
Tri-Basin NRD
1723 N Burlington Street
Holdrege, NE 68949



Phone: (308) 995-6688
Fax: (308) 995-6992
Email: tribasin@tribasinnr.org

Natural Resources District

NEWS RELEASE

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For more information, contact: Nicole Salisbury, Information Coordinator
Phone 308-995-6688 or email nsalisbury@tribasinnr.org

Area Residents Should Prepare Now for Emerald Ash Borer

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture has announced that the emerald ash borer (EAB), an insect that destroys ash trees regardless of their size, age or health, has been found in two locations in Nebraska. The first affected tree is located in Pulaski Park in South Omaha. The second confirmed infestation is on private property in Greenwood, NE.

While residents in the affected areas are working to prevent the spread of the insect and treat healthy ash trees to minimize loss, people in other areas of Nebraska, including Tri-Basin Natural Resources District (TBNRD), should be aware of the pest, but should delay treatment of ash trees. The Nebraska Forest Service recommends waiting until emerald ash borers are found within 15 miles of your ash trees to begin treatment.

"It may be two years, or it may be 20 years before emerald ash borer reaches our area," said John Thorburn, manager of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District (TBNRD) and Holdrege Tree Board member.

There are, however, a couple of things people in this area can do to prepare for the arrival of the emerald ash borer.

First of all, you can help prevent the spread of the insect. The primary means of the emerald ash borer's spread is through the transportation of ash wood (firewood, pallets, sawlogs, etc.), so the simplest way to prevent the spread of the pest is to use only local ash wood products.

"The insects can only fly a few miles a year on their own, but they have been spread to 27 states by people hauling infested wood," said Thorburn.

Second, you can identify ash trees on your property and begin planning for their treatment or

removal. According to the Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska's taxpayers and homeowners may spend over \$900 million on ash tree removal, disposal and replacement over the next few years because of the emerald ash borer.

“Upwards of 80 percent of the ash trees will die within eight years after EAB is found in a community if nothing is done to manage the pest,” said Eric Berg, Program Leader for Community Forestry and Sustainable Landscapes. “This can put a strain on city budgets and staff and create liability issues if dead trees are left standing. Nebraska municipalities need to be proactive in dealing with EAB.”

Communities should begin identifying ash trees that are in poor condition, located under wires, or planted too close to sidewalks and buildings and consider removing those trees now to help spread the cost of dealing with EAB over more time.

As an individual, you can begin the same process on your own property. In appropriate locations, trees that are removed should be replaced with a diverse selection of trees instead of just a few species. This will help prevent other major losses of trees because of species-specific pests or diseases. Once EAB has reached our area, property owners and communities will only want to treat healthy ash trees, since treatments have to be administered every one to two years for the life of the tree in order to protect it from EAB.

For assistance in identifying ash trees on your property or for more information about emerald ash borer, contact your tree board or call Tri-Basin NRD at 1-877-995-6688.

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An adult emerald ash borer. Photo courtesy David Cappaert, Bugwood.org



Ash trees can be identified by their opposite leaf pattern in which leaves, buds and stems are located directly across from each other. The leaves are compound, typically consisting of 5 to 11 leaflets. Seeds are paddle-shaped and hang in clusters that stay on the tree until late fall or early winter. Photo courtesy Keith Kanoti, Maine Forest Service, Bugwood.org