

Treatments (Injections) 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, City rights of way (boulevards) and other public landscapes. In April, 2018 EAB was confirmed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in two separate private mature trees in Robbinsdale. In each case owners of these trees were contacted and elected to treat their ash, saving both trees. Public ash in good condition and exhibit a full canopy, no significant dieback, adequate growing space and healthy branching structure are injected with an insecticide called emamectin benzoate (TREE-äge). This insecticide remains wholly within the tree, 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 was completed in August of 2018. Treatments will continue in perpetuity until widespread EAB infestations are no longer a threat.

The relative cost of a single treatment is a fraction of what it would cost to remove a mature ash when incorporating future tree benefits. 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 landscape aesthetics. Public ash trees that are in declining health and/or exhibit poor structure are skipped and removed the following winter. Publicly removed ash trees are then replaced with a tree planted from the City's gravelbed nursery. Treated trees are marked with a round aluminum tag stamped with the letters "RF" (Robbinsdale Forestry) 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 you need to decide on either treatment (injection) or removal. There is a 100% chance an untreated ash tree will be killed by the emerald ash borer since native ash trees have no natural resistance. By the time EAB-caused decline symptoms become visible from the ground, it is often too late for treatment, with removal the only viable option. As of 2024 EAB is widespread in Robbinsdale. Note that mountain ash trees (native or introduced) are NOT susceptible to EAB despite their name, as they are not in the same plant family as more well-known ash trees are.

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.