

EMERALD ASH BORER in COLUMBUS

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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 tree's 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 professionals 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 publications can also be found at 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.