



First Choice Tree Care, Inc.

Branching Out

Spring 2016



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In This Issue

[Save Your Ash Trees or Give Them Up to the Bug!](#)

[Spring is Here!](#)

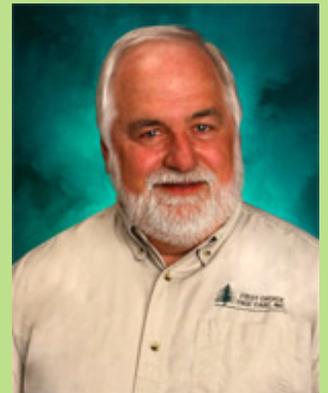
[Insects to Look for this Spring](#)

[The ABCs on Pruning Shrubs this Spring](#)

Now is the time to put your spring tree and maintenance plan together!

Your valuable trees and shrubs are waking up from a long winter. So are the bugs and diseases. Spring is when insects and diseases have the most impact on your landscape. Get ahead of your enemies and put a helpful defense together. Have one of our highly trained arborists come to your house today to put an active, cost effective plan together to help you create the best spring and summer landscape for your yard.

In this issue of "Branching Out," we're providing you with key steps to take with your trees as spring approaches, information on Emerald Ash Borer that continues to be a bigger threat year after year, as well as provide tips on how to properly prune your shrubs. We've also compiled a list of common insects to look out for this spring when checking your trees. You will also



News Flash!

Emerald Ash Borer found in Stevens Point

On Thursday April 7, 2016, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture announced that EAB had been found in several street trees in the city of Stevens Point. Based on this discovery, it can be assumed that the insects have made their home here for several years. As of that day the central Wisconsin counties of Portage, Wood and Adams are all quarantined. Therefore, the movement of ash wood from these counties to areas outside of the quarantine area is regulated and restricted. Residents of Portage, Wood and Adams counties are encouraged to take proactive steps to prevent the spread of EAB. **Ken was featured on WSAW TV talking about this discovery. Check it out [here](#).**

Featured Tree: River Birch



As its name suggests, the River Birch, or *Betula nigra*, naturally grows along river banks. But as a

read an update from Dr. Les Werner, of the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point Forestry Department in our new feature section, "From the Professor's Pen," where he discusses the many ways a tree prepares for spring.

Happy Spring!

Ken Ottman, Owner, First Choice Tree Care

Save Your Ash Trees or Give Them Up to the Bug!

Emerald Ash Borer found in Portage County - Portage, Wood and Adams counties quarantined.

In April, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was found in Stevens Point, and Portage, Wood and Adams counties have been added to the list of 39 quarantined counties to prevent it from spreading to more Wisconsin counties. Stevens Point residents noticed woodpeckers on one of their Ash trees and quickly reported it to the city. City foresters then collected EAB larvae from under the bark and noted typical EAB damage such as tunneling under the bark and D-shaped exit holes where the adult bug emerged.

EAB is becoming a bigger threat year after year. This small, invasive beetle feeds on the inner bark of ash trees and eventually kills them. EAB has killed tens of millions of Ash trees in the United States, and will continue to do so. In some areas of Wisconsin, ash trees make up nearly 20 percent of the tree population.



D-shaped exit holes



Adult Emerald Ash Borer

landscape tree, it can be planted almost anywhere in the U.S. The species is valued for its relatively rapid growth, tolerance of wetness and some drought, unique salmon-colored curling bark and spreading limbs. The River birch grows best on acid soils, so it is a better plant for the central areas of Wisconsin, rather than the southeast part of the state.

River Birch trees are often used as ornamental trees because of their bark characteristics and delicate foliage. As the tree ages, it may reach heights of 70 feet, and its bark turns into a beautiful dark red-brown. It is one of few birches to be resistant to the Bronze Birch Borer.

Tree Quote



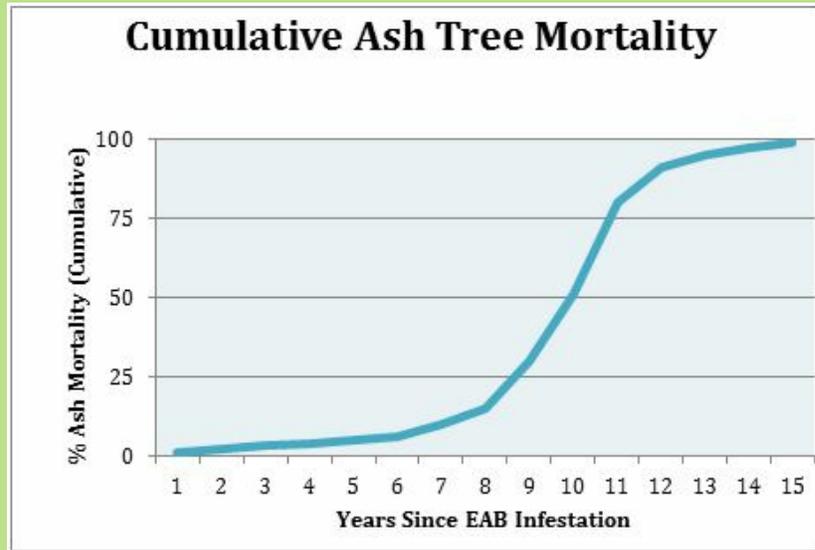
"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time is now."

