

Ag Column
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Ash Trees Threatened by Borer

Homeowners should watch their ash trees closely. Many homeowners have already lost ash trees to the Emerald Ash Borer. It is a dark green insect about ½ inch long and 1/8 inch long, but its larvae is actually what does the damage under the tree bark. Fortunately, the EAB affects only ash trees.

Pay particular attention to your ash trees. Symptoms such as dieback in the top of the tree, sprouting around the base of the tree, bark splitting, and woodpecker feeding are clues that there may be an infestation. When inspecting the tree trunk, you need to watch for d-shaped exit holes approximately one-eighth inch wide. If you find loose bark, look for s-shaped galleries and larvae that may be feeding.

The EAB larvae tunnels under the tree bark destroying the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients necessary for tree survival. Because the larvae is under the bark, it is very difficult to control with an insecticide. The larvae overwinter under the bark making d-shaped exit holes in the spring. They potentially can be seen in the adult life stage from April through September. A systemic insecticide must be used to prevent damage to ash trees.

Ash trees can be protected with soil drenches, trunk drenches, and trunk injections. The easiest way for the homeowner to control the EAB is to apply a systemic insecticide like imidacloprid in the late winter as a soil drench around the tree near the trunk as the tree starts to move water and nutrients up to the branches. Read the insecticide label before you use an insecticide for EAB control. If trees aren't protected, they can be easily killed in three years.

Due to the EAB infestation, firewood cannot be transported within Tennessee or Virginia. You can get the latest information by searching EAB quarantine for a particular state.

For insecticide options and control information on EAB control, you can visit the following websites.

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

<http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/eab>

<http://www.emeraldashborer.info>

You can also call your local Extension office in Tennessee or Virginia.