

Emerald Ash Borer

The emerald ash borer (EAB) was discovered near Detroit in 2002, probably on solid wood packing material. It is spreading to everywhere that ash trees grow, including New Jersey. Every ash tree that is not treated will be killed by this pest. Many already have been.

The most obvious symptoms of the presence of EAB in an ash tree is what is often called “bark blanding”, the removal of strips of bark by woodpeckers attempting to feed on the EAB larvae in the tree. By the time this symptom is visible, it is usually too late to treat. Infested trees are often killed within a year or two after infestation.

The EAB also leave “D-shaped” exit holes as the adults emerge in the spring. These are often hard to see, and often look like holes left by other, less harmful, insects.

Ash trees can be successfully protected from the EAB! Treatment typically involves injecting the tree with a pesticide that stays within the tree and kills the EAB for a period of two years. A soil-applied pesticide is also available, but is not likely to be as effective. However, these pesticides will not protect the ash trees from several other less common but potentially lethal problems.

If a homeowner does not plan to treat his or her ash trees every two years for perhaps a decade or more, tree professionals recommend immediate removal. This is because ash trees become brittle and unsafe to climb once attacked. Failures of parts or of entire trees can occur at any time after infestation, and the wood can shatter upon impact. Removal of any ash tree typically requires the use of bucket trucks and/or cranes, and the longer an ash tree is allowed to remain standing after it is dead, the more likely it is to fail, and the more difficult and expensive the removal.

