



Protecting our trees from emerald ash borer

Not too long ago, ash trees were among the most common trees growing east of the Rocky Mountains. They sprouted up in moist soil alongside streams, lakes and wetlands, and thrived in the patchy shade of low-lying woodlands. Many ash trees were planted in cities and towns, where their arching limbs cast shade over streets and buildings.



In just 20 years, emerald ash borer (EAB) has changed the landscape of many American cities and wooded areas - and it's rapidly infesting ash trees in Minnetonka.

EAB is native to Asia and probably reached the United States inside pallets and crates constructed from ash wood. This tiny beetle - barely a quarter of an inch long, lance-shaped and iridescent green - is named for its favorite food source: ash trees. The beetles found a huge food source in our native ash species and spread wherever people transported ash firewood.

Why ash trees matter

Before EAB, Minnesota was home to one billion ash trees - more than any other state. At least 100,000 of those ashes grew right here in Minnetonka.

There's a reason why ash is so common - it's an adaptable tree that offers a lot of environmental and habitat benefits:

- The dense, leafy ash canopy provides shelter, nest space and food for a wide range of animals - from native insects and pollinators to songbirds, raptors, game birds and mammals.
- Ash root systems hold soil in place, controlling erosion.
- And wherever they stand, ash trees steadily pull in water. This reduces the volume of polluted stormwater flowing into local waterways, and minimizes the risk of flooding.

A single mature ash tree provides these natural services and more, reducing your heating and cooling costs and increasing property values.



Battling the bug

To save valuable ash trees, when possible, and slow the spread of EAB, city staff have been preparing for its arrival in Minnetonka since 2010. Their work includes:

- Injecting large, healthy ash trees on city property to protect from EAB infestation
- Reducing the number of ashes on city property and in the roadside right-of-way (at no cost to property owners)
- Marking EAB-infested trees on private property for winter removal
- Replacing ash in parks and public spaces with diverse species
- Holding an annual tree sale for Minnetonka property owners.



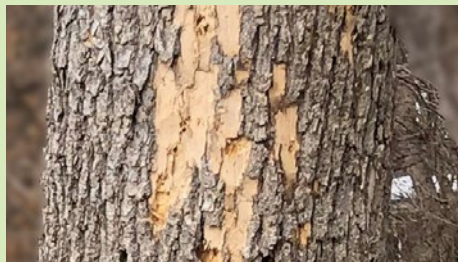
What You Can Do

In Minnetonka, most ash trees are in private wooded areas and yards. Ninety-nine percent of those trees will die of EAB infestation unless injected. Dead ash are brittle and pose a serious risk to homes, yards and roads.

One of the most important steps in protecting our trees is to first recognize an EAB infestation. Emerald ash borers are tiny insects that spend most of their time high in the leafy tops of ash trees or beneath ash bark – so you're unlikely to see them up close. Instead, look for these common signs and symptoms of EAB infestation:



Leaves and branches die back, especially in the top of the tree's crown.



Pale patches on the bark are caused by woodpeckers hunting for EAB larvae.



Stressed trees may grow water sprouts near the ground.

Contact the city's forestry team at forestry@minnetonkamn.gov if you notice a declining ash tree on your property or anywhere in the city.

Then, work with a certified arborist to make an EAB management plan including all of these steps:

1. **INJECT** healthy ash trees 10 inches in diameter or larger.
 - Ash injection is quite affordable.
 - Contact Rainbow Treecare at 952-922-3810 to request Minnetonka's bulk discount, or ask your preferred tree contractor about pricing and services.
2. **REMOVE** unhealthy or small ash trees. Contact city staff before removing trees near wetlands, lakes and creeks, where construction is planned, or in a conservation easement.
3. **REPLANT** with diverse tree species.
4. **PREVENT** the spread of EAB!
 - Prune or remove ash trees only in winter, when EAB beetles are dormant.
 - Properly dispose of ash debris.
 - Don't move ash wood outside the metro region, and buy certified firewood when you travel.



Diversity is key

A diverse community forest - with many kinds of trees of different ages - is much more resistant to pests, diseases and climate change. Consider replacing ash with other species that thrive in similar conditions or offer similar benefits. Good alternatives include:

- Maple: red, silver or sugar
- Oak: bur, white, swamp white, red or pin
- American basswood
- River birch
- Black walnut
- Black cherry
- Kentucky coffeetree
- Ohio buckeye
- Boxelder
- Hickory: shagbark or bitternut
- Hackberry
- Honeylocust
- Ironwood

In the future, EAB-resistant varieties of ash may become available. New strains of native species are being bred to select genes that allow these beneficial trees to fight off EAB infestation.

For more information on emerald ash borer and what you can do to protect our community forest, visit minnetonkamn.gov/EAB.

