

Planning for Emerald Ash Borer  
By: Kelly Feehan, Extension Educator  
Release: Week of January 24, 2022

Emerald ash borer (EAB) was confirmed in Columbus this past summer by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Now is the time for ash tree owners to make plans to either treat trees for the remainder of their life span or remove and replace ash trees.

For ash trees in a community where EAB has been confirmed, or within a 15 mile radius, it is recommended to begin treating trees that are good candidates for treatment; or make plans to remove ash that will not be treated. The sooner either of these is done the better.

To find out where EAB has been confirmed in Nebraska, go to the Nebraska Forest Service website and search for Emerald Ash Borer. They have a map showing where EAB has been found.

It is best not to wait until a tree is found to be infested to begin treatment. It can take a few years or more after infestation for symptoms to appear. And while trees can be treated after EAB has attacked, trees are often in fairly severe decline before EAB is even noticed. Trees with 40 to 50 percent or more canopy loss will not recover, even with treatment.

It is also recommended to not wait until an ash tree dies to have it removed. Trees killed by emerald ash borers tend to become brittle and more likely to drop limbs or fail in storms. It will be riskier, and could cost more, to have a tree that already shows damage or has already died removed.

The majority of ash trees will eventually be lost to emerald ash borer so think twice before treating and only treat good candidates. A tree is a candidate for treatment if it is structurally sound and in good health and vigor. Unhealthy, stressed trees are unlikely to move pesticide efficiently through the tree.

Older ash trees, or those with structural or other issues such as already being attacked by our native borers, are not considered good candidates. If a tree is in a poor location, such as beneath power lines, it is not a good candidate for treatment.

Fairly young ash trees may better be replaced than treated. Trees need to be treated at least every other year for the rest of their life and will still eventually die from EAB or from the damage caused by treatments.

Replacing a younger tree is more feasible than spending money on treatment for a number of year and then spending more money to eventually remove an even larger tree.

If treatment is chosen, spring treatments are most effective for emerald ash borer. There are insecticides homeowners can apply if trees are 15 inches in diameter or less, such as a soil drench. This can be effective, but not as effective as the pesticide used by professionals.

The pesticide licensed pesticide applicators can apply is injected into a tree and needs to be applied every other year. Hiring an applicator experienced with or trained in injection treatments is wise to help avoid unnecessary damage to trees.

For information about emerald ash borer or treatments, refer to the Nebraska Forest Service website page on emerald ash borer or call your local Extension office.

But know that if a tree is within a 15 mile radius of a known infestation, it is time to make plans for having the ash treated during spring or removed, and preferably in the next few years.