

Emerald Ash Borer in Osage County

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetle is a non-native insect from Asia (Native to South Korea, North Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, and the Russian Far East) which was likely introduced to the United States in packing crates. In 2002, it was detected near Detroit, Michigan. As an invasive species, it has no natural enemies in our ecosystem and is devastating ash trees across the United States. EAB is present in 36 states and the District of Columbia. In Kansas, EAB has been found in 12 counties with Osage County being the most recently detected.

The EAB adult is a small, metallic green beetle, ½ inch long and 1/8 inch wide. Often confused with the Japanese Beetle or the Green June Beetle, this insect is much smaller and often goes unseen. While the adults do minimal damage to ash trees, the larvae are extremely destructive with their tunnel feeding. This tunneling destroys the tree's xylem and phloem (food and water conducting tissue) killing the tree within just a few years.

Adult EAB are weak flyers, only moving short distances at a time. EAB transmission comes primarily from human activity. Moving nursery stock, firewood, or logs from EAB infested areas to un-infested areas is often how the insect moves. The movement of trees and wood is responsible for the devastation of millions of ash trees in the United States with many more to come as the insect spreads.

When EAB larvae begin feeding on ash trees, it can be extremely difficult to detect. It may take up to three years for the damage to become apparent in the tree's appearance. The tree may exhibit branch dieback, canopy thinning, new growth around the trunk (known as epicormic growth) and bark splitting. Sometimes heavy woodpecker feeding on the trees can also be an indication of an infestation.

Treatment for EAB is a major obstacle for most homeowners and municipalities. Purdue University and Indiana Department of Natural Resources has created a helpful decision guide to [determine if your tree is worth treating](#). The challenge with treating for EAB is that there is no one-time fix. Treatments involve injections or drenches applied by trained arborists (many of the pesticides needed are restricted use) and must be applied either every year or every two years, depending on the product. Individual treatments can be expensive with annual treatments quickly adding up. Treatment should be reserved for larger and the healthiest ash trees contributing to the landscape. Trees with noticeable canopy thinning, cavities, cracks, and other significant defects are not good candidates for treatment.

Emerald ash borer was confirmed in Osage County in May 2022, presenting new challenges for communities, residents and landowners as the insect continues to spread throughout the county. Communities can prepare for the arrival of EAB by managing resources and creating a response plan. Kansas Forest Service, along with local extension offices have resources and information to coordinate with these efforts. Please reach out to your local extension office for more information about managing EAB.

Resources:

Kansas Forest Service: https://www.kansasforests.org/forest_health/current_pests/emeraldashborer.html

Frontier Extension District: <https://www.frontierdistrict.k-state.edu>.

Kansas Department of Agriculture: <https://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/plant-protect-weed-control/insects>

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