

Emerald Ash Borer 2021

2021 - 9

A Resident's Experience with Emerald Ash Borer

Contributed by our neighbor, Gretchen Funk

When we consulted with our City Forester, we found out we have quite a few mature green ash trees on our land, and that all of them are vulnerable to the current wave of infestation with emerald ash borer (EAB). By the way, a consultation with the City Forester is available at no charge for Sunfish Lake residents. He helped us understand that all green, white, and black ash trees are susceptible to emerald ash borer. Minnesota has more ash trees than any other state and the total number of Minnesota ash trees is north of a billion trees.

Emerald ash borer is certainly one of those complicating wrenches in landscape planning for a homeowner. If you can catch a tree before the infestation becomes serious, it is possible to have a certified professional inject systemic insecticide into the tree with a good rate of success protecting it. This process works well, yet the expense and upkeep of recurring treatments may be a deterrent if you have a high population of ash trees like we do.

Informed with the Forester's advice, we decided to proceed with a plan of action that combined systemic insecticide treatment of our most important ash trees. A gorgeous trio of mature ash trees in our backyard gives our home passive-solar cooling in the summer, greatly enhances our view, and brings wildlife to our windows. These important trees are the ones we decided invest in by having them treated. We chose to protect our most valuable ashes to keep the cost reasonable and began our program of planting a diverse mix of native trees to maintain the wooded glory of our landscape.

On the south side of our property there are ash trees we have decided not to try to save. They are lovely mature trees, but with their lifespan likely to be cut short we are taking the opportunity to diversify with an eye to the long-term. We have so far planted tulip poplar, white pine, Sienna Glen maples, and red bud trees in advance of the ash trees inevitable decline. We plan to continue to add more trees each year by planting them in just the right locations to maximize the landscape beauty and environmental benefits to our home. The cost and maintenance of new plantings is less than ongoing treatments, and we believe our plan is more environmentally conservative – we use fewer pesticides while at the same time planting more trees. A bonus is how very enjoyable it is to be a part of creating custom landscape woodland which enhances or screens just the right spots. We look forward to watching our emerging scenery with the security of knowing we are improving our beautiful environment.

EAB Situation this Year in Sunfish Lake

City Forester – Jim Nayes

Ash trees in the City of Sunfish Lake are generally infested with emerald ash borer. This alien insect invasion has been coming our way for many years and got a foothold in Sunfish Lake about seven years ago. First a couple trees were infested, then a few fairly close ash trees became infested and now ash

trees are generally infested throughout the city. The only ash trees likely to be alive five or 10 years from now are those that have been treated with systemic insecticide within the last two years and these will need continuing treatments every two years going forward. It is possible, **but not likely**, that starting to treat currently infested trees will be successful. The City Forester can help you make a determination.

All the photos are ash trees in the city showing various levels of infestation during the week of January 3rd, 2021. Woodpeckers help us find new infestations especially during the winter by searching for and feeding on the emerald ash borer larvae inside ash trees. The bark flaking that looks like whiter patches is called blanding and is caused by woodpeckers pecking into the ash trees to get at the beetle larvae. By the time an ash tree has significant blanding visible, the tree is too heavily infested to successfully treat with insecticide.





A few areas in the city have woodlands that have substantial ash populations and when these trees die en-mass they will begin to fall apart within about one year. They will also dry out and become a substantial source of burnable brush on some properties. If you have that situation, you may contact the City Forester for a "Firewise" assessment related to wildfire prevention. Trees that die due to EAB infestations tend to fall apart quite quickly. Major limbs may break off as soon as 10 months following death. This means that dying ash trees are relatively easier to remove than fully dead trees.

The city does not require that dead or damaged trees be removed on private property unless they are close enough to a public street or trail that they could be a safety risk. The city does not survey private streets and driveways however you could call the City Forester for a free recommendation. If you do have an ash tree that dies and is near a public street, trail or ROW you may be asked to remove it before it becomes a serious safety issue.

Please take a look at the pictures. Once you begin to see this kind of insect damage you will start seeing it all over the metro area. No city will be spared, and no untreated ash trees will survive. Mountain ash is an unrelated species and is not affected.