

Tree Talk

Emerald Ash borer

This native Asian insect borer has been hard at work in Southeastern Michigan, causing the loss of approximately 6 million of their ash trees in the state. Not only has this killer been found in Michigan, but it now inhabits areas of Ohio, Ontario, Maryland, and Virginia. The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is not a great flyer, so it depends on people for its transportation needs. It is being moved to other states by infected firewood and nursery stock. The insect can attack and kill white, green and black ash trees that are 2-inches in diameter or greater. The infested states are still attempting to eradicate the insect, but once it moves into native woodlands, as it has already done, the likelihood is high that this will be a new pest for us to contend with in the near future.

The EAB is very similar to the color and size of the Bronze Birch Borer, an insect that we already deal with in South Dakota. The big difference between these two insects is that the EAB kills only ash trees and does not care whether the tree is healthy or not. The EAB is also the only insect that will leave D-shaped holes in ash trees. If you find dying or dead ash trees with D-shaped holes, please contact the Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry immediately.



South Dakota relies heavily on ash trees when it comes to planting farmstead shelterbelts or neighborhood tree plantings. To avoid an even larger threat in the future, we need to diversify our tree species and start planting alternatives to ash. For a list of alternatives, please contact Aaron Kiesz at 1-800-228-5254.

*Aaron Kiesz is the
Urban Forestry Specialist
For the S.D. Div. of Resource
Conservation and Forestry,
523 E. Capitol
Pierre, SD 57501 or
Phone at (605) 773-3594 or 1-800-228-5254 (SD Only)*