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# Considerations When Deciding to Remove an Ash Tree

By Bill Meyer, WSU Senior Groundskeeper (Retired)

(WSU Retiree Center Newsletter, Summer 2016)

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). It seems like every day more information comes out on the deadly disease attacking the Ash tree. And worse yet, the disease is here in Winona. One only has to listen to the buzz of chainsaws removing Ash trees near Lake Winona to see the seriousness of the threat. What should a homeowner do?

If a homeowner suspects he might have EAB in an Ash tree in his yard, a quick and easy inspection of the tree will yield helpful information about the potential presence of EAB in the tree. Look for the following clues: woodpecker holes that can be found on the trunk, a mottled, light brown bark which can be observed on the trunk and larger branches, growth at the top of the tree that is sparse, D shaped exit holes indicating EAB activity, S-shaped galleries that can be found just under the bark, and if you have good eyes, maybe you can spot the metallic green adult (about 1/2 the size of a penny). Still confused? Maybe it is time to ask yourself a few questions. How valuable is this tree to me? Does it offer desirable shade to my house and yard? Is it a rather young tree or a stately mature tree that has stood straight and tall for many years? Do I enjoy viewing the birds and chipmunks that spend time in the tree? How will the removal of a large tree affect my property values? Finally, how long would it take for a young replacement tree to reach the size of my current Ash tree? Would removing the tree and replanting a new young sapling make sense or cents?

The good news is new insecticide products and application methods have developed over the past few years that show large Ash trees can be effectively protected from EAB. This protection can last a number of years. For instance, some neighborhoods in Michigan have treated their Ash for up to ten years. Successfully! Furthermore, numerous recent economic analyses have consistently concluded that treating Ash trees with a systemic insecticide is less costly than removing the tree and then replanting.

As a homeowner and a tree lover, the choice is clear to me. If I had a large, mature Ash tree in my landscape, I would have a professional provide a chemical solution to EAB. I would have a systemic insecticide such as TREE-age injected into the base of the tree through a series of drilled holes into the sapwood. Soil applied insecticides are not a good option in Winona because of the high water table and the chance of ground water contamination.

Finally, I would start the treatment when the tree was still healthy. Studies have shown that a single injection of TREE-age (emamectin benzoate) in mid-May or early June will give excellent control for two years. Every two years I would have the tree injected until the EAB outbreak subsides. After each application, I would monitor weather patterns. If dry conditions followed treatment, supplemental watering would help assist uptake of systemic chemicals in the tree.

Taking down an Ash tree and replacing it with a young tree is not only an expensive option, but an option that takes time. At my age I would rather take my chances with a trunk injected treatment. I think it makes both sense and cents to go that route.