



An Emerald Intruder

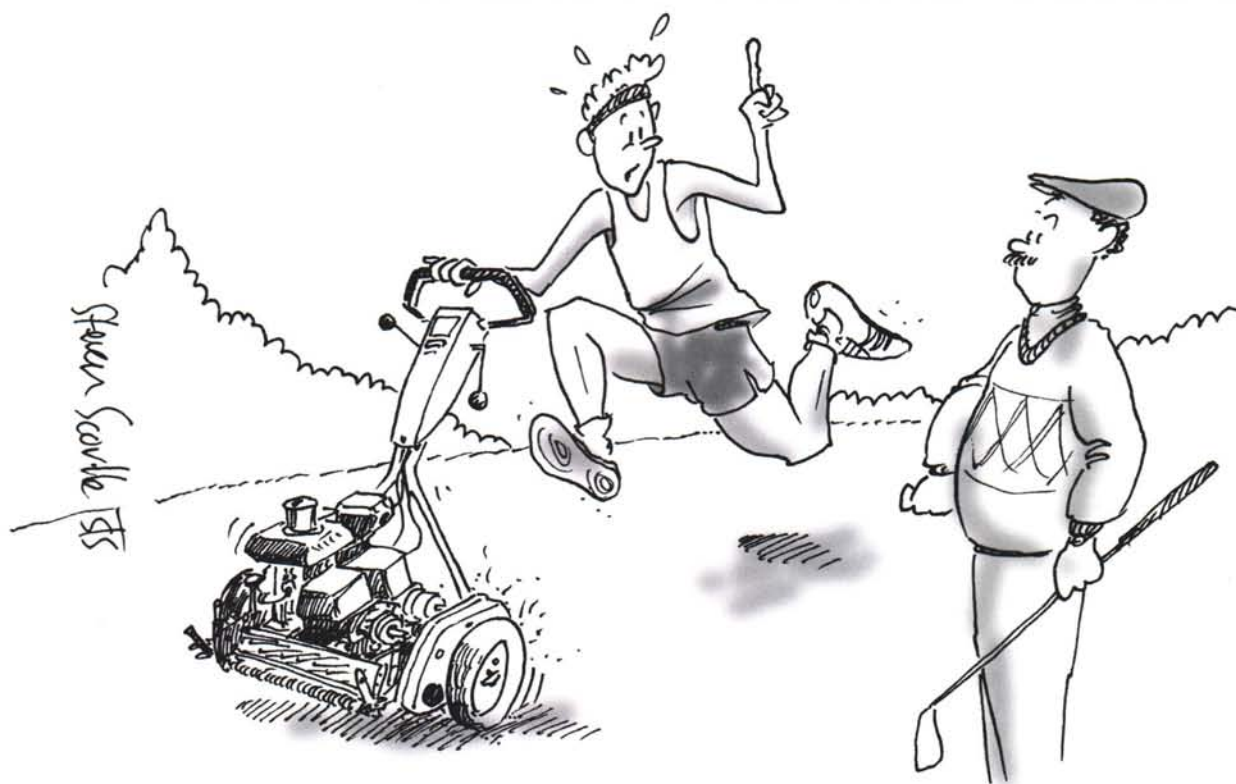
By P.J. Liesch, Department of Entomology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Wisconsin is well known for a lot of different reasons, ranging from our brats and beer, dairy industry, numerous farms and our sports teams, to the North woods and our terrific outdoor recreation. Many would agree with me in saying that the outdoor recreation is perhaps the top offering of the state. I've gone on many road trips to visit friends and family throughout the state, and there's usually a golf course just around the corner. Courses such as Lake Arrowhead in central Wisconsin, the top-notch courses at Kohler, Hawk's View in Lake Geneva, and even the course at Peninsula State Park in Door County come to mind when I think of all the places I've visited throughout the state.

While playing a round at any golf course, you may think of the open fairways and greens as the most important part of the game—and without a doubt, they are when you're worrying about your score. However,

other aspects are perhaps even more important when it comes to the overall experience of the game and the aesthetics of the course. Bob Ryan, a columnist for the Boston Globe, once eloquently described golf as "a passion, an obsession, a romance, a nice acquaintanceship with trees, sand, and water." From my own experience, the trees on a course can have a subtle, yet powerful influence upon the appearance of the course and your experience there.

As I mentioned earlier, Wisconsin is famously known for our trees and woodlands, yet there has been a growing concern over the past few years over the health of our trees—particularly our state's resource of ash trees. This is due to the imminent threat of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer (*Agilus planipennis*), more simply known by those who work with it as EAB. Recent estimates of over 717 million



"I'VE GOT TO MOW FIVE GREENS, BUT WE COULD ONLY AFFORD ONE GALLON OF GAS!"

ash trees show that we've got a lot at stake here in Wisconsin. Ash trees can be highly valued for their strength and hardness and are commonly used to produce tool handles. In addition, anyone that has ever played baseball or turned a bat on a lathe will have a certain appreciation for the hardness and durability of ash wood.

Having two years of experience through UW-Extension as a field surveyor looking for the Emerald Ash Borer, I know the challenges of finding this elusive pest on a first-hand basis. As it turns out, I'm originally from southeastern Wisconsin, where many of the golf courses that I grew up playing on are loaded with ash trees. I remember one unpleasantly warm July day inspecting a suspected EAB infestation on a golf course in southern Wisconsin. Afternoon golfers would drive by in their carts, ask what I was doing, and after a brief explanation of my task, they'd respond along the lines of, "it'd be a real shame to lose the trees on this beautiful course."

At the current moment, EAB has been found in seven states, with Michigan and Ohio being the epicenter of the epidemic. To date, EAB has NOT been found in Wisconsin, but EAB seems "ready to pounce" as there are now infested trees within 40 miles of our southern border. After I finish describing this nearly unstoppable pest to groups such as the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association and Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, I usually elicit at least one comment from the audience of, "so should I just cut down all my ash trees?"

While it's true that at this point we have no guaranteed way to stop the Emerald Ash Borer, we're far from tossing in the towel. The multi-state effort to combat the spread of EAB has been successful in reducing or eliminating the spread via nursery stock, ash prod-

ucts, and shipping materials. In fact, despite regulations and the threat of fines, the movement of firewood by campers and hunters is really the main concern regarding the spread of this pest.

When EAB is found in Wisconsin, the state is considering several management options including eradication in hopes of quickly "snuffing out" any infestations before EAB becomes firmly established. However, this approach has been highly scrutinized, and as more research is completed, a shift from eradication to other management strategies may occur. Consequently, leaving open the possibility of using chemical controls (insecticides) against EAB.

At this point in time, insecticides are not being recommended from an eradication perspective especially since the success rates in the

insecticide trials can vary dramatically far from a magical solution to the problem. In addition, it would literally be too cost prohibitive to treat all the ash trees in a woodlot or a forested area. However, it's important to note that there have been some insecticide trials showing promise, and we may be able to protect individual trees in our yards and on our golf courses.

Those interested in more information regarding EAB in general or the use of insecticides against EAB are encouraged to visit the Emerald Ash Borer link under the "Outreach" heading on the UW-Madison entomology department webpage:

<http://www.entomology.wisc.edu/>

Editor's Note: P.J. Liesch is a graduate student in Dr. Chris Williamson's lab. 

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