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NEWS

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Emerald ash borer: What Western Slope communities need to know

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. – With the highly destructive emerald ash borer (EAB) now confirmed in Colorado, many homeowners on the Western Slope have questions about their ash trees and the risks presented by the invasive tree insect. Late last year EAB, already responsible for the death or decline of tens of millions of ash trees in more than 20 states, was detected in the City of Boulder. It poses a serious threat to Colorado's urban forests, where ash species comprise an estimated 15-20 percent of all trees.

To help homeowners and communities make decisions about dealing with the pest, this week the Colorado State Forest Service is releasing a new Quick Guide about EAB in Colorado. Although EAB has not been detected in western Colorado, and the Rocky Mountains form a barrier to the natural spread of the insect from the Boulder area, ash trees in the region remain at risk due to the potential spread through human actions – such as the movement of firewood.

Primary recommendations relevant to the Western Slope include:

- **Determine now if you have any ash trees.** The first step to dealing with the possible future arrival of EAB is identifying susceptible host trees on the landscape, which include virtually any species and varieties of ash (*genus Fraxinus*). Ash trees have diamond-shaped bark ridges, compound leaves with 5 to 11 leaflets, and their leaflets, buds and branches grow directly opposite from one another.
- **Avoid planting ash trees anywhere in Colorado.** Ash trees have been widely planted here, but due to the risk of EAB, future plantings are not recommended. However, this spring is a good time to consider planting diverse tree species where ash trees growing now could be lost in the future.
- **Recognize signs of EAB infestation.** Homeowners with ash trees should be on the lookout for signs of EAB infestation, which include: thinning of upper branches and twigs, loss of leaves, D-shaped 1/8-inch holes on the bark, vertical bark splitting or increased woodpecker activity. Any suspect trees should be reported to the Colorado Department of Agriculture at 888-248-5535 or email CAPS.program@state.co.us.
- **Be aware of EAB imposters.** Other insects like lilac/ash borer, ash bark beetle and flat-headed appletree borer may look like EAB or cause similar tree symptoms. For more information, see the new EAB guide at [www.csfs.colostate.edu.](http://www.csfs.colostate.edu/)

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- **Know that treatments now aren't a good option.** Treatments to protect high-value ash trees are not recommended more than 5 miles from a positive detection. Currently, with the only confirmed in-state detection in the City of Boulder, homeowners on the Western Slope need not apply chemical treatments to protect ash trees from EAB.
- **Prevent further spread of EAB.** Don't ever transport ash firewood, or any other untreated ash wood products, to other locations.

For more information about EAB infestation and ash tree identification, view the guide online at www.csfs.colostate.edu or pick up a free copy at the nearest CSFS district. For current information about the status of EAB in Colorado, go to www.eabcolorado.com.

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