

Emerald Ash Borers in Middle Tennessee: The Facts



Now that word is getting around about the destructive presence of Emerald Ash Borers in middle Tennessee, there are varying and often confusing opinions of what to do about the problem. We've done the research and we're out there doing the job, so we would like to present the facts as we understand them:

1. **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)**, *Agrilus planipennis*, attacks only ash trees. It is believed to have been introduced into Michigan 15 to 20 years ago on wood packing material from Asia. Since then, the destructive insect has carved a path of destruction through the northern states and is now present in the southern states, including Tennessee. Typically, Emerald Ash Borer beetles can kill an ash tree within three years of the initial infestation. They were confirmed in Davidson County in 2016 and surrounding counties are now confirmed and quarantined as well.
2. **How they spread:** The normal flight patterns for an adult Emerald Ash Borer is only a couple of miles in its brief lifetime. But the spread of this infestation has caused massive destruction due to the transportation of ash trees used as firewood or other products made from the trees. Adult EAB males are believed to live approximately two weeks, whereas females live for three. During that life cycle, the female may mate several times and lay between 65 – 90 eggs. The eggs, larvae, or pupae are difficult to see, which makes it difficult to detect when transporting the wood from one area of the country to another. For this reason, all middle Tennessee counties are under an ash quarantine. The wood must stay in its county of origin.
3. **How they attack:** Emerald Ash Borers attack the tree from the crown to the base. It is therefore very difficult to tell if the pest is present in the tree until the colony has eaten the conductive tissue from top to bottom and exited the tree via their call sign, the D-shaped exit holes near the base of the tree.
4. **How they kill ash trees:** When EAB are active in the tree, the process of inflicting damage to the ash tree happens under the bark where the larvae feed in the tissues that the tree needs to transport water and nutrients. This activity, largely done in autumn and winter, destroys those necessary tissues, eliminating the tree's ability to sustain life. At that point, die back in the crown is visible as leaves fail to appear and the branches begin to die. EAB is not the only reason



an ash could fail, but there is no ash tree that is not susceptible to this insect unless it has been treated specifically to fight against Emerald Ash Borers.

5. What you can do to save your ash trees:

Treat! There are a lot of naysayers out there that will tell you treating does not work. We disagree. We continue to glean information from the northern states, which have already borne the brunt of the impact from EAB. We've got the knowledge, the product, and seasoned professionals to begin the process of saving your ash trees. You should be prepared to treat every two years for the foreseeable future in order to best protect your tree. However, the good news is that you can treat your ash tree for up to twenty years before you'll match the cost of removal.

It's important that you understand you may have to make a tough choice on whether to save or remove your ash tree. If the tree has already been damaged heavily, if you have many ash trees on your property, or if your ash tree is already aged and in decline, it may be smarter to invest your money in removal and then replant something different. The catch to removal swings back around to the EAB problem. Once they've eaten all that conductive tissue inside the ash tree, it quickly becomes brittle and dangerous. Because the integrity of the tree is entirely compromised, the tree won't be able to continue to hold its own weight, much less that of a tree worker attempting to remove it. We highly recommend immediate removal of your ash tree if you choose not to treat it or it is already in decline. We can't send climbers into ash trees. Removals must be done using specific machinery. The more brittle it becomes, the more costly it is both with time and finances. Immediate removal is key, but it must be done with care and consideration by a professional who carries the appropriate insurance and certification as well as the necessary safety equipment.

Arbor Art Tree Care, Inc. is here to serve the greater Nashville area. Please call us to set up a consultation so that we can take care of your ash trees!

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