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CHOOSE ARBORIST CAREFULLY TO TREAT TREES FOR EMERALD ASH BORER

EAST LANSING, Mich. -- The onslaught of the emerald ash borer (EAB) in southeastern Michigan has left homeowners searching for methods to save their ash trees and reputable tree care professionals to apply them.

“Hiring a tree care company should not be left to chance, or done in a rush,” says Robert Bricault, Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) horticulture and natural resources agent in Washtenaw County. “The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) suggests that, when choosing an arborist, you ask for proof of insurance and references, get all bids in writing as well as dates when work will start and be completed, ask whether cleanup is included, and get signed, detailed contracts.

“Ask for hourly rates in the contract in case more work needs to be done,” he says. “The ISA also suggests getting multiple bids. Examine low bids carefully to ensure that the company is qualified to do the work.”

The Michigan Forestry and Park Association suggests looking for arborists with experience, educational backgrounds in arboriculture or landscape horticulture, certification from professional arborists associations, and current pesticide applicator certificates. Companies that belong to professional arborist organizations show a desire to keep knowledge up-to-date, Bricault notes.

A lack of understanding about EAB can lead to improper treatments or even needless applications of pesticides, Bricault adds. Currently only ash trees within the 13-county quarantine zone would potentially benefit from treatments to minimize damage

from EAB. Kay Sicheneder, arborist with Owen Tree Service in Attica, says reputable companies demonstrate professionalism in their efforts to educate the public about tree care.

“An arborist should be able to explain management techniques available for EAB and research on product efficacy,” she says. “They should also explain that treatments are needed annually to protect the ash trees.”

She also emphasizes that homeowners should avoid companies with high-pressure sales or promises of a cure, and those that claim to be the only company with an answer.

“The common theme here is that qualified arborists are well-educated and experienced professionals who need to be able to answer your questions, provide information based on research and help clients make decisions on when damaged trees are beyond the ability of pesticides to be effective,” Sicheneder says.

Contact your county MSUE office for more information on EAB and ash trees, or go to the Web site <http://www.emeraldashborer.info>.