

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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The emerald ash borer is posing a threat to the population of ash trees in the state of Iowa. If you haven't heard of it yet, you most likely will. It has had a devastating impact on the ash trees in Michigan and is starting to impact trees in states bordering Michigan. It is believed they will find their way into Iowa and threaten the ash tree population here. At a workshop I recently attended, Dr. Mark Shour, Iowa State University Extension Program Specialist, provided answers to the most commonly asked questions about the emerald ash borer. The following information is a summary of his comments.

The emerald ash borer is a small, metallic green beetle about the size of Lincoln's image on a penny. Its primary host is any type of ash tree. It will infest all size of ash trees and the result is the same - death of the tree. Both the larvae and the adults feed on the ash. The adults feed on the leaves and the larvae feed under the bark in the living tissue. As the larvae feed, they cut off the water and nutrient conducting tissues of the tree which results in the tree starving to death. The adults emerge from mid May through late July and the larvae feed from mid summer through the next spring.

At this time, the USDA has quarantined the following states in an effort to slow the spread of the emerald ash borer: Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. They have also been found in Maryland and as close as Chicago. As of the spring of 2006, none have been found in Iowa. A collaborative survey process to monitor the spread of the insect is being conducted by Iowa State University Extension, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forestry Service. They are visually inspecting ash trees throughout the state for infestation. Sentinel trees are also being used to detect the presence of the insect.

Why is this a concern? It is estimated there are fifty million ash trees in Iowa forests and an additional ten million in urban settings. There are no known effective practical control methods identified at this time. Therefore, the best control is to prevent the movement of the insects. On its own, the beetle moves slowly through the landscape, approximately one mile annually. Humans can greatly accelerate the spread of the insect by moving infested nursery stock, firewood and logs to un-infested areas.

For more information about the emerald ash borer, check out the following website:
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/home/pests/urbanag.php> or call the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.