

EAB treatment questions

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Questions about when to begin treating ash trees for emerald ash borer (EAB) continue. The answer from Nebraska Extension and the Nebraska Forest Service remains the same.

Wait until EAB is found within 15 miles of an area before treating ash trees. Even in states like Michigan, where the borer has killed hundreds of trees, they recommend waiting to treat trees until the borer is within 15 miles.

An advantage Nebraska has is we are learning from states that have been dealing with EAB for a number of years. A Nebraska EAB task force has been learning about this pest for a number of years and determining best recommendations to make.

While emerald ash borer is likely to be found in Nebraska in the next few years, it has not yet been found. Even after it is found in Nebraska, we will still recommend waiting to treat ash trees until the borer is within 15 miles.

Why wait and take the risk? Money savings is one reason. The fact that insecticides can kill pollinators and lead to resistance in insects is another. Applying insecticides when they are not needed is not responsible pesticide use.

A third reason is that trees can be treated and saved even after infested. And finally, the most effective and environmentally responsible treatments are proving to be injections of insecticides applied by certified arborists.

Most healthy ash trees can only tolerate about 10 injections before the treatment causes issues and also leads to dieback. If a tree is injected before EAB is in an area, these are years of the trees life that may be lost.

So what is a homeowner to do? Now is the time to watch ash trees for signs of EAB, and to making the decision about whether an ash tree will even be treated once the borer is within 15 miles.

Signs to watch for include dieback in the top of the tree. Profuse suckering at the base of the tree or on the trunk. Woodpecker damage to the trunk.

Homeowners can also check the trunk for borer holes. Our native ash borers cause round holes when adults emerge. EAB adult beetles create D-shaped holes as they emerge because of the beetles shape. EAB are flat headed borers while other common ash borers are round headed.

When it comes to determining if a tree will even be treated, consider the age and condition of the tree as well as location. Older trees that are showing signs of decline may not be worth treating. Trees that are not providing beneficial shade for a building, patio or elsewhere may not be worth treating.

Treatment might be considered for younger, vigorous growing trees that are planted in strategic locations where they provide beneficial shade or privacy.

At any rate, it is up to individual homeowners to decide. Our recommendation, if a homeowner chooses to treat, is to wait until EAB is found within 15 miles. Even if it happens to be found in your community first, know that some EAB infested ash trees could still be treated and saved.

For additional information, refer the Nebraska Forest Service EAB resources website at <http://nfs.unl.edu/emerald-ash-borer>.