



Evanston losing ground to Emerald Ash Borer



By Jonathan Bullington TribLocal reporter Wednesday at 4:11 p.m.

Evanston officials report that the invasive Emerald Ash Borer is rapidly spreading through the city's ash trees, forcing forestry workers to remove infected trees.

However, the need to remove parkway ash trees has outpaced the funds required to replace them, city officials said, adding that nearly 500 parkway ash trees have been removed in the past year.

The city is asking residents to consider donating to a "reforestation fund," which was established in 2011 after repeated severe storms damaged many of the city's public trees. Money from the fund will be used to speed the pace of replanting trees in areas where Emerald Ash Borer has forced the removal of ash trees.

In 2006, when the ash borer was first discovered in Evanston, the city had more than 4,000 ash trees on its parkways. That number represented about 12 percent of the city's 33,000 public trees, officials said.

Roughly half of the city's ash trees have either been removed or are tagged for removal, officials said. Forestry workers have attempted to control the spread of the insect, but thus far no effort has proven successful enough to warrant widespread use, officials said.

Several city blocks have been hard hit by the insect, officials said, including blocks of Asbury, Ashland, Colfax, Darrow, Dempster, Dodge, Elmwood, Ewing, Hartzell, Jackson, McDaniel, Oakton, Ridge, Sherman and Simpson.

Forestry workers hope to replace by this spring or fall one-third of the trees on those blocks most affected by the ash borer. The remaining two-thirds should be replaced in 2013 and 2014, officials said.

For trees that are not heavily impacted by the ash borer, the city does allow residents to treat their ash trees on the parkway by obtaining a permit for Tree-Age, a chemical agent injected into the ash tree and designed to prevent the spread of Emerald Ash Borer. Homeowners themselves are not allowed to inject trees with Tree-Age; instead a permit must be obtained from the forestry department and a licensed contractor must administer the product.