



Emerald Ash Borer: Beware of Dying Ash Trees

By Sue Gwise, Horticulture Educator

The emerald ash borer (EAB) has been on our radar for several years now. As far as we know it has not been found in Jefferson County—but it will be here soon enough. It is along the southern shore of Oneida Lake and there is a population in Mallorytown, Ontario, which is across the St. Lawrence River from Morristown.

Ash trees that become infested with EAB will die unless they are treated with a systemic insecticide. Not only will we lose most of the ash in the county, there is a dangerous problem that occurs when ash are killed by EAB—a consequence called ‘ash snap.’

As ash trees die from EAB they lose 50% of their moisture after only one to two years. Many times these trees look healthy and only have about 20% canopy dieback—but they are hazards. As the wood dries out it becomes very brittle. Entire trees will shatter, fail low on the trunk, or uproot. Seemingly healthy trees fail with no warning and no wind, snow, or rain loads.



This is a concern for anyone who spends time around ash trees:

- Farmers plowing or working in fields with ash hedgerows (livestock are also in danger)
- Hunters
- Fishermen
- Skiers/snowshoers
- ATV/snowmobilers
- Golfers
- Hikers

These trees also have the potential to bring down powerlines, block roads and driveways, and damage homes and property. If you have a woodlot that contains ash you should not cut wood alone, especially if you are removing ash trees.

These trees are so dangerous that once they reach 20% canopy dieback, arborists and tree cutters will not allow their workers to climb these trees during removal. According to research done by Davey Tree, the force needed to break a 1” diameter limb in a healthy tree will break a 5” diameter limb in an EAB infested ash. Without climbers tree removal becomes very expensive since cranes and lifts need to be brought in.

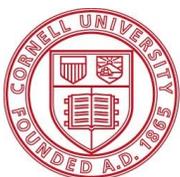
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So... if you have ash trees on your property, what are your options?

- Have the ash trees removed while they are still green and can be safely climbed. This proactive option is the cheapest—once the tree gets to the 20% dieback point costs for removal will double.
- Treat the tree. This is another proactive choice that is initially cheaper, but may be more expensive in the long run since treatments need to be done approximately every three years. This must be done by a certified arborist or pesticide applicator. Costs are about \$10 per trunk diameter inch, plus travel.
- Do nothing. This reactive option will be the most expensive. Either you will pay double to get the tree removed once it becomes a hazard, or it will come down on its own. Depending on the location of the tree this could lead to property damage, injury, or lawsuits.

If you have questions about the status of EAB in the county or treatment options, contact Sue Gwise at sjg42@cornell.edu.



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