



Ash Tree Management

Dealing with the Emerald Ash Borer Invasion

Forestry Topic 35

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What is the Emerald Ash Borer?

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is one of the most destructive insects to have invaded North American forests. It was first discovered in Virginia in 2003 and subsequently eradicated, then found again in 2008, and has now reached a density that allows it to spread rapidly throughout the state. All species of ash (*Fraxinus spp.*) native to North America are susceptible to the emerald ash borer, and once infested, a tree usually dies within three to five years. Ash trees of all sizes are at risk, even smaller saplings; EAB has been found to infest ash trees as small as ½ inch in diameter.

What Should I Do if I Have Ash on My Property?

Treat. Insecticide treatments are the only way to increase the likelihood that your ash will survive. There are effective insecticides on the market as long as you treat before more than 30 percent of the canopy is damaged. Preventative treatments with appropriate products have a higher chance of success before signs of decline are apparent. It is important to note that re-treatment is necessary every one to three years (depending on the product) while EAB populations are high. The decision to treat is a long-term investment but may be more cost-effective than tree removal. Consult with a certified arborist to discuss which treatment option is best for your tree.

Remove. If you own forestland with a large component of commercially-valuable ash, the VDOF recommends discussing your forest management options with a professional forester. This is the time to start thinking about a possible salvage harvest. Since EAB only impacts the outer layer of wood, infested ash trees may still have wood product potential as long as they are harvested within a year of dying. Instead of sending dead ash to the landfill, consider upcycling these trees into quality products like furniture, flooring and crafts.

Do Nothing. If the ash tree is not a safety hazard (i.e., deep in the forest with no walking trails, buildings or high-

value assets nearby), it is acceptable to leave the ash tree on the property knowing that it will likely die. Quarantine laws do not require the removal of dead or dying ash and standing dead trees are valuable habitat for wildlife. However, please be aware that ash becomes brittle shortly after emerald ash borer infestation and will pose a safety hazard.

What about Biological Control?

Four species of parasitic wasps are currently approved for release as biological control of EAB. These species have been thoroughly tested in quarantine facilities to ensure that they do not have negative impacts on non-target hosts. They are not currently available to the general public as a control method, but releases have been carried out by various organizations in Virginia. While there are some native biological control agents present, they have minor effects on ash survival and cannot control EAB populations alone. We remain hopeful that biological control agents, both natural and introduced, will someday regulate the EAB population in Virginia.



Emerald Ash Borer Galleries



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