



North Carolina Forest Service  
Forest Health Program

## **ASH PROTECTION PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

**Updated Feb. 2026**

### **Introduction**

The emerald ash borer (EAB) (*Agrilus planipennis*) is a non-native invasive insect already responsible for killing hundreds of millions of ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp.) in the U.S. Considered by many to be the most destructive forest pest ever seen in North America, costs associated with EAB will undoubtedly reach into the billions of dollars nationally.

First detected in the U.S. near Detroit in 2002, EAB was found in N.C. in 2013. To date it has been confirmed in 77 counties statewide, making it the fastest-spreading invasive forest pest this state has ever seen. Ash historically was a popular choice for urban plantings and seeing large ash trees in urban areas is still not an uncommon sight. EAB can be found in the six most populous urban areas in the state: Charlotte, Raleigh, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Durham, and Asheville. In addition, it is in or near urban areas in the eastern part of the state including Fayetteville, Greenville, Wilmington, and others.

### **Objectives**

EAB is spreading into new areas each year, it is imperative that actions are taken to protect the ash component of N.C.'s urban forests. The NCFS Forest Health Program received funding to aid with protecting ash trees in urban areas and has established the Ash Protection Program (APP). Currently, pesticides are the most effective and immediate way to protect a tree from attack.

The APP is a short-term program that aims to:

- Provide financial assistance to municipalities and state agencies wishing to protect their ash assets with pesticide.
- Equip municipalities, homeowners, and natural resource professionals with the education needed to identify ash trees, monitor ash resources for EAB damage, and effectively manage and protect those resources.
- Increase awareness associated with the risks of transporting firewood.

## **Eligibility & Limitations**

**Eligible Beneficiaries.** The intent of this program is to protect urban ash trees greater than 4” in diameter in N.C. Beneficiaries of the APP must be parties responsible for the management of urban ash trees and have a tax identification number. Eligible beneficiaries include:

- Local municipalities (e.g., cities, towns)
- Colleges, universities, and schools
- Historical or preservation associations/societies
- Non-profit organizations
- Parks (e.g., city, county, state)

**Funding Limits & Priorities.** A single municipality is eligible to receive up to \$10,000. All areas within North Carolina are within the generally infested EAB range or close to that range and are eligible for the program. Ash trees are the only trees eligible for treatment. If the tree is currently infested with EAB, trees are only eligible if less than 25% of the canopy is in decline (thinning/dieback).

Applications will be given priority based on tree size and relative urban importance, as follows:

1. Ash trees larger than 22” DBH (diameter at breast height, 4 ½ feet above the ground) and those of historical significance as indicated in the application and/or applicants that are local governments with a population of less than 50,000 (per [02 NCAC 60B .0800 - .0807](#)).
2. Ash trees between 12-22” DBH and those in recreational areas, high-visibility areas (e.g., downtown areas, parks, etc.), or located on sites where tree failure would present a high risk to people and property (e.g., street trees).
3. Ash trees 4” - 12” DBH.

**Approved Pesticide & Application Method.** The only approved chemical to be applied using funds from the APP is emamectin benzoate. Emamectin benzoate is shown in independent field trials to be the most effective and longest-lasting pesticide registered for use against EAB.

All applications of emamectin benzoate shall be applied by a licensed pesticide applicator trained to administer emamectin benzoate as a stem injection. All applications must be applied as a stem injection and occur when phenologically appropriate (mid-late spring after ash trees have leafed out and before the end of June to ensure uptake during same growing season). Emamectin benzoate may be applied using the low label rate for trees smaller than 22” DBH. The medium or high rate must be used for trees larger than 22” DBH.

Municipalities may decide whether to contract the pesticide application with an outside party (e.g., an arborist or tree care company) or perform applications in-house. The pesticide must be applied according to authorized uses, directions on the label, and other Federal or State policies and requirements.

Re-treatment. The pesticide used for treatment (emamectin benzoate) is effective for 2-3 year. Therefore, trees treated last year are not eligible for retreatment through APP. Trees previously treated under the APP are eligible for re-treatment with reimbursement in 2026. Requirements and rates are same as for trees treated for the first time. Please note: Trees treated the previous year are not eligible for retreatment.

Reimbursement Rate. Reimbursements will be at cost up to \$16 per inch DBH for both contract and in-house applications. Recent cost estimates per inch of diameter at breast height have ranged from as low as \$10.00 per inch of diameter to as high as \$22 per inch of diameter. This is dependent on a variety of factors including rate and travel distance to the job site.

## **Application Process**

Applicants shall submit all application components by 5 p.m. on April 3, 2026 for full consideration in the APP. Full applications consist of:

- Application Part 1
- Application Part 2
- Tree Specifications List
- Quotes (only required if contracting pesticide applications):
  - ✦ Two quotes from tree care company/arborist (must include number of trees, cost)
    - Written approval from the Forest Health Program Head must be given if only one quote
- Pictures of trees (as a group if grouped or individually)
- Encouraged: Map of tree locations

Applications must be sent electronically to Jim Moeller, Forest Health Branch Head, [james.moeller@ncagr.gov](mailto:james.moeller@ncagr.gov).

Following application deadline, the NCFS will prioritize applications based on factors listed under 'Funding Limits & Priorities'. Applicants will be notified of application status within two weeks of the deadline date.

Following application approval but prior to pesticide application, the claimant shall submit:

- Agreement for Reimbursement form (signed)

## **Reimbursement Process**

Within 30 days of pesticide treatment, the claimant shall submit:

- Request for Reimbursement form
- Updated Tree Specifications List and/or maps

- Manpower and Equipment Documentation worksheet (required for both contracted and in-house treatments; does not affect reimbursement amount)
- Treatment invoices and proof of payment
  - ✦ *If contracted*: Invoice and proof of payment
  - ✦ *If in-house*: Receipts for equipment/chemicals purchased
- Picture(s) of pesticide application(s) in-progress

Reimbursement forms shall be sent to Jim Moeller at [james.moeller@ncagr.gov](mailto:james.moeller@ncagr.gov). Images received may be used by the N.C. Forest Service to promote the treatment of ash trees. Upon receipt and review of reimbursement materials, a check for the agreed reimbursement will be disbursed to the claimant.

If an APP claimant wishes to treat additional trees not initially included in the application, claimant may request a reimbursement increase in writing to Jim Moeller before pesticide application occurs. Increasing the reimbursement amount will be subject to program limitations (no more than \$16 per inch DBH and no more than \$10,000 total per claimant), funds available, and ash tree priority level.

## **Questions**

For questions, contact Jim Moeller at [james.moeller@ncagr.gov](mailto:james.moeller@ncagr.gov).

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*The N.C. Forest Service is a division of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Steve Troxler, Commissioner*