

BEETLES

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locust trees, which require more care but seem to stay longer, Laubhoff said. Hills city officials used emergency funds earlier this month to pay three tree service companies to inject an insecticide near the base of ash trees in the city's major rights-of-way and parks. About 800 trees have been treated, said Dale Countegan, city planning director. The city takes care of roughly 1,200 ash trees, he said, adding trees already damaged by the infection will be processed by the tree service companies. Though the ash tree decline has been known for the past several years, its culprit has been officially identified by state and federal agriculturists.

The county informed the city that the bug is known as "emerald ash borer" and has infected many of the trees on public property already, including those planted at the city campus on 11 Mile and Orchard Lake.

The Hills city council approved the use of emergency funds at its Monday meeting. City Manager Steve Brock said there isn't enough information available as to whether the insecticide will stop the insect from infecting a tree entirely.

"We may be part of a test group for this borer," he told the council. The city did issue a press release that there is a quarantine on ash trees leaving the affected five-county area: Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston and Washtenaw.

How can you identify and treat infected ash trees?

Ash trees affected by emerald ash borer may show some of the following symptoms, according to Hills city officials:

- thinning and/or yellowing of the foliage;
- development of new shoots from the trunk or branches;
- woodpecker injury (wood-boring beetles are a woodpecker's favorite food);
- tunneling beneath the bark;
- D-shaped emergence holes on the trunk or branches;
- gradual tree death.

State agriculture officials have issued a quarantine on all ash trees and timber products in the affected counties to help prevent and control the spread of the pest. Under this quarantine, ash trees, branches, logs and firewood may not be moved outside the affected area unless certified for movement by the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

Countegan said the city's investment in the trees is important and that the city was told by specialists from the county that the sooner the trees were injected with the insecticide the better.

City officials said for trees that are not severely affected, residents should remove the dead branches. The branches can be tied in bundles (up to 4-feet long and 6-inches in diameter) and placed at the curb for recycling, since compost materials do not go outside the quarantined area.

Experts at Michigan State University are still investigating treatments for ash trees that are not yet affected or mildly affected. Treatment information is available on their Web site, www.msue.msue.edu/reg_se/roberts/ash/decline.html

"The larva (of the beetle) is active in mid to late August," he said. "We have half a million dollars invested in our trees and we're trying to maintain our natural infrastructure."

Brock said the city could look into having tree service contractors offer the city lower prices for residents if enough interests in joining a program is gained. He warned that tree service companies may already be overwhelmed with requests from residents for ash tree protection services. "We think this is the right first step," he said of treating the city's healthy ash trees.



ELL BRESLER/OBSERVER

The holes in the trunk of the ash are made by the Emerald Ash Borer. The damage occurs under the outer layer of bark. Woodpeckers are often attracted to the borers, causing their own additional damage to the stressed tree.



KATY BARTHOLOMEW/OBSERVER

Political members and civilians came together on Tuesday morning to speak their minds on Engler's veto.

OVERRIDE

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islaters. "This is unfair because the governor said he wouldn't touch the cigarette tax (increase)," said Patterson. "I'm not here to embarrass the governor - he embarrassed himself."

Patterson drew some booing as he said it would be in the best interest of local government if they worked to defeat the three ballot proposals which Engler cited as the reason for the state shared revenue veto.

"In my 11 years as mayor, I never remember a time when state government was so irresponsible," said Grand Rapids Mayor John Legie. "Each legislator who is trying to be re-elected or elected to a new job should remember this is their moment - they either stand with Gov. Engler or they stand with the people."

The massive cuts in staff and services that would be required had the funding veto stood were addressed by many speakers. The impact on public safety was particularly emphasized by the rally speakers, who stood in front of rows of uniformed police and firefighters.

"The governor has betrayed and double-crossed public safety in this state," said Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer, representing the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police.

"Maintaining public safety must be the number one priority for this state. Local government will experience major

budget reductions in public safety," he added. "These may require slashing services, raising local taxes and in some extreme cases, forcing receivership."

In public safety, about 90 percent of a department's budget can be personnel costs, Dwyer said, meaning officers have to be laid off to offset revenue cuts.

Some fire departments such as Lansing brought their fire trucks to the Capitol and sounded their sirens as the speakers concluded. Override supporters then moved into the Capitol to visit legislators to again urge that the veto be overridden.

After the rally, Hills Mayor Nancy Bates, who was up on stage with Patterson and other featured speakers, described the roster of speakers as a nice balance. She was also impressed by the turnout for the rally. "It was really good to see people come out and fight for their communities," she said.

"We've got a lame duck session coming up, so nobody knows what's going to happen," she said.

Teri Arbonowicz, who works as assistant to the city manager, keeps a close eye on legislative issues and will watch this one, Bates said.

Staff writers Joni Hubert and Paul Pace contributed to this story.

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