

Treeways

July 2012

EAB – The Genie is Out of the Bottle

Minnesota and Sunfish Lake are on the cusp of the major breakout of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in our area. If EAB in Minnesota follows the typical infestation growth pattern experienced in other parts of the country we will learn of many new Minnesota EAB hot spots within the next 2-3 years.

The closest known EAB infestation is only 4 miles away in St. Paul however new infestation centers are not typically located until 2-3 years after they get started. In 2011 a major new infestation was found in the Winona area. That infestation may have been 5-6 years old and because of that fact many emerging beetles have moved out from there. An additional quarantine was put in place, but as one entomology expert recently said – “the genie is out of the bottle” meaning that we may be able to slow down the movement of EAB, but we cannot stop it.

So what should we do?

1. Do not buy and plant ash trees. Green, black and white ash trees are all at risk. Mountain ash is a non-related species and is not susceptible.
2. If you have legacy or magnificent specimen ash tree **don't wait any longer to begin to treat that tree proactively with systemic insecticide to prevent EAB from destroying it.** Contact your City Forester, check the City website or the Minnesota Extension Service for more information.
3. If you have a forest of average quality ash trees you should quickly begin a program of reforestation so that you don't end up living on the prairie that used to be your woodland home.
4. When you install new young trees you must protect them from deer and rodents, make sure they get plenty of water and suppress the weeds, grasses and turf around them so they will become established and grow more quickly.

The take-home message is that we can save an ash tree or two or three from death by EAB, but we cannot save all the ash trees in our woodlands. Planting new trees of other species is the answer. The best time to plant a tree was tens years ago and the next best time is now. Ten years from now when the trees you plant now are growing into a magnificent new woodland you will be glad you started planting now.

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