

VERMONT FOREST PEST PLANNING

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and why is it a problem for my trees?

- Emerald ash borer (EAB) is a destructive tree pest that attacks and kills ash trees. Since its accidental introduction into North America in 2002, EAB has killed millions of ash trees in more than 15 states.
- The metallic-green adult beetles are a half inch long, and are active from May to September. EAB larvae kill ash trees by feeding on tree just under the bark.

What are the signs of an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestation?

Potential signs of EAB damage include woodpecker damage, especially at the top of the tree, bark cracks or splits, s-shaped galleries under the bark, and die-back of leaves in the upper one-third of the tree branches.

If a citizen thinks they have an invasive tree pest how do they report it?

- Direct them to the website <http://www.vtinvasives.org/tree-pests/report-it> or have them call their district Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Office.

Why should we focus on Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)?

- EAB is more destructive, widespread, difficult to manage, and spreads faster than other known exotic pests.
- The closest detections of EAB are just over the border in Dalton, MA, Albany, NY and just outside of Montreal, Quebec. Chances are good that EAB will arrive in your town in the near future.
- Unless treated with insecticides, EAB will kill most infested trees within 2 to 5 years.
- Once EAB is detected in an area, more detections follow quickly and loss of ash trees increases rapidly over a few short years.

Why do we need to prepare if the ash trees are going to die anyway?

- Scientists are making great strides in developing EAB management tools, such as the introduction of natural enemies and host species resistance, and better survey methods for early detection.
- At this point, eradication of EAB has proven to be impossible and is no longer considered an appropriate response to an EAB infestation so our goal is to slow down the spread of the insect to allow more time for communities to prepare and to develop management tools.

Should we plan for other invasives, such as the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), and how?

- While management actions, cost estimates and disposal and utilization options will be focused on dealing with EAB, your forest pest preparedness plan will help you plan for other pests by helping your community:
 1. Develop a plan for increasing tree species diversity and selecting site-appropriate species
 2. Improve public awareness and engage community leaders and residents in the natural resource decisions and motivate them to get involved.
 3. Strengthen or enact local policies and partnerships to support long-term tree management.
- HWA is already in Vermont. While it is not expected to kill trees as quickly as EAB, HWA is affecting trees and its impact on both trees and municipalities will grow. Impacts are environmental, economic and aesthetic. Dead and dying trees can threaten public safety, increase town expenses and decrease property values. Planning prepares towns to take prompt and specific action to avoid or mitigate the problems associated with each particular pest.

- Since we don't know IF, or when, ALB or another destructive pest will arrive in Vermont, it would make sense to wait until a threat is on the horizon and then adjust the pest-specific elements of your plan to meet the new threat.

Will trees be cut?

- In most cases, the municipality or private landowner are responsible for tree removals on their respective properties.
- Some states have worked with landowners to remove trees, as necessary, to delineate Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestations or as part of experimental efforts to reduce insect numbers. We may consider this option when EAB spreads to Vermont.
- For Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) infestations, the federal government is currently mandating tree removals, which are conducted at government expense.

Is there state or federal funding available to help?

- Unfortunately, no, federal or state funding for removal of privately-owned or municipal trees beyond what is required to abate an EAB infestation is currently unavailable, however that could change once an infestation occurs.
- Ideas for alternative funding options are available at:
<http://vtcommunityforestry.org/resources/financial-technical-assistance/funding-resources>

What technical services and assistance is available from the state or federal government?

State assistance is available to all towns for community preparation planning, outreach and education, pest surveys, pest identification and coordination of pest management activities. Contact your district Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Office and visit www.vtinvasives.org:

Windsor & Windham Counties: Springfield Office - 802.885.8845

Bennington & Rutland Counties: Rutland Office - 802.786.3851

Addison, Chittenden & Grand Isle Counties: Essex Junction Office - 802.879.6565

Lamoille, Orange & Washington Counties: Barre Office - 802.476.0170

Caledonia, Orleans & Essex Counties: St. Johnsbury Office - 802.751.0110

How long before Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) goes away? How soon can we replant ash?

- A small population of EAB will probably persist for many years after the initial infestation. It is not recommended to plant ash until natural enemies of EAB have become well established. This could be decades.
- The best option is to select the right tree for each site and be careful not to overplant any one tree species. More info on tree species options is available at:
<http://vtcommunityforestry.org/resources/tree-care/tree-selection>

Will Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) kill all species of ash and of all sizes?

