

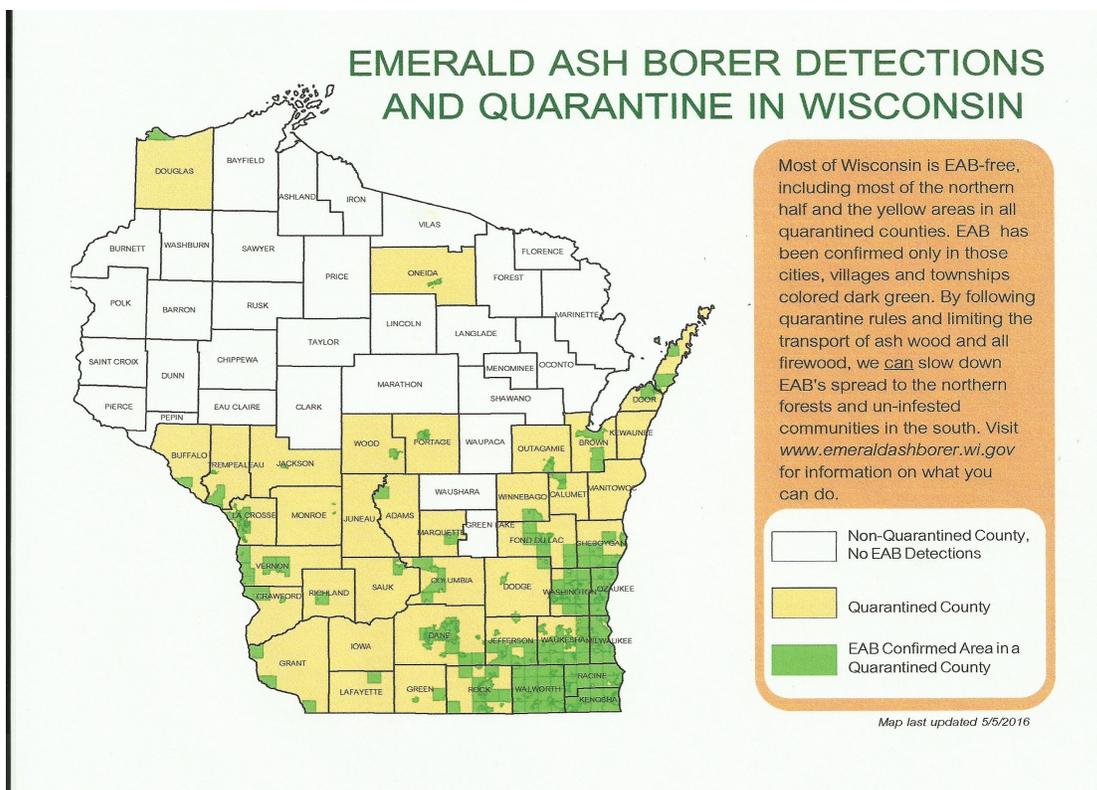
## **Kiss Your Ash Good Bye**

By Tom Ward, AIS Coordinator

With the threat of emerald ash borer (EAB), an invasive species, we need to start now on replacement of our ash trees.

See attached Map for location of Counties with emerald ash borer (EAB) and you will note that it's only a matter of time until Manitowoc County ash trees become infested. Sites were confirmed this spring in the Towns of Cedar Grove and Sheboygan Falls to the south in Sheboygan County; to the West in Calumet County the Town of Harrison; to the North the Town of Morrison in Brown County.

Research on EAB in forests in Michigan has grimly shown that all black, green, and white ash trees are susceptible to EAB. Ash survival decreased 30-50% over three years in infested stands, and they predict that a healthy forest will lose 98% of its ash trees in 6 years.



The emerald ash borer (EAB), *Agrilus planipennis*, is an exotic insect that was first identified in southeast Michigan in 2002 and detected in Wisconsin in 2008. EAB infests and **kills all true ash species** (*Fraxinus* spp.) that are native to Wisconsin.



***Many of our woodlots are wetlands dominated with Ash trees, as the ash die from EAB the canopy will open up and the site will be vulnerable to invasion by the invasive Phragmites grass. Such as this wet swamp near the Viking Bow and Gun Club after a tornado destroyed many of the trees over a decade ago and Phragmites invaded.***

### **What can homeowners and small property owners do?**

The goal of any urban forest is to achieve tree diversity. No more than 20 percent of one kind of tree should comprise the total urban forest population. Diversity should be planned for both public and private landscapes. Remove large canopy dominating ash species that are shading out other species on your property.

### **What should I plant if I remove my ash trees or wish to reforest part of my property?**

I try to observe the native tree species in the area on similar soils. When planting trees, I prefer to plant species that provide multiple benefits to wildlife and provide diversity of species to my property. I select fruit and nut bearing trees or species that provide winter cover and wind break.

A naturalist friend of mine use to say that pine plantations are no more than habitat for black birds and grackles, evolving to a sterile conifer forest. I prefer a more natural planting with a mix of conifers forming a wind break etc. I prefer native white spruce and cedar and white pine for winter cover. Stay away from disease vulnerable blue spruce; Norway spruce which is shorter lived on clay soils; and Red Pine that requires a sandier soil.

My favorite yard tree is the Common Hackberry (Celtis Occidentalis) which tolerates our high PH alkaline heavier clay soils; forms a shade canopy like our American elm with pebbled bark

and fall yellowish color; and most importantly produces pea size dark colored fruits. Robbins and cedar wax wings love the berries and they don't drop to the side walk or ground creating a mess.



***My 20 year old backyard hackberry  
Which grows well on our clay soils***

***In the early fall birds love the pea size fruits***

My second choice for a yard or wildlife property is an oak, if your soils permit. Many gardeners plant certain wild flowers to attract butterflies, oak attract many butterfly species providing a host for their larvae. Blue jays love to help plant oak by carrying off the acorns in the fall.

The oak species have a tap root that penetrates the soil to a significant depth, making it very difficult to transplant unless you move it as a seedling. However, because of the tape root, oak species do not do well on dense compacted or heavy clay soils. They prefer a sandy soil or some of our lighter more gravely clay soils (Hortonville and Hochheim soil types). You can check the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service web site and look up your soil type (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>).

The white and burr oak prefer open sun and don't tolerate competition with other trees. Deer, turkey and wood ducks love the smaller tasty acorns that drop in September. The swamp white oak (*Quercus Bicolor*) which is common in our watershed tolerates poor drainage and would be the oak tree of choice on our clay soils. Red oak is subject to the oak wilt disease and is spreading through out western and central Wisconsin; the disease hasn't shown up in this part of the State to my knowledge.

On lighter soils the black cherry (*Prunus Serotina*) is a faster growing tree that is also quite shade tolerant. Like the hackberry it has a small black cherry that is difficult to see from the

ground and is consumed by birds during the fall migration. Out in the open the tree tends to grow more shrub like, if planted with other species it will grow tall and straight producing a very valuable saw log. Black Cherry is also a host to many butterfly larvae.

As a landscape tree I love my flowering crab trees. I have white and the deep pink blossom varieties through out my yard. Their blossoms are over whelming lighting up my yard sometime near Mother's day in mid-May. The small apples are available for birds especially robins and cedar wax wings during the fall migration. A few apples always remain through the winter providing a food source for roving flocks of cedar wax wings and critically important to robins when they arrive too early in the spring. The little red apples glisten like ornaments during the first fall snow falls.



**Small red apples of the flowering crab provide food for migrating birds, glistening like ornaments in late fall.**

**A few apples always remain through the winter, critical to robins that may arrive too early in the spring if we receive a late snow fall.**

The flowering crab species because they are lowering growing 15 to 20 feet, are also great trees to plant near your road side where power lines are a concern or close to your home where you may fear a having a tree falling on your home.

**All trees should be planted where grass sod has been scalped back, sprayed or mulched in a 4ft. circle to reduce competition for moisture by grass for a couple of years. Trees should also be protected with a tree tube or chicken wire from rabbits and deer.**

Always support our local nurseries and vendors.