

Five Observed Non-EAB Impacts on the Ash Tree Decline

This article reprints part of a report sent to a long standing golf course client. The contract to review and report on the trees was completed in September 2010. Most of the trees showed decline symptoms and there were questions of EAB control action efficacy.

Below are the 5 agents and actions creating concern and tree decline:

"The most telling difference in the ash trees on the property is those that are in irrigation as opposed to those which are not. Likewise, ash in proximity and competition with other trees, show more drought stress; this is a normal reaction and consequence."

"Five non-EAB issues are causing decline and visual concern are evident in the trees, which are treated with Imidacloprid.

1. Ash Flower Gall Mite, a common early spring pest, will expand populations in conjunction with Imidacloprid treatments and the "brown balls" persist in the trees. This is not negative, but is aesthetically unpleasing.

2. Spider Mite feeding on the leaves will accelerate, especially in hot, dry weather like we have had in 2010, producing yellow leaves, brown spots and pre-mature defoliation.

3. Spring Anthracnose was severe and its affects: leaf drop and necrosis are still seen in September.

4. There are the number of stem and root wounds created by turf management. This can create reduced sap flows, reduced tree vigor and early defoliation in drought.

5. Some of the ash show stress fractures from the Christmas 2008 ice storm. These fractures slow or stop the sap flows to specific branches, which took loads, but didn't break. Now, the dead or sparse branches are evidence of this event. In some cases the reduction of sap flows means the reduction of Imidacloprid used to control for EAB and those branches are infested."

All these factors contribute to the unsatisfactory appearance of the trees and to the decline of some of the ash inspected. Most will be revived; the speed of which is dependent upon management inputs.

This reports highlights a broad reality in urban forestry, there are single agents or affects which can kill a tree, but often is a series of affects, often in association, which can reduce the tree's entropy and precipitate it into decline and death.

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