

City has treated 4,300 ash trees

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Rochester forestry workers finished insecticide applications on the last of 4,300 ash trees last week, a key part of the city's defense against invasive emerald ash borers.

The insects, native to Asia, were first detected in New York in 2009. Since that time ash borers have been detected in scattered locations in nine New York counties, six of them in this part of the state and three in the Catskills region.

An infested area was found last summer along Scottsville Road in southern Chili, and in June officials said that trees in Rochester's Upper Falls Terrace Park, just north of downtown, had been hit. Several trees there have been cut down and several more will go in October, city forester Brian Liberti said.

In a bit of good news, no additional local infestations have been confirmed.

The insects lay their eggs on green, white, black and blue ash trees. Larvae tunnel under the bark and disrupt the flow of nutrients, eventually killing the tree.

New York has a huge ash-

tree population — an estimated 900 million, including 16 million in Monroe County — and experts are predicting a slow-moving arboreal catastrophe.

While there's no practical way of protecting all those trees, individual specimens can be saved by application of an insecticide. Rochester used Tree-age, the most popular ash-borer insecticide, on 4,300 city-owned trees in parks, cemeteries and alongside streets.

Over the last two years, the city also cut down more than 600 ash trees that were less desirable due to pre-existing damage or age. Rochester budgeted \$610,500 for its anti-ash borer program over that period.

Other municipalities, institutions and homeowners also have turned to insecticides, which most often are injected into the trunks, to protect valued ash trees.

But local arborist Noreen Kelley Riordan said that while her company, Summit Tree & Landscape, has treated plenty of ash trees, she has been surprised that most people haven't acted.

"I wonder if people simply don't know how to identify an ash tree and there-

fore don't know that the trees on their property are susceptible to dying in the next three to five years," she said. "Since ash trees are not yet beginning to show signs and symptoms, do people think they can wait to treat their trees?"

Experts say it may be possible to save a tree once ash borers have appeared on it, but advise treating it before they arrive to be safe.

Riordan and Liberti said they've not seen evidence of new infestations in the area. Neither has John Gibbs, the state Department of Environmental Conservation regional forester.

"Nothing that we looked at was confirmed positive. That doesn't change the fact that we know they're out there in the landscape, but where exactly the critters are I couldn't hazard a guess at this point," Gibbs said.

That could change as state and federal officials continue to check the thousands of rectangular purple-colored ash-borer traps set in trees throughout the state. A number were added in Rochester after the borers popped up near High Falls in June.

"The DEC traps are being taken down shortly," Liberti said. "I'll be interested to know what they find." □

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