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CITY OF NORFOLK & TREE ADVISORY BOARD PLANNING AHEAD FOR THE FUTURE OF NORFOLK'S ASH TREES

Though the Emerald Ash Borer beetle is small, no larger than the size of a nickel, it can leave a devastating impact on a community. In fact, the tiny, green bug has already destroyed millions of ash trees in 31 states.

The destruction occurs when the larvae of the beetle burrow under the bark of the tree, damaging it and causing scars. This disrupts the flow of water and nutrients, eventually killing the tree. Not only is the death of an ash tree a concern, but the hazards that come with it. After death, ash trees may rapidly be invaded by a fungus, making the tree brittle, thus triggering the risk of the tree to fall without warning.

Currently, the nearest known Emerald Ash Borer to Norfolk is about 75 miles away. "Until the borer is found within fifteen miles of Norfolk, there isn't a need to do anything," said Chairman of the Norfolk Tree Advisory Board, Tom Surber.

The City of Norfolk Park Division has been working closely with the Norfolk Tree Advisory Board to stay ahead of the Emerald Ash Borer. The Park Division has spread the costs of Emerald Ash Borer remedies out through the budget to prepare for the potential of disease in nearly 500 public ash trees. But, there are several thousand private ash trees in Norfolk, including those that line the streets and terraces.

"Once it is found, people may want to use a treatment on their ash trees that inoculates it for the borer infestation. Landscape ash trees can be saved with annual applications of a chemical either into the tree itself – expensive over the years and damaging to the stability of the tree – or with ground applications around the tree," said Surber. "If a person chooses not to inoculate a tree, they will someday need to remove the dead ash tree or hire someone to remove it for them. To spread out the cost, consider gradually removing portions of ash trees on your property. 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."

Though remedies are available for older and stronger ash trees, it is best to remove young or weak ash trees. The chemical used to remedy the Emerald Ash Borer may be the same that is used to fight grubs in the lawn. If using the chemical approach, the total application of this chemical needs to be within the safe limits for children and pets as listed on the container.

The beetle is out from late April into August. Surber said that if someone does notice damage to their ash tree and the signs of the beetle, they can put the insect in a small jar and take it to the State Extension Office for identification.