

Invasive Emerald Ash Borer - a threat to local ash trees

Have you heard that the invasive Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetle, a threat to all our ash trees, was detected in Vermont in 2018, and is now in the area around East Montpelier?



In the past, chestnut blight, Dutch elm disease and butternut canker decimated entire species of once-common forest trees, and now EAB has that potential as well. Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Ohio have been hit hard since EAB was first discovered in the U.S. near Detroit in 2002. Virtually all of the ash trees in certain areas are gone now.

One problem we are facing is that once ash trees in public road right of ways (ROWs) are infested and start dying, they become a danger to the public and to town road crews. This is because they are extremely brittle, so difficult and expensive to cut down safely.

The town has an initiative to stay ahead of this serious new danger and will maintain an active dialogue with town residents to keep them informed. If you saw people staring up at roadside trees this past summer, they were members of the Resilient Roads Committee (RRC) mapping and gathering information about ash trees in the town's ROWs. The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission and the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program have been helping the town develop a plan for how to proceed, based on the experience of other states that are further along in the process.

RRC has inventoried all ROW ash trees over 6" diameter and identified trees that are in poor condition or would be at high risk of falling onto roads. RRC has produced a draft management plan and is committed to keeping community members updated. It is likely that the plan will include staged removal of almost all ash trees along town roads. Utilities are already removing hazard ash trees from their ROWs. RRC plans to select a small number of iconic roadside ashes to treat with a preventative insecticide and will share information about this treatment option with landowners.

The town is now formulating a plan to test how the process of tree removal will go, targeting the most at-risk trees first. RRC received a grant to do a pilot project that will remove ash trees along Gallison Hill Road bordering U-32 property and in the school parking lot, as well as ash trees along some neighboring roads. RRC will share information with the public as this proceeds and looks forward getting the public's help in completing the plan.

Watch Front Porch Forum for updates

<https://eastmontpeliervt.org/boards-commision/roadside-vegetation-management/>

<https://vtinvasives.org/invasive/emerald-ash-borer>

<https://vtcommunityforestry.org/community-planning/tree-pests>

<https://vtcommunityforestry.org/>

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