recently the media is again hyping the threat of this green pest. Although eight years later, I continue to say, “Relax.” There certainly is reason for concern but no reason for fear.

By now, one should surmise I’m referring to the notorious emerald green insect, better known as the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). It was determined that this metallic green beetle of Asian origin first arrived in Michigan around 2002. Once discovered, experts estimated the borers had killed 40 million ash trees in southeastern Michigan; and five years later, millions more in eight other states.



As of today, EAB infestations have been discovered in twenty-five states resulting in millions more ash trees destroyed. In 2007, I reported the closest EAB infestation was hundreds of miles away from Nebraska’s border. As of March, 2015, the closest infestation of EAB is in the Kansas City area— a mere 60 miles away.

Today, the question is not so much about if the beetle arrives, but more about when this ominous green monster reaches Nebraska. Upon its arrival, I can assure you, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Nebraska Forest Service, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, the University of Nebraska and yours truly will loudly declare its presence. When this occurs, these agencies will promote what can be done to protect Nebraska’s ash trees from this emerald marauder’s death sentence.

It is certainly not my intent to add to the panic by writing once again about Emerald Ash Borer; but, rather, I want to clarify misinformation surrounding the EAB, particularly in regard to treatments. I recently received a publication from The Nebraska Forest Service designed to help eliminate confusion and calm people’s fears. Allow me to answer a few commonly asked questions.

- **Can I start treating now, so I don’t have to worry about EAB later?**

Unfortunately, treatments are not a one-time occurrence. They do not immunize. Those ash trees destined to be saved will need treatment every one to three years.

- **When should I begin treatments?**

Treatments for EAB should be considered only when EAB is known to be present within 15 miles of your tree. This 15 mile recommendation tries to strike a balance between protecting valuable trees and limiting the negative effects of unnecessary treatments. Treating trees outside of the 15 mile zone provides little or no benefit to the trees, yet exposes humans and the environment to pesticides, wastes money and in the case of trunk injections, causes unjustified tree damage.

- **Isn't it too late to treat after a tree is attacked?**

EAB usually requires a minimum of a few years to kill an otherwise healthy tree. Infested trees may be successfully treated, even those with a fair amount of canopy decline.

- **Can I treat my trees myself?**

Homeowner- applied treatments are somewhat limited. The most available method involves a soil drench around the trunk which might not adequately protect large ash trees. Since the chemical is a systemic, flowering plants growing near the tree can easily pick up the chemical exposing bees, butterflies and other pollinators to the toxic material. Professional arborists have more options available to them, such as trunk injections, which help limit the effects on non-target organisms.

- **Should I avoid treating my ash trees?**

The best candidates for treatment are high value trees that are properly sited and in good health. If you do not treat, any benefits the ash tree provides will likely be lost and the cost of its removal could be expensive. The many benefits trees create such as shade, storm water control, improved air quality and sheer beauty should be considered. If you decide not to treat, plant other tree species nearby to replace the ash that will someday be lost.

It's a fact, EAB is getting closer, but there is still no reason for panic. I suggest checking out the Nebraska Forest Service website at nfs.unl.edu/EAB for additional information regarding Emerald Ash Borer. Once there, you can download two great publications: *Emerald Ash Borer Treatment Options* and *Emerald Ash Borer Guidelines for Nebraska Homeowners*.