



**THE DIAMONDBACK**

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## UMD to use insecticide to protect ash trees on the campus

By Jeremy Snow - May 7, 2015



An ash tree near Wicomico Hall is the largest of its species in the county — and university Arboretum and Botanical Garden officials want to make sure it stays healthy.

Later this month, they will use insecticide to preventatively treat ash trees around the campus to protect them from the emerald ash borer, a shiny green beetle about half an inch long.

While officials will be on the lookout for several different harmful insects, the emerald ash borer is one of their biggest concerns, as Prince George's County has been a hotspot for the bug since a nursery sold infested trees in 2003, said Karen Petroff, arboretum and horticultural services assistant director.

“Given the presence and the proximity, it would be foolish to state that there is no emerald ash borer living on campus,” she said. “We are completely surrounded by the ... infestation.”

The arboretum will treat at least six ash trees near dorms as well as others in front of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center and near Memorial Chapel. Some ash trees also circle the campus in the more wooded areas, but those will not receive treatment.

The beetles only consume ash trees, Petroff said. Last year, the arboretum removed six trees because of suspected borer damage, she said.

The emerald ash borer is responsible for destroying millions of ash trees in the Midwest and local areas such as Baltimore City, Petroff said.

College Park has not seen an official infestation yet, though the bug is common just 15 to 20 miles away, entomology professor Michael Raupp said.

Raupp said he predicts the bug will be introduced to College Park in about a decade, as the bugs spread about a mile a year.

“I don’t think it’s a matter of if; it’s a matter of when,” he said. “It’s a matter of how long it takes to get up here. This thing is like a giant tsunami rolling across the country.”

To prevent a potential infestation, the arboretum will use TREE-äge, a chemical that is injected into the tree’s trunk to repel the insects. With injection treatments, the chemical does not get in the air and cannot get on people who touch the tree, Petroff said.

TREE-äge is typically used to stop emerald ash borers across this state, said Kim Rice, acting program manager for this state’s Plant Protection and Weed Management program. The injection method lets the chemicals move up and down the trunk and enter the leaves.

“Injections have been successful before and are one of the options we usually suggest to deal with special ash trees,” Rice said.

The date of the treatment is not finalized, but should occur in mid-May, Petroff said. Officials are currently looking into which trees need treatment and comparing the costs of replacing the trees versus treating them.

Learning how to deal with the “big, bad beetles” might become part of the routine for saving trees, Raupp said, but could still cause great environmental impacts.

An infestation resulting in tree loss could have a negative environmental impact, he said. Ash trees across the campus remove pollutants, reduce greenhouse gases and provide shade, he said.

“Can you imagine what a desert our campus would be if we didn’t have these trees?” he asked.