

Should I Use Pesticides to Protect My Ash Trees From Emerald Ash Borer?

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The use of pesticides approved as preventatives for emerald ash borer (EAB) in Indiana is certainly an option for homeowners in Indiana who wish to protect their ash trees from the insect. Until recently, the use of pesticides as a preventative for EAB was not recommended in Indiana because of our participation in an eradication program for the insect. During this program, all ash trees within ½ mile of a confirmed find of EAB would be cut and removed to take away the insects' food source whether the trees had been treated with pesticides or not. Indiana has recently withdrawn from the EAB eradication program and no longer cuts ash trees down in affected areas, relying instead on surveys, quarantines, and public education to combat the beetle.

This recent change of policy places decisions about ash trees into the landowners' hands. Landowners may now choose from several options:

1. If the ash trees are in a woodland setting and will not become a hazard if they are killed by EAB, the landowner may choose to do nothing and let nature take its course.
2. If the ash trees are in prominent places in the landscape or are situated anywhere where they may fall on property or people, the landowner can choose to:
 - a. Protect uninfested ash trees with chemicals before and after EAB arrives in the vicinity. Pesticides work only as a preventative for EAB and will not "cure" an ash tree that is already infested with EAB.
 - b. Remove and/or replace the ash trees after EAB has moved into the area and attacked the trees. This action need not be taken until the trees have been killed and become actual hazards.

If landowners decide to use pesticides to protect their ash trees from EAB, they must take the long term cost of prevention into account. Ash trees must be treated every year for an indefinite period, and the cost of chemical protection may shortly exceed the worth of the tree. Below are some basic considerations when making a decision to protect or replace your ash trees:

Basic finance:

- Protecting an ash tree from EAB requires a long term commitment of both money and time as ash trees will require constant protection to survive where EAB is present. This means that each ash tree you wish to protect must be treated with pesticides every year for the rest of its life.
- The costs of preventative treatments range from about \$50 to \$200 each year per tree depending on whether the owner or an arborist does the application and the size of the ash tree. Costs of annual insecticide treatments eventually exceed the costs of tree removal.
- Replacement trees such as maple, oaks, beech, horsechestnut, or linden increase in value as they grow and can exceed the value of protected ash trees in a relatively short period. The cost of annual insecticide treatments ultimately exceeds the cost

of removing the ash tree. The value of a replacement tree will surpass the value of a protected ash tree (8-14 inch diameter) in 15 years or less. (*Note*: the larger an ash tree is when protective treatments begin, the longer it takes to reach the break-even point, more than 40 years in the case of an 18 inch diameter ash).

Recommendations:

Based on the above considerations, we make the following recommendations for homeowners in areas where EAB is present who might one day need to make a choice to protect or replace their ash trees:

- Leave ash trees standing until they are killed by EAB to allow them maximum financial appreciation before they die.
- Replace ash trees that are dying from EAB infestation with a site-appropriate tree other than ash.

See this link for a list of possibilities:

<http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/pdfs/ashalternatives.pdf>

For a slide show with details on the Protect or Replace Debate concerning ash trees and EAB, [click here](#).