

Treatment of Public Ash Trees

Starting in 2016 the City Forester began treating public ash trees as a preventative shield against emerald ash borer (EAB) for trees growing in parks or in city rights of ways (boulevards). In April, 2018 EAB was confirmed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in two separate private mature trees in Robbinsdale. Of these two trees one was still in good condition and was treated by the property owner, while the other tree was in poor condition and was marked for removal. Public ash trees in good condition and exhibit a full canopy, no significant dieback, adequate growing space and healthy branching structure are injected with an insecticide called TREE-äge. This insecticide makes the tree “toxic” to EAB larvae and adults. A single treatment is guaranteed for 2 years, but it is likely that a 3 year rotation is adequate unless insect pressure becomes very high. This pesticide remains wholly within the tree canopy, and because ash trees are wind pollinated TREE-äge poses no threat to bees or other pollinating insects. Public ash trees are treated once every 3 years by the City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist and the first rotation of these treatments (over 500 trees) was completed in August of 2018.

The relative cost of a single treatment is a fraction of what it would cost to remove a given established tree. Preemptive removal of a healthy mature ash eliminates all of the valuable non-market benefits such as shade, stormwater interception, wildlife habitat, increased property values and positive landscape aesthetics. Since larger trees provide a greater degree of these benefits, public ash trees that are larger than 8” in diameter and in good health are candidates for treatment. Ash trees that are smaller than 8”, in declining health and/or exhibit poor structure are skipped and removed at a later time. Any ash tree that is removed will be replaced with a tree planted from the city gravelbed nursery. Treated trees are marked with a round tag stamped with the letters “EAB” or “COR” (City of Robbinsdale) and the last year treated.

Proactive treatment of ash trees prior to EAB infestation is critical since ash killed by EAB quickly become very brittle and breakdown rapidly, posing significant risks to life and property. If you have an ash tree in your yard it is highly recommended to consider either a treatment (injection) or removal as soon as possible since the emerald ash borer is now present in Robbinsdale. There is a 100% chance an untreated ash tree will be killed by EAB once it is infested, as native ash trees have little to no natural resistance to this insect. By the time EAB-caused decline symptoms become visible from the ground it is often too late for treatment and removal is the only option. Note that the mountain ash is NOT susceptible to EAB despite their common name as they are not in the same family or genus as traditional ash trees.

The City of Robbinsdale licenses tree service contractors and a number of these companies provide treatment services for private ash trees. This list can be found on the forestry webpage. If you have any questions about emerald ash borer or about treatment options please contact City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist Stephan Papiz at 763-531-1273 or at spapiz@ci.robbinsdale.mn.us.