

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, making them 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 in early summer of 2019, 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 (UCFP) 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.

After inventorying all ROW ash trees over 6-inch diameter, the RRC produced an interim ash tree management plan that envisions staged, preemptive removal of all of the ROW ash trees. Utilities are already removing ash trees near powerlines along our roads. Along with tree removal, the RRC has selected a small number of iconic roadside ashes to treat with a preventative insecticide, which is also an option for landowners with landscape ash trees.

The town is now testing how the process of tree removal will go. The RRC is completing a pilot project this year, funded in part through a grant from UCFP, that includes removal ash trees along Gallison Hill Road bordering U-32 property, as well as ash trees along nearby Schoolhouse and Wheeler roads.

The RRC encourages public input as it evaluates the pilot project and completes the town's ash tree management plan. A public informational meeting was held at U-32 last January and another is scheduled for mid-September.

Watch Front Porch Forum for updates

See links below for more information:

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

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

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

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