

Things to Consider Before Treating Trees for EAB

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Two weeks ago in this column, I covered the various chemical controls available for protecting ash trees from Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Now, I'd like to touch on some things to consider before you begin treatments.

Insecticide treatments for EAB are costly, and must be continued for many years. How long is still being debated by the experts. Plan on aggressive treatments (every one or two years) for at least 10 years once your neighborhood is hit; after that, a maintenance treatment every 3 to 5 years might work. Also consider these points:

- * It may cost as much as \$1000 or more to remove a large, dead ash tree.
- * It will cost between \$300 and \$600 to buy another large tree.
- * How much will your air conditioning bill go up while you wait for the new tree to grow enough to provide shade?
- * Will you lose the enjoyment of your yard or patio without this shade?
- * Is your ash tree healthy and in good shape now? If it's in decline, or has been damaged by storms, it's not worth spending the money on protecting it.

There are some environmental concerns with using these chemicals, especially the soil drench products. Of most importance is the potential harm to honeybees and other pollinators. Since ash trees are wind-pollinated and not a nectar source for bees, there should be no direct harm to pollinators from the trees. However, soil applications should not be used if there are flowering plants at base of the ash trees, because the roots may absorb the chemical and transfer it to the blooms and pollen. Either move the flowers away from the ash, or have the tree injected by a licensed professional, so that none of the chemical enters the flowers.

To keep these chemicals out of surface or groundwater, the best option is to have the products injected into the tree. Soil drenches should not be performed on trees near ponds, streams, or well heads; nor on sloping property where runoff can occur. If the soil drench is applied close to the trunk, the tree's roots will absorb the product before any can leach down to the water table.

Researchers have found little to no effect of these treatments on woodpeckers. Woodpeckers feed on live, mature EAB larvae, mostly in late fall, winter and early spring. The chemical kills larvae in late spring and summer, long before the woodpeckers arrive to feed on them.

Injections can cause minor injury to the tree. The equipment used in some of the more effective EAB treatments create very tiny holes that are quickly closed off with new growth. Avoid injecting trees that are already stressed and in decline, because the wounds will be just another problem for them to deal with.

There will be a free workshop on EAB on Tuesday, March 15, starting at 6:30 pm, at the North Park Library in Evansville. For more information on the workshop or EAB, contact the Purdue Extension Service at (812) 435-5287.