

## **Protecting Ash Trees From Emerald Ash Borer**

### **AGRI-VIEWS**

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

With the arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in Kansas City, Kansas last summer it has just emphasized the need to start taking steps towards protecting your ash trees from this deadly pest. Just like other disease and insect pests that have decimated tree populations in the state, EAB has the potential to kill most of the ash trees over time. I've been to Michigan and seen the impact of this pest and it isn't pretty!

The Emerald Ash Borer is a small skinny little beetle that has not yet been found anywhere in Kansas except Kansas City. It often arrives in an area several years before it is detected. It lays its eggs in late spring on the trunk of ash trees. The small larvae bore into the tree and start feeding in the outer sapwood areas (phloem) of the tree. Their feeding severs the vessels that transport water and food throughout the tree.

Once they finish feeding, the larvae pupate over winter in the tunnels or gallery where they have been living. In the spring, the adults emerge and chew their way out of the tree leaving a very distinctive small D-shaped exit hole. A single year of infestation normally won't kill a tree. But after several years of feeding damage you start to see branch dieback, often accompanied with lots of sprouting of new branches from the trunk. After a few more years the tree dies. We have several different borer pests of ash trees but none of them can kill a tree like Emerald Ash Borer can.

Fortunately there are preventative treatments that can be fairly effective in protecting ash trees from EAB. But it is very important that you start treatment before a tree is infested. There are homeowner treatments available. Most of these are soil drenches. The treatments tend to last for the entire season, but need to be done annually. It also takes time for the tree to get the insecticide taken up through the roots and distributed throughout the tree at a high enough level to be effective. In general, we recommend treatment in the month of March.

There are currently two products labeled for homeowner use. The products may be available under several brand names, but the active ingredients are imidicloprid and dinotefuran. Imidicloprid has been around for some time but dinotefuran is newer and may not be readily available or not yet labeled in Kansas. The key is to make sure that you have a product with one of those two active ingredients and then make sure that Emerald Ash Borer is on the label.

Before you purchase the insecticide you need to know how big around your tree is. Most all of the products call for one ounce of the product per inch of tree circumference 4.5 feet above the ground. You will need a flexible measuring tape of some kind and possibly some help if it is a bigger tree. If your tree is 30 inches around you will need 30 ounces of product. You will mix this up in a bucket with some water and then pour it all around the base of the tree within a foot or two of the trunk. If it doesn't rain in a few days you may want to put the garden hose out under the tree and let it run slowly for several hours to help carry the insecticide into the root zone of the tree. If the product is a granular product, follow the label directions which should have a similar procedure.

When EAB arrives here it will have a devastating impact on unprotected ash trees. If you have ash trees in your yard that are important to your landscape, I would start now with an annual treatment program. As always, read and follow all label directions and if you have questions, give me a call at the Extension Office, 785-238-4161.