

Lambertville's Ash Trees Face a Deadly Future

In 10 years, most of New Jersey's 24 million ash trees in forests - and countless others in neighborhoods, parks and backyards - will be dead according to State Forester John Sacco. The culprit is the Emerald Ash Borer, an unwelcome import from Asia.

What is the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)?

The EAB is a tiny beetle that came from Asia with wood products that were brought to the Great Lakes region. It started showing up in Michigan in the early 2000s and has been spreading ever since.

How Does It Affect Trees?

In the first year of infection, the tree appears healthy. By the second year, the tree continues to appear healthy but woodpeckers flock to the tree in order to eat the insect's larvae burrowed under the bark. The larvae busily eat the tree's xylem and phloem tissues, essentially starving the tree. In the third year, the crown thins, as nutrients are unable to reach the high branches, and bark starts splitting. By the fourth year, the tree is dead.

How Do I Know If a Tree is Affected?

The tree just starts looking bad. It starts thinning out at its crown and the leaves start turning yellow. You'll see shredding bark and woodpecker holes. On the trunk, you may notice D-shaped holes where the insects exit.

What Should I Do?

Over 99 percent of untreated ash trees in the landscape will eventually become infested and die from EAB, so doing nothing is not a good option for trees planted in yards, near homes, along streets, in parks, and in playgrounds.

Identification of ash trees is the first step and, once done, residents are urged to contact a trusted tree professional. The trees can be identified as having: (1) branches and buds growing on opposite sites of each other, rather than staggered; (2) leaves that are compound and composed of 5-11 leaflets; (3) (mature trees) bark showing a tight diamond-shaped pattern or (young) a smooth appearance. See photos on next page.

There are two courses of action to take: start cutting ash trees down or start treating them with insecticide. Treatment costs about \$200 per tree, and they have to be treated every two years. If you see a tree that's in decline, it's too late. Treating a declining ash tree is a waste of money.

(Source: New Jersey Conservation Foundation)

Ash Tree IDENTIFICATION



1. Leaves are compound and composed of 5 to 11 leaflets.



2. Seeds on female trees are cask shaped.



3. Branches and buds are in pairs directly across from each other (opposite branching).



4. Mature bark has diamond-shaped ridges.