

Tree Talk

Tree Diversification

Tree diversification is an important part of tree planting and should be followed in order to prevent epidemics such as Dutch Elm Disease (DED). The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a lethal insect to ash trees, was discovered in Michigan in May, 2002, but was probably introduced into the state at least five years previously from Asia, its native origin. The insect kills ash trees by destroying the tree's water and nutrient conducting vessels. The EAB is so aggressive that ash trees may die within two years after they become infested with the beetle. All species of ash seem to be susceptible.

South Dakota is very unique in that we have the highest percentage of ash trees in the nation. Therefore when the insect enters our state, we will have much to lose when compared to other states that have a higher tree diversification. Green ash is very popular because of its ability to do well in South Dakota's harsh growing conditions. Other trees that are recommended as ash alternatives are Bur Oak, Hackberry, and 'Discovery' Elm which is a DED resistant variety. These trees will tolerate poorer conditions and grow similar to some of the ash species.

Whether you live west of the Missouri river or east, South Dakota has many species of trees to choose from. Some will do better than others depending on the type of planting site you are working with. Buying your trees from a reputable nursery is always crucial to the survivability and hardiness issues that are part of planting and caring for trees. For optimal performance, tree stock should come from northern climate states, such as North Dakota, Minnesota, or Montana. For more information on tree species selection or general tree care, visit our website at: www.state.sd.us/doa/forestry/

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