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What's going on with the Ash Trees

City Forester: Robin Sailor

The City of Decorah is implementing its Emerald Ash Borer(EAB) management plan, and ash tree removal will resume over the next few months. Tree removal is a strategy to combat the already affected EAB ash trees in both city Right of Way(ROW) and the park system. Residents of the City of Decorah can anticipate continual removal of all ash trees in the Right of Way and the park system over the next few years. We have inventoried 425 trees in the boulevard Right of Way that will need to be removed over the next 4 years. We estimate 1200 ash trees are located on private landowner property.

The following are questions frequently asked about city trees:

What is EAB?

EAB or Emerald Ash Borer, is an exotic beetle larva. Over 50 counties in the state of Iowa, along with much of the Midwest and Eastern United States have identified a presence of EAB.

EAB infestations begin in the upper portions of a tree canopy making first detection

difficult to spot. External symptoms will then begin to manifest; such as small jagged holes excavated by woodpeckers, lighter bark color where wood has been chipped away (called flecking), water sprouts, and D shaped exit holes from which adult beetles emerge from. This pest is very prolific, and trees can quickly become brittle and dangerous even if trees are still leafing out.

Homeowners are encouraged to identify Ash trees on their private property, and form a plan for treatment or removal. The City of Decorah will be removing trees from the Right of Way (ROW), homeowners are responsible for the removal of trees on their own property.

Helpful resources in identifying ash trees: iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Forest-Health/Emerald-Ash-Borer

Winneshiek County Extension Office: Scott Timm, (563) 382-2949

I have an Ash Tree, what are my options?

In Right of Way (ROW), the City of Decorah will be responsible for the evaluation, and removal of all ash trees. A complete ROW tree inventory, and EAB management plan are being used by the City Forester to address Decorah's tree canopy needs. The City pledges to: safely remove tree/trees, grind stumps as soon as possible, and backfill stump area with soil/seed. Homeowners will be required to notify the City Forester before any treatment of ash trees located in ROW. If treatment is determined feasible, all treatment fees are the responsibility of the adjacent property owners.

On private property ash trees are no exception to the infestation of EAB. Homeowners will need to develop a strategy on how they will manage their ash trees, either through removal or treatments. Treatments however would be necessary for the life of the tree, and research is still being evaluated on the toxicity of these chemicals, as they are water-soluble. Homeowners should have trees evaluated for health and condition by a professional, and hire a licensed certified applicator.

What is Right of Way (ROW)?

This is typically indicated by the space between the street and sidewalk. Size can vary, but homeowners can use a general measurement of 12-15' from the street, or look to neighboring homes with existing ROW space to identify their own ROW.

How will I be notified that my tree is being removed in the ROW?

Homeowners will receive notification prior to removal via a door hanger, and they may also look for trees painted with an orange band around the trunk base.

If landlords identify that there is an ash tree located on ROW, please contact the City Forester about removal. Trees will be marked with an orange band around the trunk base.

What can I do after my tree has been removed?

ROW plantings require an approved planting permit from the City Forester. The City of Decorah along with the Decorah Tree Board offer homeowners a partial reimbursement for purchasing and planting

new trees in ROW. A list of regulations, participating businesses, and approved tree varieties are available on the City of Decorah website: decorahia.org

On private property homeowners are encouraged to replant a diverse selection of trees. When selecting trees with consider mature canopy cover, proximity to structures, growth rates, and insect and disease resistance. This will ensure a healthy urban forest for years to come. Consulting with local nurseries may help make this choice.

EAB is being likened to Dutch Elm disease, and will have a similar impact on the communities canopy. Ash tree removal from EAB will affect nearly 15% of Decorah's urban landscape. It will be important to replant with a diverse selection of trees, the best strategy to guard against future invasive species. Urban canopies has proven to be beneficial; reducing carbon pollution, and storm water runoff, while increasing beneficial insect populations, and public usability. Contact Decorah's' City Forester Robin Sailor at:
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