

The emerald ash borer has been found in Ozaukee County, just south of Sheboygan County. Sheboygan County has now been put on a quarantine list for the destructive insect. The following is information from the University of Wisconsin Extension including some frequently asked questions. More information is available at [www.emeraldashborer.info](http://www.emeraldashborer.info).

**Emerald ash borer** (*Agrilus planipennis* Fairmaire), an invasive insect native to Asia, has killed tens of millions of ash trees in urban, rural and forested settings. This beetle was first discovered in 2002 in southeast Michigan and Windsor, Ontario. As of May 2009, emerald ash borer (EAB) infestations were known to be present in 11 states and two Canadian provinces. Many homeowners, arborists and tree care professionals want to protect valuable ash trees from EAB. Scientists have learned much about this insect and methods to protect ash trees since 2002. This bulletin is designed to answer frequently asked questions and provide the most current information on insecticide options for controlling EAB.

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

**What options do I have for treating my ash trees?** If you elect to treat your ash trees, there are several insecticide options available and research has shown that treatments can be effective. Keep in mind, however, that controlling insects that feed under the bark with insecticides has always been difficult. This is especially true with EAB because our native North American ash trees have little natural resistance to this pest. In university trials, some insecticide treatments were effective in some sites, but the same treatments failed in other sites. Furthermore, in some studies conducted over multiple years, EAB densities continued to increase in individual trees despite annual treatment. Some arborists have combined treatments to increase the odds of success (e.g., combining a cover spray with a systemic treatment).

Our understanding of how EAB can be managed successfully with insecticides has increased substantially in recent years. The current state of this understanding is detailed in the bulletin. It is important to note that research on management of EAB remains a work in progress. Scientists from universities, government agencies and companies continue to conduct intensive studies to understand how and when insecticide treatments will be most effective.

### **I know my tree is already infested with EAB. Will insecticides still be effective?**

If a tree has lost more than 50 percent of its canopy, it is probably too late to save the tree. Studies have shown that it is best to begin using insecticides while ash trees are still relatively healthy. This is because most of the insecticides used for EAB control act systemically — the insecticide must be transported within the tree. In other words, a tree must be healthy enough to carry a systemic insecticide up the trunk and into the branches and canopy. When EAB larvae feed, their galleries injure the phloem and xylem that make up the plant's circulatory system. This interferes with the ability of the tree to transport nutrients and water, as well as insecticides. As a tree becomes more and more infested, the injury becomes more severe. Large branches or even the trunk can be girdled by the larval galleries.

Studies have also shown that if the canopy of a tree is already declining when insecticide treatments are initiated, the condition of the tree may continue to deteriorate during the first year of treatment. In many cases, the tree canopy will begin to improve in the second year of treatment. This lag in the reversal of canopy decline probably reflects the time needed for the tree to repair its vascular system after the EAB infestation has been reduced.

### **My ash tree looks fine but my county is quarantined for EAB. Should I start treating my tree?**

Scientists have learned that ash trees with low densities of EAB often have few or no external symptoms of infestation. Therefore, if your property is within a county that has been quarantined for EAB, your ash trees are probably at risk. Similarly, if your trees are outside a quarantined county but are still within 10-15 miles of a known EAB infestation, they may be at risk. If your ash trees are more than 15 miles beyond

this range, it is probably too early to begin insecticide treatments. Treatment programs that begin too early are a waste of money. Remember, however, that new EAB infestations have been discovered every year since 2002 and existing EAB populations will build and spread over time. Stay up to date with current EAB quarantine maps and related information at [www.emeraldashborer.info](http://www.emeraldashborer.info). You can use the links in this Web site to access specific information for individual states. When an EAB infestation is detected in a state or county for the first time, it will be added to these maps. Note, however, that once an area has been quarantined, EAB surveys generally stop, and further spread of EAB in that area will not be reflected on future maps.

**I realize that I will have to protect my ash trees from EAB for several years. Is it worth it?**

The economics of treating ash trees with insecticides for EAB protection are complicated. Factors that can be considered include the cost of the insecticide and expense of application, the size of the trees, the likelihood of success, and potential costs of removing and replacing the trees. Until recently, insecticide products had to be applied every year. A new product that is effective for two years or even longer (emamectin benzoate) has altered the economics of treating ash trees. As research progresses, costs and methods of treating trees will continue to change and it will be important to stay up to date on treatment options. Benefits of treating trees can be more difficult to quantify than costs. Landscape trees typically increase property values, provide shade and cooling, and contribute to the quality of life in a neighborhood. Many people are sentimental about their trees. These intangible qualities are important and should be part of any decision to invest in an EAB management program.

It is also worth noting that the size of EAB populations in a specific area will change over time. Populations initially build very slowly, but later increase rapidly as more trees become infested. As EAB populations reach their peak, many trees will decline and die within one or two years. As untreated ash trees in the area succumb, however, the local EAB population will decrease substantially. Scientists do not yet have enough experience with EAB to know what will happen over time to trees that survive the initial wave of EAB. Ash seedlings and saplings are common in forests, woodlots, and right-of-ways, however, and it is unlikely that EAB will ever completely disappear from an area. That means that ash trees may always be at some risk of being attacked by EAB, but it seems reasonable to expect that treatment costs could eventually decrease as pest pressure declines after the EAB wave has passed.