

Treeways

January 2013

It's not too early to think about spring, the best time all year to plant new trees and shrubs. I had good intentions last summer about planting new bare root trees but drought conditions from June till some time in December squashed those plans. They did however get into pots and my fingers are crossed that these baby trees will come through winter ready to explode into growth when planted this spring. I am all about diversifying the forest that I live in. Some of the more interesting new trees I will be planting include American chestnut, shagbark hickory, dawn redwood, bicolor oak, black cherry, and hazelnut.

Emerald ash borer (EAB) is on our doorstep! Some of our neighbors have begun treating their legacy and important landscape ash trees with insecticide to prevent destruction by EAB. There are at least three other major concerns related to EAB. **First**, when the ash trees in the forest die, and they will die, what will be left? Will buckthorn, honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, burdock and other invasive species take over? **Second**, when a forest of ash trees die how long will it take for them to fall down and create a potential fire hazard. And **third** how can we use this devastating problem to reforest our woodlands to give us a new and improved more diverse, beautiful and long-lasting forest?

Here is a reasonable plan going forward:

1. Begin preventative insecticide treatments of legacy or important landscape ash trees.
2. Remove ash trees that are damaged or are in locations where they will likely become hazard trees.
3. Every year going forward plan to plant new trees. Plant as many trees as possible in your part of our Sunfish Lake forest. Planting additional trees every year means that you will gradually develop a diverse, multi-aged forest that will be more resilient in the face of storms, climate change, and the next new pest.
4. Consider cutting out holes (i.e. remove groups of ash trees) into ash dominated woodlands and planting new species of trees into these openings. This is exactly what happens following a forest fire or when an ancient giant tree crashes to the forest floor. These openings are new opportunities for new possibilities.
5. Always protect the new plantings from our abundant population of antlered rodents and the rabbits and the voles. Plan supplemental watering for at least the first two years.

Remember that this is a long-term plan and as even as we lose our ashes over the next 10-15 years we can by planting trees each year going forward truly create our forest of dreams. Call me if you have a special tree to request for Arbor Day.

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