

Options for managing ash trees from the threat of emerald ash borer

Emerald ash borer, an invasive tree pest that attacks and kills ash trees, is the biggest current threat to our tree canopy. There are over 1 million ash trees in Hennepin County, and 100 percent of them are threatened by the emerald ash borer. Most residents live within 15 miles of an infested ash tree, which means you should be taking steps now to determine if you have ash trees on your property and how you are going to manage them.

Identifying ash trees

Learning to identify ash trees is the first step. Look for the following characteristics to determine if your tree is an ash tree:

- Branches that grow directly opposite from one another
- Compound leaves, or multiple leaves on one stalk joined to a branch.
- Bark with a diamond-shaped pattern.
- Seeds that are oar-shaped samaras that typically hang in clusters.

Preserving

You can work with an arborist to save ash trees that are of high value. Ash trees within five miles of an emerald ash borer infestation should be treated. The county recommends using a trunk injection of emamectin benzoate (commercial name Tree-age). Prevention treatments must be administered by a certified arborist every two years in late spring.

Removing

Any ash tree not being treated will eventually need to be removed and disposed. If you decide to proactively remove ash trees, remove them between October 1 and April 30 to avoid the season when emerald ash borer is active and in flight. Trees should be removed by a certified arborist, and you can coordinate with your neighbors to reduce individual costs of removing trees.

Replanting

Trees provide numerous benefits, including improving air and water quality, reducing soil erosion, increasing wildlife habitat, providing savings in heating and cooling, and improving health. So planting new trees in place of any you remove is a great idea!

Select a diversity of tree species that are well-suited to your growing conditions. Be sure to call 811 before you dig, follow proper planting techniques, and give your young tree enough water.

Learn more about emerald ash borer and options for managing ash trees at hennepin.us/ashtrees.