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Finksburg tree company uses injections to protect against emerald ash borers



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"We love our trees so we don't want them to die from a bug"

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Len Wrable is concerned about the high-value ash trees lining his Westminster driveway now that invasive emerald ash borers have arrived in Carroll County. Wrable called Bartlett Tree Experts in Finksburg to see what could be done to save the trees from the green Asian beetles.

"The trees are paramount to how our house and yard look. They really add to the aesthetics of the house," Wrable said. "If we lose the trees, we'd lose their shade and we'd lose estate value."

Wrable, a forester for Mar-Len Environmental Inc., said he bought a cornfield adjacent to his home in Westminster 35 years ago and has planted 55 species of trees there.

"We love our trees, so we don't want them to die from a bug," he said.

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Brian Rhoten, local manager of Bartlett Tree Experts, injected Wrable's trees Friday with a systemic insecticide called Treeage, which will provide two years of control against emerald ash borers.

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Treeage can be used both to prevent infestation or to kill insects already in the tree, Rhoten said.

Steve Allgeier, horticulturalist for the University of Maryland Extension in Carroll County, said injections seem to give the longest window of control and have the most efficient kill rate.

"Treeage has a very low nontarget toxicity," he said. "It's not like some others that are broad

spectrum and kill everything that flies by."

Kevin Mullinary, manager of The Davey Tree Expert Co. in Baltimore, agreed with Allgeier and said Treeage and other products like it seem to be the "product of choice."

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"Methods of treating emerald ash borers have evolved since they were first found," Mullinary said. "It started with trunk sprays but the method has improved. Independent studies suggest this has the most effective rate of control."

Rhoten said Wrable selected the systemic injection method because it is more cost-effective for trees that are not yet infested, rather than applying multiple conventional sprays or systemic soil applications.

"We have a real connection to all the trees in our yard. It seems silly to let them die. It's just a small fee," Wrable said.

Rhoten drilled holes in the tree as low as he could with a special tool called Arborjet's QUIK-jet system and injected the Treeage.

"As EAB (emerald ash borers) has gotten more common, we've purchased more Quikjet systems," he said. "We've probably treated close to 700 trees this season throughout the Baltimore metro area."

Rhoten said he is concerned that emerald ash borer infestations will become more widespread.

"It's really important that people identify the trees on their property," he said. "If you care about your trees, protect them."

Mullinary said Treeage will not prevent emerald ash borers from spreading and the best approach to preventing the insect from infesting trees is to treat them beforehand.

"In the Baltimore metro area, surveys have been conducted that concluded several hundred thousand to a million ash trees are located here, so we won't be able to stop EAB in their tracks," he said. "EAB is running roughshod, and the Mid-Atlantic area has a fairly large native population. What we will now do is target trees that have a value; we will collectively select trees worth saving."

Times Staff Writer Wiley Hayes contributed to this article.

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