

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

www.ci.norfolk.ne.us

September 9, 2015

“Council Approves Emerald Ash Borer Community Plan”

A bug known to have killed tens of millions of ash trees around the country, the emerald ash borer, was recently found in Montgomery County, Iowa - only 40 miles from Omaha. Since it travels in firewood or other wood products, tree experts say there's a good chance it will end up in the Norfolk area in the months ahead.

The City of Norfolk Tree Advisory Board has been watching the advancement of the borer and making preparations for its arrival. Dr. G. Tom Surber, chairman of the board, wrote up a plan of the steps the City can make now and when the borer does arrive in the area. That plan was approved by the City Council at its September 8 meeting.



City of Norfolk park staff Ron Stender and Tom Wolfe plant an oak tree on the north side of Skyview Lake. There are many ash trees at the lake that will die as a result of the impending emerald ash borer infestation.

“Once the borer arrives in the area, it will take up to three years to start seeing damage to ash trees. The majority of the ash trees will die in nine to 12 years. Nearly 100% of the ash trees will be dead after 15 years,” Surber said.

The borer has destroyed over 50 million ash trees in 25 states since first identified in Michigan in 2002. Originally from Asia, it is thought to have come to the U.S. via wood packing materials. The borer is a metallic-green beetle about the size of a penny. The larvae of the insect burrows under the bark and damages the tree causing scars to disrupt the flow of water and nutrients and killing the tree. New adult beetles leave a distinctive “D” shape hole, less than 1/8 inch diameter in the bark as they emerge.

An ash tree count was done in City owned or controlled areas of Norfolk earlier this summer with 414 trees found to be ash trees. The

Emerald Ash Borer Community Plan entails that ash trees that are currently sub-standard be removed now. Some of the bigger ash trees that are along the trail system or in a highly visible area will be treated while the rest will be removed as they die off.

“Until the borer is found within an hour's driving distance from Norfolk, there isn't a need to do anything. Once it is found, people may want to use a treatment on their ash trees that inoculates it for the borer infestation. The cost is about \$80 per treatment and it lasts two to three years. If a person chooses not to inoculate a tree, they will need to someday remove the dead ash tree or hire someone to remove it for them as there aren't any ash trees that are immune to the borer,” Surber said, “It may cost up to \$1000 to remove a large ash tree in your yard. Consider removing a portion of your ash trees gradually to spread out the cost. You may want to get new trees of varying species started to replace the ash trees. Remember, you are responsible for any trees on the terraces.”

Surber said that if someone does notice damage to their ash tree, they can call the Nebraska State Forestry service at 402-375-0101 for help in identifying the problem.