- Although EAB has a preference for some species of ash over others, all ash species native to North America are a suitable host. In Vermont, white, green and black ash are all susceptible. Mountain ash, which is not a true ash, is not susceptible.
- Generally, all branches and stems one inch in diameter and larger are susceptible.

If there's a quarantine how do we inform all of our citizens?

- Use all of the resources available to you (website, town newsletter, e-newsletter or email distribution list, posters, flyers, information sent home with students, newspaper article, public meetings, etc.)
- Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and UVM Extension will assist with public meetings and provide you with the information you need for print advertisements.
- For up-to-date info. on forest pest quarantines visit <http://www.vtfpr.org/protection/quarantinefrontpage.cfm>

What are steps we can take proactively?

- Develop a Forest Pest Preparedness Plan. Many parts of a thorough plan are proactive, such as forming a local forest pest team, updating your tree inventory, budgeting, outreach to the public, and much more. NOW is the time to plan, before EAB arrives.

Are we encouraging preemptive removal of ash trees and when?

- Municipalities with a large number of ash trees should reduce the ash component over time using a prioritized process that starts with structurally unsound ash trees in poor health.
- There are tools available, such as insecticides, that can either preserve trees to extend their lifespan until they need to be removed or preserve them for over a long time with continued application.
- For woodland trees, refer to the ash management guidelines on the website-- <http://www.vtfpr.org/protection/documents/AshManagementGuidanceforForestManagers.pdf>

What as a town are we legally, ethically and financially responsible for?

- Public safety—dead and dying ash trees can threaten people and property.
- Local sentiment—need to respond to public values, such as significant and historic trees, at the community and individual homeowner levels.
- Preserve public resources— These trees remove 750 metric tons of air pollution/year at a value of \$6.6 million/year; store 1.1 million metric tons of carbon at a value of \$25.1 million; draw in \$330 million in tourism revenue during foliage season alone and provide sap to produce maple syrup, which contributes \$30 million of revenue annually.

What is the utility companies' role?

- The utility companies are responsible for removing trees within their ROW (usually 30 to 50 feet) that endanger their lines.
- Companies can also remove “danger trees” that lie outside the ROW but are a threat to the powerline.

We have a lot of ash in our town Right-of-Way (ROW)/on private property that affects the town ROW.

What do we do about it?

- The town will need to decide, as a minimum, what needs to be done to ensure public safety.
- A minimum but reasonable approach would be to remove any EAB-killed ash along town roads that threaten public safety and leave those that are not a threat. Preemptive removal of large structurally unsound or unhealthy ash will benefit the budget by spreading out the removals. Cutting live trees is also much safer for the tree crews.
- On private land, removal of trees that threaten public safety is the responsibility of the landowner unless your town has an ordinance to the contrary. Some towns have offered to split the removal cost with the landowner to ensure that high-risk trees are removed promptly.

If the county is quarantined, how will I be able to legally dispose of my tree?

- Proper disposal methods depend on the pest. For hemlock woolly adelgid visit: http://www.vtfpr.org/protection/documents/VTFPR_HWAinVT_RecommendationsforLandownerResponse.pdf.
- You can hire an arborist to remove and dispose of the tree for you. Go to <http://vtcommunityforestry.org/resources/tree-care/hiring-arborist> for more information on hiring an arborist.
- The wood and debris can be transported within the quarantined area where it originates. However, removing it from the quarantined area is prohibited without a compliance agreement. For up-to-date info. on forest pest quarantines visit <http://www.vtfpr.org/protection/quarantinefrontpage.cfm>

Can I treat my ash or hemlock trees and how long will I have to treat it for?

- Because landscape trees provide lots of benefits that are hard to attach a dollar value to, pesticide treatments can be well worth the investment for treasured trees.
- No treatments are recommended until the insect is present in the area but you can start planning and budgeting for it now. Hemlock woolly adelgid treatment options are found at: http://www.vtfpr.org/protection/documents/VTFPR_HWAinVT_RecommendationsforLandownerResponse.pdf.
- There are several products currently available and effective against the emerald ash borer for both homeowners and commercial applicators.
 - The most commonly used application method is trunk injection.
 - Depending on the insecticide, trunk injections may be effective for 1 to 3 years.
 - Material costs alone (not factoring in equipment and labor) range from \$2.50/inch of DBH to \$15/inch of DBH for 1 to 2-3 years of control respectively depending on the pesticide.