Chinese Proverb

First Choice Receives Safety Award

As part of the First Choice difference, we value safety and high-quality customer service. We are excited to have been

Below, you can see a graph that illustrates the rate at which EAB kills ash trees in a given area. This graph, commonly known as the "death graph," shows that if ash trees are left untreated, EAB will kill more than half the ash trees in a given area in the first 10 years and all the ash by year 15. We are in year eight in southeast Wisconsin, just as the rate of ash tree mortality is going to increase exponentially.



You Have a Choice!



If you have an ash tree, one way or another, you have a decision to make. You can choose to save the tree by having it treated or you can plan to remove the tree and hopefully replace it. Both options are 100% effective. Our experts can guide you in making the right decision for your individual circumstances. One way or another, a decision needs to be made.

To help make a decision, evaluate the worth of your ash tree. Is it healthy, structurally sound and a good landscape specimen? Does the tree add value to your home or property? Does the tree have special meaning to you? Will you miss it when it's gone? If so, you should save it. If not, removal and replacement may be the right answer for you. Research has shown that treatment, especially for larger trees, is the less expensive and more environmentally sound approach to EAB management.

recognized by Spectrum Insurance and Western National Insurance Companies with their best safety record award. As a result, we have been given the best workers comp rate in the state of Wisconsin.

We've had 16 years without a lost time recordable accident, which is a testament to our dedicated arborists and staff that are committed to serving our customers with safety as a priority. Thank you for placing your trust in us!

Contact Us

info@firstchoicetreecare.com

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800-342-9498

Research has shown nearly 100 percent survival of ash trees when treated with Emmamectin benzoate (TREEage). Protection prior to EAB discovery is most effective; the earlier the treatments, the better chance you have of saving your trees. **First Choice's TREEage treatment plan is an industry-leading protective and curative plan, and we guarantee that it will work. Call us today to learn more about your treatment options.**

Spring is Here!

With such a mild winter coming to a close, spring has arrived a lot faster than expected. To help you prepare for spring, and recover from winter, we came up with four key action points:

Water: Lack of snow = lack of water. It is likely your trees are dehydrated from the lack of snow we received this year. Be sure to give them a little extra water this spring!



Protect: The mild winter can also mean disease-carrying insects, such as oak wilt and Dutch elm disease, will be on the move much sooner than normal. Stop pruning any oaks and elms immediately. Remember, by the time you see disease damage on your tree, it's already too late!

Assess: Rabbits and voles searching for somewhere to dine during the winter could have taken advantage of your trees without you knowing it. If you see bite marks 18-20 inches up the trunk of your tree, you may have rabbits. If you see bite marks below that, plus little trails throughout your yard, you may have voles. To know for sure, ask a First Choice Tree Care expert to come out and assess the damage for you.

Flush: Now that the snow is melting, be sure to flush out salt from the soil around your trees and shrubs to prevent lasting damage.



Vole damage



Rabbit damage

Insects to Look for this Spring

When monitoring for tree damage this spring, inspect your trees and shrubs for early signs of insects. Common insects include Magnolia Scale, Bronze Birch Borer and Viburnum Borer.

- **Magnolia Scale:** The Magnolia Scale is about 1/4 inch in diameter and is a very large soft scale that feeds on magnolias. Mature females, present in July and August, are pink-orange to brown bumps, often with a white waxy coating. The insect spends the winter on older twigs in an immature or nymphal stage that is dark gray with a reddish brown ridge along the middle of the back.



Nymphal Stage

Magnolia scale in July/August

- **Bronze Birch Borer:** Adult bronze birch borers are $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long dark, bronze-colored beetles. This borer kills white birch trees. The species overwinters mostly as larvae in a boat-shaped depression just under the bark. In late April or early May, larvae molt into the resting stage. During early June adults chew their way through the bark and emerge, leaving the characteristic D-shaped hole. