

### Ash wood—what to do with it?

The Emerald ash borer (EAB), *Agrilus planipennis*, is a wood-boring beetle that was discovered in southeastern Michigan in the summer in 2002, several years after “hitchhiking” here from Asia in the wood of shipping crates. Since its discovery, it has killed more than 6 million ash trees, and has forced a quarantine in 13 counties prohibiting the movement of ash trees and firewood (for more info visit [www.emeraldashborer.info/](http://www.emeraldashborer.info/)).

This monumental problem has many homeowners wondering what to do with their ash trees. For instance:

1. If I have an ash tree in the quarantined area, should I apply pesticides, or cut it down?

To be effective, pesticides need to be applied before the tree is infested. A spray or a soil drench is available to homeowners, but the safer trunk injection method must be administered by a certified applicator, and the cost averages about \$150 a tree. Each of the methods must be repeated every year, for the life of the EAB infestation, which some predict will always be with us. Removing and replanting with a species that doesn't require on-going chemical treatment will likely be the most cost-effective solution.

2. If I cut it down, what can I do with the wood?

The State of Michigan has free ash wood disposal facilities, two of which are in Washtenaw County—for locations, visit [www.recycle.ewashtenaw.org](http://www.recycle.ewashtenaw.org). The wood brought to the facilities is turned into useful products, or chipped (research shows that chipping to size 1” or less destroys the larvae). The chips are then burned for energy production.

3. Can I keep the wood for firewood?

If you live well-within the quarantined area, then leaving the wood in your yard for later use will not contribute to its spread, because the EAB only flies about ½ mile a year. But it is very important not to transport the wood to an area that hasn't already been infested. This is largely how the pest has spread to the upper Lower Peninsula, and to Canada, Ohio, and Indiana.

The danger posed by transporting firewood is resulting in new regulation: On November 3<sup>rd</sup> the U.S. Forest Service instituted a \$5,000 fine, and/or imprisonment for up to six months, for bringing quarantined wood into the national forests in Michigan. Offenders can even be held liable for the costs of eradication and restoration of the infested area.

If we can keep the EAB “in its place,” we may be able to save ash from going the way of the American chestnut and American elms—virtually eliminated from North America.

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