

Norfolk Insider

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“The arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer – plan now”

The Emerald Ash Bore (EAB) is coming. This little beetle will ultimately kill all the ash trees in Nebraska. Below are issues we as Norfolk citizens can address right now before EAB infests our ash trees.



Pat Mrsny, City of Norfolk Park Superintendent, discusses Emerald Ash Borer infestation at a recent Tree Advisory Board meeting.

First, we do not know when the EAB will arrive. It might be this spring. It might be five years. Right now EAB is in Creston, Iowa; Kansas City, Missouri; Wyandotte County, Kansas; and Boulder, Colorado. The borer can and does fly in search of new ash trees to eat but it travels the furthest and fastest in our vehicles. People transporting firewood or pallets made of ash can spread EAB so it could show up anywhere.

Second, once EAB is present, it will take up to three years to start seeing damage to ash trees. The majority of the ash trees will die at nine to 12 years after the arrival of the EAB. Except for a few, rare lingering ash that will remain infected and stressed nearly 100% of the ash trees will be dead 15 years after the arrival of the EAB.

Third, it is expensive to remove large trees. After they die, ash trees turn very brittle. They will drop branches and topple over possibly causing expensive and extensive damage. Omaha has over 114,000 public ash trees. Lincoln has over 100,000 public ash trees. In Norfolk, there are nearly 700 ash trees in our parks and on our terraces. Terrace trees

in Norfolk are the responsibility of the adjacent landowner. A large ash tree can be over forty feet tall, have a 30-foot spread and a trunk diameter of over 20 inches. A tree this large, depending on its

proximity to buildings or wires or streets can cost over \$1000 to remove. Very few landowners have the tools, skills, or time to remove trees this size.

Fourth, while there are treatments that will at least delay the death of an ash tree, current treatments must be applied every year. All of these treatments are toxins of varying degrees. They do overlap with other lawn and garden applications such as grub worm. The maximum safe levels for children and pets of these toxins in your yard can easily be exceeded. Some of these treatments will harm other beneficial insects, bees and other pollinators.

For some of these treatments, a license is required. Some of these treatments, such as the trunk injections actually weaken your ash tree. Thus, when EAB actually does arrive, then will be the time to evaluate what treatments will be available and what the environmental and safety side effects will be. No treatments are recommended until EAB is known within 15 miles. Doing treatments before then is wasteful and dangerous.

What can you do right now? Go out and look at your trees. How many of them are ash? Are there certain ash trees that are mainstays or anchors in your landscape? You could consider trying to save those.

Are some of your ash trees stressed by drought or other pests? Are some of your ash trees small and not important in your landscape? Are some not ideally located or are they too close to your house or garage or street? These will become dangerous as they die and become brittle. Except for those large ash trees you consider essential to your landscape, all these should be removed.

Do you have so many ash trees that removal by a professional arborist all at once would be financially prohibitive? Could you replace some or all of your ash trees with other species and improve your landscape? As we probably have a few years until the ash start dying, landscape planning now is essential. By removing a portion of the ash trees each year, you can spread much of the cost over several years. Also, you can greatly improve your landscape. Depending on how many, of what size, serving what purpose, you can just bite the bullet and remove them all at once. Remember, you are responsible for any trees on the terraces in front of your house.

Do you have the skills, tools, strength, stamina or time to remove any of the trees yourself? Tree removal is a dangerous, risky job. Sure, most of us can whack off a two-inch trunk on a 12-foot tree but attacking a forty to fifty foot tree with a 20 inch trunk is whole other story. If it has to fall a certain way to avoid your house or your neighbor's house, this is a huge liability issue best left to the licensed, insured professional. Be sure to poison the stump with Tordon or similar poison to prevent the regrowth of multiple shoots which ash trees are apt to have.

Now is the time to count and evaluate your ash trees. Now is the time to plan for their removal and replacement. Now is the time to reevaluate your landscape plan and care.

The Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Arboretum and the Nebraska Extension Service have many sources of help and information. Most of these can be found on their website <<http://nfs.unl.edu/>> or the Nebraska Arboretum website <<http://arboretum.unl.edu/>>. The Nebraska Extension Service website is <<http://extension.unl.edu/>>. There is also information at <www.emeraldashborer.info>.