

The Emerald Ash Borer Comes to Missouri

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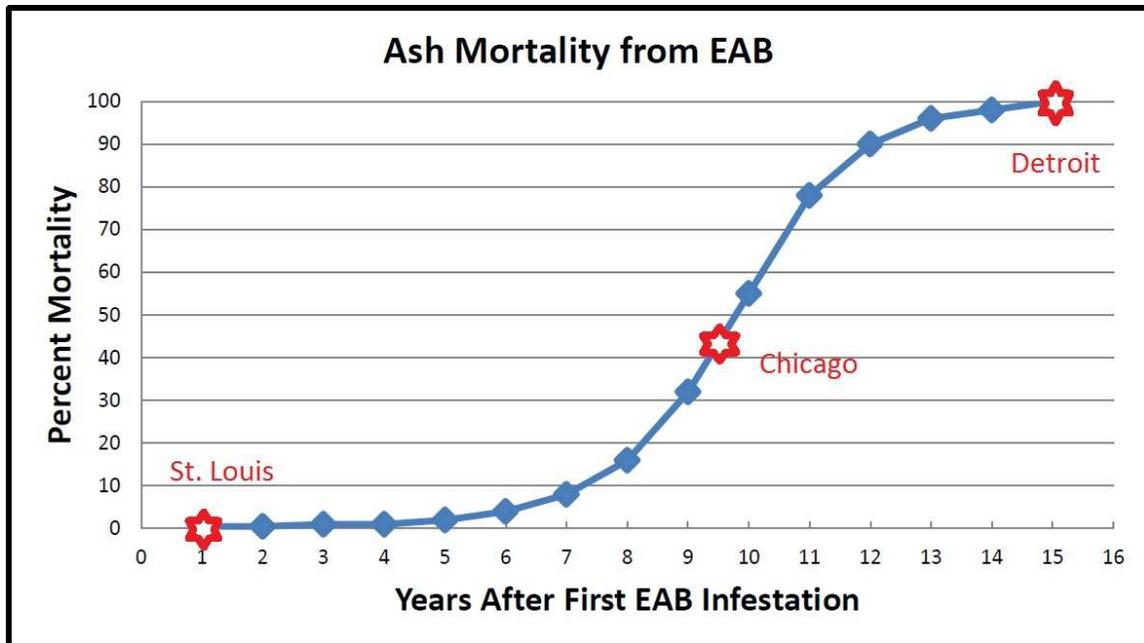
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Earlier this month I attended a conference about the expected effects of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in Missouri. EAB has now been confirmed in Kansas City and it is thought that it arrived there 5 years earlier. So it is assumed that the EAB is here in St Louis currently eating away at our ash trees.



The EAB is a small green beetle that probably came to the United States from Asia in wood packing material. The EAB will only eat ash trees. It burrows under the bark leaving serpentine tunnels that eventually kill the tree. Adult EABs spread by flying to nearby ash trees or catching a ride when firewood or other ash tree products are moved.

Before our ash trees start dying en mass we have a few years to prepare. The death of ash in an area is exponential with a low number of trees dying in the first few years and then the majority of trees dying in years 7-10 of the infestation. It is strongly recommend that ash trees be removed when they start showing symptoms and not wait until they are totally dead. Symptoms of infection include dying of branches from the top down, sprouting from the base of trees and bark falling off. A dead tree is more hazardous to remove because dead trees become brittle very rapidly making it dangerous to climb during removal. Branches also come down quickly after death and may fall on people, cars, or buildings.



