

WHERE IS EMERALD ASH BORER

By: Kelly Feehan, Extension Educator

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Emerald ash borer (EAB) has now been confirmed in Kearney by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Does this mean it must be in Columbus since the closest it was previously found was in Fremont? Not necessarily.

Emerald ash borer larvae and adults can hitchhike in firewood as well as on or in vehicles. This is the most common way it spreads because adult beetles only fly short distances.

When asked if EAB is in Columbus or Norfolk, my answer has been that it has not been found in these locations yet. It might be there, but it has not yet been found.

Now that EAB has been confirmed in Kearney, ash tree owners there and in communities near Kearney should begin making plans to either treat or remove ash trees.

For ash tree owners in communities more than 15 miles from Fremont, Kearney, Omaha, Lincoln and Greenwood, the recommendation remains to wait until EAB is confirmed in your area before beginning treatment or removing ash trees.

This recommendation strikes a balance between the need to protect valuable trees and the drawbacks of unnecessary insecticide applications.

When it is time to begin treatment, the optimal time is spring. Although professional trunk injections may provide some control even if done in summer; since EAB has not yet been found locally it would be wise to wait until EAB is confirmed in the area and then use spring treatments.

Know that treatment must be done for the remainder of the tree's life. It is not a once and be done treatment. Take time to assess the value and health of an ash tree to determine if it is a good candidate for treatment.

Trees worth treating are those that provide much-needed shade or have intrinsic value. The trees should not be too old and in very good condition with no large dead or dying branches, and no mower damage or other serious trunk wounds.

Once EAB is present, ash trees left untreated will eventually die and need to be removed. Do not wait until a tree dies to remove it. Trees that have died from EAB become extremely brittle and pose a hazard.

There may also be a high demand for tree removals when large numbers of ash begin dying. This will likely increase prices and the chance homeowners could be approached by "fly-by-night" tree companies.

When working with tree care services, it would be prudent to ask for proof of insurance as well as references from customers. In Columbus, the City of Columbus provides a list of tree care services permitted to do tree work in city limits.

As trees are removed, replace them with a diverse selection of shade trees, not just a few species of very fast growing or small trees. If one or two species are overplanted again, like ash and American elm were, another significant loss of the urban tree canopy will happen when the next serious pest arrives.

Source: Laurie Stepanek, Nebraska Forest Service