

Talking Trees

If you have a tree on the street in front of your property which has been tagged on the street side with a green dot, it has been identified as an ash tree. You have three choices as you work with the city to mitigate the damage which will be caused by the coming of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). You can treat, cut and replace the tree, or wait until it dies before cutting and replacing.

All trees in the city's right-of-way were identified last summer in a tree inventory project which was funded in part by an Urban Forestry Grant from the Department of Natural Resources. The map of all of the street trees is on display just inside the front doors of the City Hall on La Crosse Street. The 217 ash trees are shown in red on the map.

The EAB Plan adopted by the City of Wisconsin Dells in December of 2012 calls for up to 20% of the city's ash trees to be cut and replaced by another tree species which will create diversity in our urban forest over the next five years or when EAB arrives. In most cases the cost to the property owner is \$200—half the \$400 cost of cutting and disposing of the ash tree, grinding the stump, purchasing a new tree from a list provided on the city's website www.citywd.org, transporting the tree from a nursery near Princeton, auguring the hole, and planting the new tree. The other half of the cost is assumed by the city.

No-fee Tree Permits (which can be found online or picked up at the Public Works office in City Hall) to have their ash trees cut and replaced in priority order in which the permits were received. The property owners can indicate on the permit that they plan to treat their trees over a period of several years before, during, and after the coming infestation to prevent emerald ash borer insects from killing their trees. The expense of treatment is assumed by the owner; some treatments are proving to be up to 90% effective. Property owners can also decide to delay cutting and replacing their trees until the last year of the five-year plan (2017) or when the tree dies, whichever comes first.

If you love your ash tree and are willing to invest in treating it, the Tree Board recommends that you begin treatment this spring before EAB is found in the Dells. If you would like to cut and replace your ash tree, we recommend that you file a permit now. The higher you are on the list, the more likely you are to have your tree replaced after cutting. If EAB arrives before the five-year plan is complete, the city is less likely to have funds replanting after cutting dead and dying ash trees.

Dead and dying trees, which are not ash trees, were also identified by the inventory. If you have a street tree which is not leafing out this spring, you may fill out a Tree Permit to have it cut and replaced. If your dead or dying tree is prioritized by the Public Works Department, you will be contacted by the city.

Cooperative action between citizens and the public works department will preserve the Wisconsin Dells tree canopy in the face of EAB and other threats to our urban forest. Don't hesitate to call Public Works with your questions 253-2542.

Debbie Kinder