Emerald Ash Borer Policy  
City of Gothenburg

Recommendation by the City of Gothenburg Tree Board  
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City of Gothenburg Staff  
  
This policy applies only to ash street and park trees on City of Gothenburg property. Private and commercial property owners are responsible for their own ash trees and should consult:

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Purdue Cooperative Extension Service - Monroe County  
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Trees provide important ecological services to our city. Large trees constitute the majority of the City's tree canopy, which sequesters carbon, reduces peak flows of storm water runoff, cleans the air and provides many other benefits to Gothenburg citizens. Large trees also increase homeowner's property values and improve the beauty of the places in which they live. Furthermore, having a vibrant tree canopy is critical to maintaining our status as a [Tree City USA.](http://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/?breadcrumb=homepage)

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is an insect introduced to the United States more than 10 years ago, first identified near Detroit, Mich. It affects all ash tree species. Once the pest arrives in a community, mortality of the ash tree population is nearly 100 percent, as indicated by experience in the nearby cities of Carmel and Fort Wayne, Ind. Trees die quickly, typically within one to three years. The EAB has not yet been identified in the City of Gothenburg; however it is important for the city to have a plan in place that can be acted upon immediately. Large numbers of standing dead trees throughout the community will be unacceptable visually and from a risk management standpoint.

Ash species comprise about 6 percent of the public tree inventory in Gothenburg numbering about 700 street trees and 130 park trees. The city has not planted ash trees since 2003 when EAB was first recognized as a future threat to the city, and the Planning Department no longer allows developers to plant ash. Since the early 2000s the city has systematically reduced the number of ash trees by removing hazard trees and trees in poor condition with defects as well as removing ash trees in the course of construction projects.

The EAB pest is the biggest threat to our urban forest since Dutch elm disease, and the impact to the municipal budget must be considered. The deaths of large ash trees will cause great expense to the city via the costs of tree removal, disposal of infested wood and the replanting and maintenance of new trees. In addition, newly planted trees take a number of years to achieve the environmental benefits of the large and more mature trees which are removed.

Our goal is to spread the cost of treatment, removal and replacement over a manageable time period in order to lessen the aesthetic, environmental and economic impact to the community. The Tree Board recommends that the city adopt a policy supported by [research at Purdue University.](http://extension.entm.purdue.edu/EAB/index.php?page=management/homeowners) It suggests treating 20 percent of the potentially affected trees with pesticide every year for five years will reduce the peak impact of the insect infestation so that some trees will survive, which will reduce the cost of removal and replacement for the city. Once the peak of the EAB infestation has passed, some trees may even survive to maturity. We also believe that at the same time we can efficiently reduce the total public ash tree population by half within two to five years with selective removals. Each tree should be considered individually since both options of treatment and removal have their own advantages depending on both tree condition and location.

Our estimates show that th cost of treatment for 20 percent of our ash trees will be approximately $21,000, which is less than the estimated cost of $726,250 for removing and replacing the entire ash population. Purdue research suggests that nine years of treatments equals the cost of a single removal. Treatment along with selective removals allows the city to spread out the costs further over time. Trees selected for removal will be determined by the urban forester and the Tree Commission.

The pesticide to be applied will be that which is most effective at killing the EAB and least likely to impact the general public, our local wildlife and sensitive environmental features. Thus, we recommend trunk injection applications so that the chemical is contained within the tree and not leached into soils, water, or other plants.

The pesticide to be used will be applied only by persons licensed by the State of Indiana. [The proposed pesticide](http://www.emeraldashborer.info/treeage.cfm#sthash.WHYf5vHB.dpbs) and the timing of treatment are as follows: The product is sold as TREE-äge (emamectin benzoate). The best time to treat is shortly after leaf emergence, mid-May to end of June.

By applying pesticides to a limited number of ash trees in the city of Gothenburg we can reduce the expense of removing and replacing dead ash trees and will blunt the force of the insect infestation enough that the neighborhoods that are the most thickly planted with ash trees will not be denuded of their tree canopy.

As budgets permit, it is recommended that all removed trees be eventually replaced with species that add to the diversity of our urban forest. The Gothenburg Tree Commission with the Gothenburg Parks Foundation will work to promote the Gothenburg Tree Fund to assist with this cause.

In closing, it is the intent of the Gothenburg Tree Commission to reevaluate this policy annually as more research and information becomes available.

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