



Thoughts on EAB from a Commercial Arborist

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The day most of us have dreaded for a long time has come. Emerald ash borer (EAB) is here! Now what? What we do as commercial arborists will have an impact on our industry for a long time to come.

Yes, this is an opportunity to sell more services, but in my opinion, if you view it just as a time to sell services to control EAB, you will be doing your clients and our industry a disservice. More importantly, this is an opportunity to be on your clients' properties to make them better. Now they will have an interest in their trees like never before. It is your chance to give their properties more value.

Everyone will have a client that asks to have that ugly green ash that detracts from their property treated. Should you treat it? In my opinion, it is only wrong to treat the tree if you go blindly along with whatever the client wants. It is important to listen to your client, tell them what their options are and find out why, or if, the tree is important. Maybe planting a new tree that is a better species (we do need more variety) is the best way to go – even if you do not do planting and have to refer the client elsewhere. It is your duty as the professional to educate your client, give them options, and then follow through.

As professionals in our industry, we learned a long time ago to not top trees, even though that is what a client wants. I do not hear the, "If I don't top the tree

someone else will," excuse from companies continuing this wrong practice the way I used to. New clients still ask for topping but we explain the biology behind tree care and how the tree will be more dangerous in the end if it is topped. Will some of us now bring this phrase back as a justification for wrong EAB treatments?

We will need to remain open to change, as a lot will happen over the next few years with EAB controls and a better understanding of the insect's biology that will come. You will have to do your part and attend meetings to receive the new information and to network with fellow arborists (this includes municipal and utility as we all have a lot to learn from each other). Take a few minutes to go online and look at the WAA EAB Committee Report—<http://www.waa-isa.org/pdf/WAA-EAB-Committee-Report053107.pdf> and Treatment Position—<http://www.waa-isa.org/pdf/WAA-EAB-Treatment-Position0507.pdf>.

What is the goal in commercial tree care? Profitability, and therefore, selling services are important parts of it. I would contend that having clients with healthy, safe, beautiful landscapes should be the overriding goal. Happy clients with nice trees are the critical first step to a profitable tree care business.

Feel free to give me your comments at dscharf@wachteltree.com.