

Emerald ash borer information for the homeowner (August 2020):

There are only two kinds of ash trees – ones that are treated, and ones that are dead or will be soon.

The Emerald ash borer (EAB) is established in Readington. As of August 2020, many ash trees have been killed, but not all. For some ashes, especially those of high value in good health, there might still be time to treat before the EAB kills them.

The emerald ash borer is a small, metallic green, non-native invasive pest. Symptoms of its attack include canopy dieback, woodpecker activity (missing bark, often referred to as “bark blanding” from woodpeckers removing bark to get at EAB larvae), D-shaped exit holes from EAB adult emergence, shoots sprouting from the trunk, and S-shaped larval galleries under the bark. You can call a NJ Licensed Tree Expert to help identify and treat your ash trees. Treatment is typically by injecting stems at the base with an insecticide (emamectin benzoate) that stays within the tree and prevents attack for two years. If the EAB is already in the tree, in early stages of infestation, treatment can kill the larvae and protect the tree. If the tree has died back, there might not be enough leaves to pull the insecticide up to save the tree.

If a tree is already infested or in poor health, it is best to remove the tree as soon as practical, because ash trees quickly become brittle and prone to limb failure once the EAB attacks the tree. This can pose a hazard to structures, cars and even people.

What Readington Township has been doing: The key to managing the numerous ash trees on or near township property is knowing more about numbers of ash trees and their locations on township land. In 2017, the township committee authorized an inventory, performed by students in environmental studies from Raritan Valley Community College, of ash trees along township roads and in parks. It was completed in the summer of 2019. Ash trees account for about 10 percent (just over 1400) of our street and park trees.

Members of the Tree Advisory Subcommittee of the Environmental Commission used this inventory to select a number of ash trees for treatment and preservation. Criteria included size, condition, location and aesthetic value. The objective has not been to attempt to preserve every ash tree, but to keep a subset of township ashes alive for residents to see and appreciate when all untreated ones have been killed. A little over a hundred ash trees, each tagged with a number, have been treated, and will continue to be.

The township now has a database with map locations of all ash trees on streets and in parks. <https://pg-cloud.com/HCReadington/> Other tree species on streets and in parks are included.