

NJ EAB Task Force Recommendations

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for the NJ EAB Task Force

Emerald Ash Borer is here, there's no avoiding it. As shade tree program representatives you have no doubt been bombarded with information – pest alerts, fact sheets, reports, tool kits – all helpful, all overwhelming. You know that you need an inventory of your ash resource – and congratulations to the many municipalities that have already achieved this critical step. You know that there are several treatment options if you start early, and you know that “do nothing” is really not an option for your shade trees, as over 99% of untreated ash trees in the landscape will eventually become infested and die from EAB.

The NJ EAB Task Force, comprised of representatives from the NJ Department of Agriculture, NJ State Forest Service, USDA APHIS, Rutgers University, and USDA FS, have been monitoring the spread of EAB through NJ again this year, and are grateful to the municipalities that are participating in the trapping program or have called to report signs of EAB. We will continue to update the EAB Task Force website (www.emeraldashborer.nj.gov) with new information and resources, and encourage you to check the site often.

The Task Force would like to take this opportunity to call your attention to the outreach and education needs of your municipal EAB plan. Emerald Ash Borer is relatively new to New Jersey, and represents a new and potentially frenzied market in tree work. **Unfortunately, we have already seen examples of misidentification and misleading treatment advice.** We encourage you to arm yourselves with information, and to help the residents of your communities to do the same! Remember that an enormous piece of the financial burden of EAB will fall to the homeowners who have ash trees on their properties. Make sure that money spent is spent well. This is an opportunity for you as knowledgeable shade tree stewards to provide a very visible, tangible service to the community, and possibly an avenue to drive community participation in future tree issues.

Learn how to identify ash trees. Pay close attention to the branching structure and to other compound leaf species that look similar, and become proficient at telling them apart. Work with your management plan consultant or other NJ Certified Tree Expert to make sure you are correct. Then you can offer this as a service to your residents, or hold a workshop to teach your residents how to do it themselves. EAB only kills true ash (*Fraxinus*) species. Identification, just to the genus level, is the first step. The insecticides used against EAB are not specific to EAB; you want to avoid unnecessary treatment of non-host tree species that will have an adverse effect on non-target insects, waste a lot of money, and add unnecessary chemicals into the growing environment of these trees.

Learn about the other factors that kill ash trees. There are a lot of them, and the symptoms can look very similar to some of the symptoms of EAB. There are several other borers that will infest ash, and there are diseases that cause severe decline and death in ash as well. This is important to consider because treatment for EAB is only worthwhile if the tree is going to survive through the length of the infestation, which could be 20 years or more. If the tree is in poor condition or dying of ash yellows, there is no point in treating it for EAB. You want to consider the current health, structural stability, and suitability to location when making the decision whether or not to treat for EAB. Encourage residents to work with a competent and experienced NJ Certified Tree Expert to evaluate the condition of their ash trees, and to contract with a NJ Certified Pesticide Applicator for all chemical treatments. Chemical treatments must be applied properly and skillfully in order to be fully effective, and must be applied in strict adherence with the label instructions.

Study the treatment research. At the very least become informed on the many approaches which are currently available, and stay up to date as there are several research teams across the US working on new tools and alternatives for dealing with EAB. The treatment and pest timelines suggest that we will be treating for at least the next decade or

two, and there will be treatment advances. The publication that the NJ EAB Task Force and the Rutgers Plant Diagnostic Lab use as a reference for EAB treatment recommendations is the bulletin “Insecticide Options for Protecting Ash Trees from Emerald Ash Borer.” This document is a product of the Cooperative Emerald Ash Borer Program and summarizes the research findings of experts from The Ohio State University, Michigan State University, Purdue Extension, and Colorado State University Extension. It is a must read. You can find a link to this bulletin on the NJ EAB Task Force website. Copy this link and post it on your own municipal website and encourage your residents to read it too. Use this information to protect your community against bad advice.

Get organized. Work with residents and neighboring communities to schedule treatments and removals in bulk. Get quotes from several reputable tree care experts and ask about the possibility of reduced pricing for a combined contract. This should help to significantly reduce the cost to the individual homeowner for treatments and removals. Make sure the treatment options recommended match up with the research to ensure the best possible results. Triage your ash resource and spread removals out over the next several years to help avoid a glut in the market as well as a shortage of professionals to perform the work. Prioritize and pace yourselves. This is going to be a long process, and we have barely just begun.

Finally, if you are a tree care professional, realize that you are assumed to be an informed expert. Please be careful not to bundle other services and business plans into a larger program; be clear as to what is, and what is not, part of an EAB response. Be the expert, and stay on top of the research and product advances. For the collective good of the industry and its status as a professional career, it is better to deploy the best tools than to sell false solutions. Know the signs and symptoms of EAB, and how to distinguish them from other borers and diseases of ash. If you are not sure, contact the Task Force for help. Stay informed with the latest research, technologies, and strategies for managing EAB. Work with communities to schedule bulk treatments and removals, and find creative outlets for wood utilization. Be a resource for ash identification and management decision making. Provide quality advice for the good of the profession.

We wish you all the best of luck in the difficult times ahead. Please stay in contact with the NJ EAB Task Force. Continue to report sightings of EAB, and share your struggles, victories, questions, and ideas. We will do our best to help, and will keep you informed through our website (www.emeraldashborer.nj.gov), which contains information and links to help with all the recommendations listed above. Please visit our booth at the NJ Shade Tree Federation annual meeting in Atlantic City this October. We look forward to seeing you there!