

Stop Ash Borer: Adopt an Ash Today!

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As you may have heard, last month the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was officially found in both Vanderburgh and Gibson Counties. This means the entirety of southwestern Indiana is considered to be infested. It is now time to decide what you are going to do with your ash tree.

Back in January, I wrote several columns on EAB and how to protect your trees. You can access my archives by visiting the Vanderburgh County Extension website: <http://extension.purdue.edu/vanderburgh/>. These articles concentrate on homeowners and residential trees.

Many local governments have been trying to decide what to do with the ash trees on public property, such as parks and cemeteries. The Evansville Parks Foundations and TruGreen have partnered with the City of Evansville to develop an "Adopt-an-Ash" program to protect public ash trees. Citizens and corporations are encouraged to adopt a tree to help cover the expenses of keeping it treated during the EAB invasion. You can learn more about this program by visiting their website: <http://evansville.adoptanash.org/>. At the top of this page are links about the insect, a map of ash trees to be treated, and information on adopting a tree.

I was recently asked if this effort was worth it. Wouldn't it be more cost effective to cut down all these ash and replace them? The answer I developed, including details and examples, is too lengthy to reprint here, so I'll summarize the key points here:

It is best to treat and save the ash trees we have.

OK...you want more detail? Here's the tangible economics: Cost of treatment every second year (if using emamectin benzoate, or Tree-age), versus cost to remove tree PLUS cost to buy and plant a new tree PLUS cost of watering and other care for the new tree. It's economically cheaper to save the current tree.

Non-tangible economics: Cost of loss of shade to your home, and to the community's overall canopy cover, which could increase the urban heat-island effect. Loss of landscape value to your property. Trees absorb rainwater through their roots, so the loss of a mature tree means more water goes through our overloaded storm water sewers. Again, it makes more economic sense to save the current tree.

Social costs: these are difficult to quantify. Many of these large public trees can be over 70 to 100 years old, and may even show up on some historic photos of our community. None of us reading this column will live to see such large, grand trees return to the parks.

If you think keeping some of these veteran trees alive is an important thing, I encourage you to adopt an Ash tree. If our citizens don't step up, we will lose not only part of our urban canopy,

but part of our city's history as well. Contact the Purdue Extension Service at (812) 435-5287 for more information.