

Emerald Ash Borer Discovered in Illinois



By now the news is old, but yesterday it wasn't. I attended the initial press conference where state and federal officials announced they had discovered the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in Illinois. In fact it was pretty close to my childhood home, just west of St. Charles. The first case was found in a 30 year old subdivision named the Windings. Someone's sense of humor is still working as the main drive is ironically named (Image 1).



Image 1.
The Windings subdivision street entrance.

As a member of the EAB Readiness Task Group (a group of representatives of over 30 green industry partners, regulators and officials) the last two years, I realized the discovery of the pest was not a matter of if it ever reached Illinois but when it reached Illinois. We worked out detailed steps to follow when the EAB was found, and so far, planning

helps. As with all outbreaks such as this, education is the key to containing and preventing further infestation. As I experienced the onslaught of media attention the last day I realized that information based upon facts and not suppositions is most important. As golf course superintendents and caretakers of the environment, it is important that you know about this pest and its implications. When trying to discern if you have a possible infestation site know these things:

- The most likely method of infestation occurs by the transport of firewood from an infected site.
- EAB has only been found to attack ash trees.

Symptoms of an infestation include:

- Branch die-back on the top of the tree
- D shaped holes in the trunks and branches about the size of a BB (Image 2)



Image 2.
The BB sized capital D shaped hole of the EAB

- Suckering or sprouts emerging from the base of the tree
- Vertical bark cracks on older infestations
- Woodpeckers like EAB larvae, look for woodpecker damage on ash trees
- Serpentine winding galleries under the bark (Image 3)



Image 3.
Serpentine galleries on inner bark created by feeding EAB larvae.

If you have seen these signs, contact the Illinois Department of Agriculture 800-641-3934 or 312-742-3385 for an inspection. Make sure you tell the operator you are a green industry professional so your call gets routed properly (not with homeowners). If you have captured an insect, freeze it for identification. There are look-a-likes that can fool even the experienced eye.

Is it serious? At this point it is difficult to say how much of an impact this pest will make upon Illinois ash population. Already this bug has killed between 10 and 15 million ash trees in Michigan and it has been detected in Ohio, Indiana, Virginia, Maryland and Ontario, Canada. Estimates place the number of ash trees in Illinois close to 110 million. It is estimated that 20% of the city trees in Chicagoland are ash and I can think of a few golf courses with ash populations exceeding this percentage.

Control Strategies

Currently the National Science Advisory Panel on the EAB has indicated the best and most effective response strategy to combat this insect is to remove the pest population found within a half-mile radius of the last EAB positive ash tree. Currently, the Emerald Ash Borer is known to fly up to a half-mile in one season while laying its eggs in the bark crevices on an ash tree. Additionally, ash trees that may appear healthy could be infested as many infested trees do not display outward symptoms for up to three years.

Chemical companies have been very actively involved in (imagine why) testing products for efficacy on this pest with some mixed results. Landowners are able to treat for EAB, however in most cases annual retreats are required to maintain protection. Furthermore, breakthrough has occurred on treated trees and they too have succumbed to the EAB. More information on treatment can be found www.emeraldashborer.info/files/E2955.pdf

During the press conference I sat next to one of the Department of Agriculture Inspectors and he told me he already found the pest more than a half mile from the original suspect site. At our press time, a quarantine act has not yet been invoked because the outer limits of this infestation have not been defined. Judging by the look on the face of the IDA Inspector, a long summer lies ahead for all involved. I ask you to keep an eye out for this beetle and arm yourself with information from reliable sources.



IDA's Warren Goetsch asks for public awareness.





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