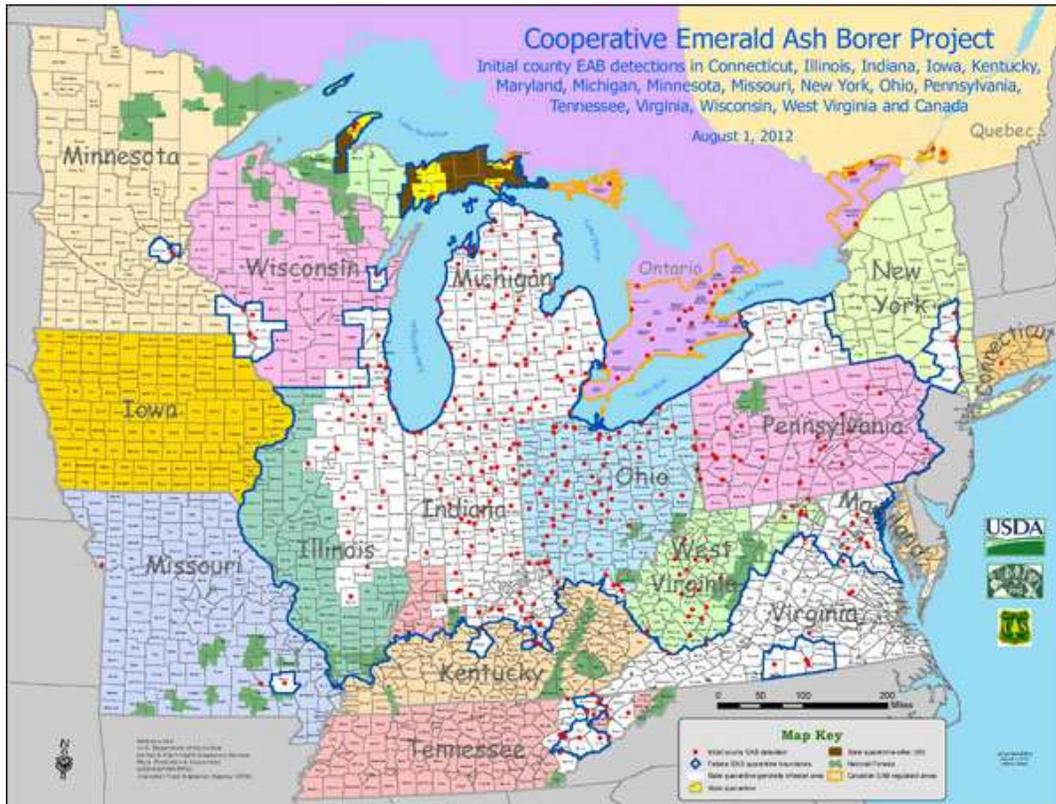
Detroit first discovered the EAB in 2002. Now most of their ash trees are dead and they are dealing with the massive task of replanting their street trees.

Chicago first discovered EAB in 2006. They are currently right in the middle of most of their trees dying. Their arborists and street departments are overwhelmed with work and dead trees are falling on cars and houses.

In St. Louis EAB has not yet been detected. We have several years ahead of us to prepare. This is a good time to remove diseased or unsightly ash. Do not plant ash trees. Make a plan for how your organization will deal with all your ash trees dying in the same year.

Calculating the impact of EAB is complicated. It is expected that almost all of our ash trees will be dead in 10 years except for trees that have been treated annually with EAB specific insecticides. Many places do not know how many ash trees are within their borders and must first conduct a tree survey before they can predict the impact of EAB. The direct costs of EAB include the removal of the dead tree and replacement of the tree. Chesterfield is calculating a cost of 2.2 million dollars just to remove and replace their ash trees. This cost does not include the other benefits of trees like shade, stormwater mitigation, wildlife habitat, and increased property values. Industries that depend on ash to produce products, such as baseball bats, will also suffer.

The map below shows red dots where EAB has been detected. The blue line surrounds quarantined areas.



We are being urged to come up with an EAB action plan. This means we need to know how many ash trees we have and where they are. Dead trees along roads and trails could become hazards and would need to be removed. We need to evaluate if we can remove all of the hazard trees if they all die the same year. We currently have 5-7 years to be proactive about tree removal. We need to remember that when the trees start dying all arborists may be busy.

It is our job to educate people about EAB or at least be prepared with correct information. People need to know how to identify the borers and ash trees. Recommend that ash trees be removed before they are totally dead. A dead tree is more hazardous to remove than a live one and it may fall on something. Important trees can be saved with EAB insecticides if treatment is started now. Don't move firewood. Don't plant ash trees.

Resources:

- <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/index.cfm>
- <http://extension.missouri.edu/emeraldashborer/>
- <http://www.dontmovefirewood.org/>
- <http://www.itreetools.org/>
- <http://www.treebenefits.com/calculator/>