Taking action to fight the emerald ash borer will be rewarded with points toward your Tree City USA receiving the Growth Award. For more information, visit arborday.org and type ‘Growth Awards’ in the search box.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

Considerable research information can be found on any of the above threats to trees and what can be done to fight back. Simply type the name of the insect into a search engine. For quick links to additional information about emerald ash borers, we invite you to visit the supplemental resources library at arborday.org/bulletins and navigate to Bulletin No. 76.

For more information, visit arborday.org and type ‘Growth Awards’ in the search box.

Other Bad Bugs

Okay, insects, not bugs. We know that, technically, true bugs are only those insects in the order Hemiptera and emerald ash borers are beetles, in the order Coleoptera. This scientific name comes from the Greek and refers to the hardened shell-like protection adult beetles have to protect the insect's second pair of wings and its abdomen. But to lay people, they are all bugs, especially when it comes to those that eat leaves or kill trees. Here are some others that have been declared by the U.S. Forest Service as pests that pose the greatest threat to our trees.

- Asian Longhorned Beetle
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid
- Gypsy Moth
- Mountain Pine Beetle
- Southern Pine Beetle
- Sirex Woodwasp
- Spruce Beetle
- Spruce Budworm
- Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer

Some of these bad actors have been introduced from foreign lands and others are natives. In either case, it is believed that the effects of these insects will be more pronounced in the future if climate change continues. Under the worse case scenarios, warmer winters allow insect populations to increase, and prolonged drought stresses and weakens trees making them less able to naturally fend off invaders.

TRE CITY USA GROWTH AWARD

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The emerald ash borer is one of the most notorious invasive insects in American history. From the discovery of this Asian species in the Detroit, Michigan, area in 2002, it has spread throughout most of the Midwest and Middle Atlantic states and is heading in all directions. If your community does not yet host this destructive beetle, it probably will in the future.

Ash is an incredibly important tree. There are 16 native species in the United States and dozens of commercially-available cultivars. Foresters estimate there are over 8 billion ash trees in rural forests worth well over $280 billion dollars. The wood of this forest tree is highly valued for its strength and elasticity, the very reasons it is the traditional wood used for baseball bats and often for bows, tool handles, guitars and many other products.

In urban areas, ash has been one of the nation's most popular trees for planting along streets, in parks and in shopping center parking lots. When Dutch elm disease decimated huge numbers of our nation's most graceful street trees, ash was often the tree of choice for its replacement. In some communities, up to 40 percent of the inventoried trees turn out to be ash species or cultivars. It has been a tree that has served extremely well providing relatively fast growth and the ability to withstand the harsh conditions of almost any urban environment. And it is estimated that a 12-inch diameter ash tree provides $131 every year in ecosystem services such as filtering air pollutants, reducing stormwater runoff and conserving energy.

When ash disappears, wildlife suffer along with the rest of us. The seeds of this tree are a boon to birdlife; many native butterflies and moths utilize its leaves, and some 44 species of arthropods are said to feed exclusively on ash trees. It is fair to say that without ash trees, ecological relationships will be affected in ways we may not yet understand.

In this bulletin, we summarize what is known about the emerald ash borer and present a case for fighting back against this epic threat.