

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR EAB AND OTHER ASH TREE PROBLEMS

If you have seen a purple contraption that resembles a box kite hanging from a tree, it's likely an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) trap. The Illinois Department of Agriculture has placed approximately 5,000 EAB traps throughout the state.

The traps primarily are concentrated in a 50-mile buffer zone that runs along the state's western border from northern to central Illinois and then cuts a swath across the south-central part of the state to the Indiana border in southeast Illinois. The Ag Department asks that these traps be left alone.

EAB is an invasive beetle that has devastated tens of thousands of ash trees in Illinois since it was first discovered in the state in 2006.

The Emerald Ash Borer is a small metallic-green insect, about one-third to one-half the size of a penny. Adults can fly but not for long distances. The borer will tunnel under the bark and start feeding on the sapwood of the tree, causing leaves to thin and yellow.

Besides the color, D-shaped holes on the bark are another clue. No other insect creates the BB-size, D-shaped holes on ashes. Also, trees may produce shoots around the trunk at ground level.

There are other metallic-green insects, including many beetles, which can make identification of EAB more difficult. The false June bug is a common metallic-green beetle, though it is almost the size of a quarter. Japanese beetles are metallic green as well, but with a coppery overtone.

Compounding the problem, ashes are plagued by other insects including another ash borer and sapsuckers, all of which can cause holes in the trunk of the tree and lead to a decline in the overall health of the tree, including the yellowing and thinning of the leaves. Homeowners need to look carefully to determine the cause.

Sapsuckers (a type of woodpecker) create uniform rows of round holes up and down the tree's trunk. The sapsucker is a protected migratory bird, so control is limited.

Lilac/Ash Borer is a moth that looks almost wasp-like. The caterpillar tunnels beneath the bark on both lilacs and ashes. Females lay eggs on the bark, and the larvae tunnel beneath and start feeding during late May and early June. The presence of fine



sawdust material called frass is an indication of tunneling. The holes made by this insect are round instead of D-shaped. Several diseases and environmental factors can also create problems. Anthracnose, a common spring fungal disease, causes leaves to become twisted, water-soaked, and turn olive-green, then the leaves fall off. Usually, the tree will produce more leaves, so the long-term effect is minimal.

Ash Decline is a name for a group of symptoms. The term is used to describe the overall decline of the tree, starting with dieback of branches and limited new growth. Leaves may be sparse, giving the tree a sickly appearance. Trees generally don't die abruptly. Instead, they may decline over five to 10 years.

Continued on next page

Trees seldom produce any shoots at ground level next to the trunk.

Horticulturists and plant pathologists haven't been able to isolate a causal agent, though some suspect a microorganism. Ash Decline could also be confused with the effects of Ash Yellows or fungal Verticillium Wilt.

A multi-step approach is needed to protect ash trees:

- First, conclusively identify the tree as an ash tree (*Fraxinus* sp.). See the photos below. If it's not an ash, the problem is not Emerald Ash Borer.
- Maintain the health and vigor of ash trees. Like most plants, trees under stress are more

likely to be infested by insects or infected with diseases. Water during droughts and maintain proper nutrient levels. Mulch the tree out to the drip line to avoid mower injury and grass competition.

- Avoid planting ash trees. While ashes are fast-growing, strong wood shade trees, they suffer several problems. If the Emerald Ash Borer moves further through the state, expect damage to occur. Work with your local nursery or garden center on alternatives to ash trees.
- Be vigilant. Look for D-shaped holes and the small emerald-green adult borer. Check trees regularly, particularly in the spring and early summer.



Is the plant really an ash tree? An ash has compound leaves, attached opposite each other on the branch. A mature ash tends to have a diamond pattern on its bark.

**If you suspect
Emerald Ash Borers,
contact your local
U of I Extension office.**

www.extension.uiuc.edu

- Be open-minded. Remember, not every problem with the ash tree is caused by the EAB. It's wise to be concerned, but don't get to the point of crying wolf.
- For more details, visit the Illinois Ash Borer website at www.illinoiseab.com.



An Emerald Ash Borer and its emergence hole.



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