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Woodlands Hazard Abatement Program

Frequently Asked Questions

REMOVALS

Q. What is the Woodlands Hazard Abatement Program?

A. The Hazard Abatement Program is part of the town's EAB management program to mitigate the impact of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer. The EAB management program has five components in all: Canopy Conservation/Ash Tree Treatment Program, Community Engagement Program, Hazard Abatement /Ash Tree Removal Program, Ash Tree Replacement Program, and Quality Control/EAB Monitoring Program. Starting this winter, as weather and ground conditions permit, the town will implement the 2017 Woodlands Hazard Abatement Program to remove hazardous dead and dying ash trees from the town's trails and woodlands for public safety and to improve the health of the forest.

Q. Why are you removing ash trees in the woodlands and not treating them?

A. Since 2008, the town has been successfully treating qualifying ash trees on streets and in active parks with the bio-insecticide TreeAzin. It is not financially or operationally feasible to treat all 43,000 ash trees in all of the town's woodlands. As well, evidence shows that treatment is not as effective in dense, low-light conditions, such as heavily treed woodlands.

Q. Why are you removing the trees and not just letting them stand?

A. Dead trees can become brittle and structurally unsound due to the lack of nutrients caused by the EAB larva tunneling under the bark. Brittle trees can lose limbs or fall, causing serious injury to people using the trails, or serious damage to private property that borders the trails. Removing dead trees also helps provide space for new trees to grow.

Q. Are you removing all of the ash trees in the woodlands?

A. No, we are removing ash trees near public trails or private property or any tree that could fall on backyards, sidewalks, trails, or hydro lines. Trees in the woodlands that are away from public areas and are not in danger of falling on trails or property are being left. Invasive plants and other trees that are identified as either structurally unsound and / or are over-crowding the forest will be selected for removal at the same time. Trees have been marked for removal in

compliance with the Silvicultural Prescriptions and best management practices of the Silvicultural Guide for Southern Ontario.

Q. How will residents know which trees are being removed?

A. The town follows the Ministry of Natural Resources' tree marking guidelines.

- Ash trees identified for removal are marked with a yellow or orange slash or a yellow dot.
- Trees other than ash identified for removal are marked with an orange X.
- An orange dot means the tree is scheduled to be pruned.

Q. Why do you remove some trees then come back weeks later to remove more?

A. Tree removals can take place in stages. The town uses two contractors for the tree removals. Some trees can be easily removed by a logging contractor. Other trees are more difficult and require special equipment and the expertise of an arboriculture contractor.

Q. What do you do with the wood from the cut trees?

A. Some of the trees are left on the forest floor to decompose and enrich the soil with nutrients to help new growth. Some of the larger trunks of trees are sold to a mill for processing. This helps the town recover some of the costs of the program. See REGENERATION, below.

Q. When will the removals take place?

A. The 2017 program will begin when weather and ground conditions permit, likely mid to late January. The ground must be hard enough to allow heavy equipment to enter the trails with minimal damage. Work will begin in properties with the most concentrated ash tree populations.

Q. What measures are you taking to avoid disturbance during bird migration and nesting?

A. Most of the operations are shut down during May-August during bird migration and nesting. Smaller work may take place in some sites, where disturbance is minimal. We do not remove or prune trees with nests in them during this time unless a town arborist has confirmed the tree to be an imminent risk to public safety.

Q. How will this affect private properties that back onto the woodland?

A. In some cases there will be minimal impact to the area and to the homeowner. In other instances, where there is a significant proportion of ash, there may be considerable change in the appearance of the woodland.

Q. Will woodlands or trails be closed?

A. Portions of select woodlands will be temporarily closed while trees are removed. Areas will be reopened once they are safe for public access. Trail closure signs will be posted at park entrances.

REGENERATION

Q. What are the plans for cleanup and removal?

A. Some large trunks and logs may be removed in areas where it is feasible and will pose minimal impact to the woodlands. Other pieces of wood and branches are left behind on the forest floor to help the forest regenerate and provide wildlife habitat. Piles of wood and branches are kept within a maximum height of 1.2 metres, in keeping with acceptable forest management practices. Crews will ensure a two-metre clearance of wood debris from trails, five-metre clearance behind property/fence lines, and eight to ten-metre clearance from watercourses.

Q. What about replanting?

A. While natural regeneration will account for most of the regrowth in the woodlands, the town will continue to establish a number of concentrated planting sites to help the forest regenerate more rapidly with desirable native species. Since the Woodlands Hazard Abatement program began, the town has planted over 16,800 trees in our woodlands. Residents can help by planting more trees on their property or taking part in community tree plantings.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. More information can be found at oakville.ca or by contacting *ServiceOakville* at 905-845-6601 or serviceoakville@oakville.ca. A thorough communications and issues management plan has been implemented since 2015 to pro-actively inform, educate and engage residents about EAB.