

Why Are So Many Trees Being Removed at The Park in Front of CVS?



As part of the Village Center Park Transformation Project we will be removing over 35 dead and dying ash trees. The situation at the Village Square Park is a good example of what can happen when there is a monoculture of one type of tree species and a pest arrives that attacks that species. The emerald ash borer, native to eastern Asia, was introduced into Pennsylvania in 2007 through infected nursery stock and firewood. This insect is responsible for widespread ash tree decline and mortality throughout northeastern North America. The larvae of the borer feed in the cambium, the thin growth layer between the bark and the sapwood, where they produce galleries (tunnels) that eventually prevent food and water transport resulting in the death of the entire tree.



Insect galleries underneath bark



Emerald ash borer adult

Once ash trees are heavily infected by the ash borer, the only control is to remove the trees. Ash nursery stock, ash green lumber, any other ash material and all hardwood firewood remains under federal quarantine and may not be exported out of the state to non-quarantined domestic or international areas.

After the infected trees are removed, it is important to recover some of the tree canopy in order to retain wildlife habitat, help control stormwater run-off, reduce air pollution, moderate heat and provide shade for park visitors. Obviously, we will not be replanting with ash trees because they will become infected. To help minimize the impacts of any future pest or disease infestations, we will be following

the recommended canopy preservation practice of planting a “polyculture,” or mixed plantings of various species of trees. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society recommends that no more than 10% of a community tree planting be of any one species and no more than 20% of trees should be in the same genus.

There are many advantages to planting trees as a polyculture.

1. Polycultures are how forests grow naturally with a variety of genetic strengths that are better able to resist disease and the impacts of changes in climate.
2. Polycultures are safer because they are less likely to attract large infestations of pest insects or foster widespread diseases that may require chemical treatments or cause decay.
3. Polycultures are less expensive in that different trees have different life spans and respond to environmental stressors differently. Trees in commercial areas endure more stressors than their wild counterparts and typically have shorter life spans. A diverse population means it is less likely that multiple trees will have to be replaced at the same time.
4. The diverse tree population, especially if the trees are native to the region, host diverse populations of beneficial insects and wildlife that will help protect the health of the tree community and better sustain them.
5. Polycultures add varied interest, color and textures to the landscape.

To learn more about the emerald ash borer and proper management practices:

<https://extension.psu.edu/emerald-ash-borer>