

BERKELEY HEIGHTS AWARDS CONTRACT TO TREAT THREAT TO ASH TREES

Berkeley Heights, NJ. - A new threat has come to New Jersey and it could be devastating. Emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis Fairmairet*, an invasive insect native to Asia, has killed hundreds of millions of ash trees (*Fraxinus* species) in urban, rural and forested settings. This beetle was first identified in 2002 in southeast Michigan and Windsor, Ontario. As of May 2017, emerald ash borer (EAB) infestations were known to be present in 30 states as well as two Canadian provinces.

The emerald ash borer has been detected in several New Jersey counties, including Middlesex, Essex and Somerset, according to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). As a consequence, the DEP warns that even if emerald ash borer has not yet been detected, all ash trees are considered to be at high risk of EAB infestation within the next few years.

"This is a real threat," said Mayor Robert Woodruff, "We don't want to wait until the insect has been detected in the Township. If we do, it will be too late. We need to take preventive action now to protect the trees."

After receiving a grant from the State of New Jersey to treat the EAB, Berkeley Heights has awarded a contract to Tamke Tree Experts of Bernards Township. In May and June Tamke representatives will be inspecting and then selecting ash trees along the Township's right of way to treat for emerald ash borer.

"Not all ash trees along the right of way will be treated," said Environmental Commissioner Richard Leister. "Small ash trees will be removed and any large ash trees that may be compromised will be marked for removal."

Residents are also encouraged to treat ash trees on their own property. New Jersey has detailed information for homeowners, including how to identify if an ash tree is affected at <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/prog/eabhomeowners.html> .

Thanks to the Environmental Commission, the Township applied for and received the grant from the Community Stewardship Incentive Program. The two-year grant will allow the Township to selectively treat ash trees along the Township right of way.

The Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission was established to protect, develop or use natural resources, including water resources, located within the Township. The Environmental Commission is an advisory group with the responsibility to recommend plans and programs to the Planning Board for the development and use of open lands and wetlands. All the members volunteer their time on a variety of projects and tasks.

Keep up with the progress of the pledge and other Environmental Commission activities on the Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission Facebook page.

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