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Thursday, June 24, 2010 - 12:12:00 AM

Worries over ash borer

It hasn't been detected here yet, but the City of Brantford's urban forestry co-ordinator says it's only a matter of time before the emerald ash borer arrives.

"It's been detected in the GTA and London," Brian Geerts said. "We know it is coming."

The emerald ash borer is native to Asia and destroys ash trees.

"In Windsor, they have lost all of their ash trees already," Geerts said. "Once it arrives, it's a matter of just eight to 10 years before they are gone."

Geerts estimates there are about 3,000 ash trees on city boulevards, which account for six per cent of boulevard trees.

"That doesn't include parks, forests and private property," Geerts said. "They is no way to get an exact measurement for the whole city, but the City of Oakville did a comprehensive study and if you scale their numbers down to a city the size of Brantford, we would have 90,000 ash trees."

The ash borer's presence here hasn't been confirmed yet, but Geerts said the insect is getting close.

"We found a suspicious sample this month that we've sent to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for testing," he said. "If it turns up here, we'll generate a report with some strategies to go to council."

Geerts said most ash trees would be doomed if the ash borer arrives in the city. But he noted that there is a pesticide available to save any significant ash trees.

"It costs a couple hundred dollars per tree every two years, so it's cost prohibitive to try to save every tree," he said. "But you could try to save some historic trees."

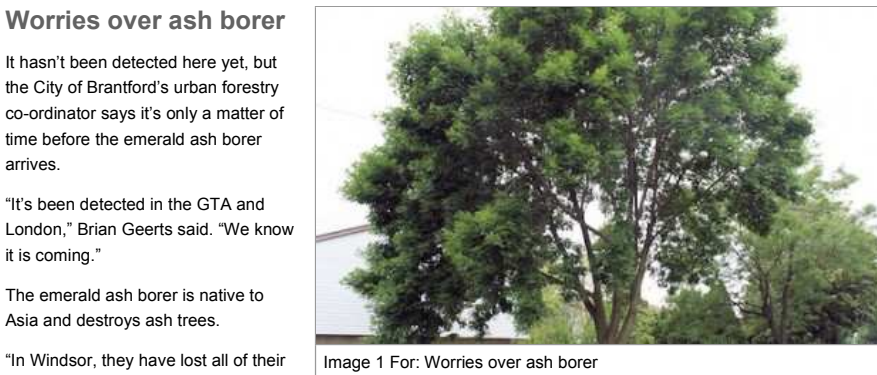


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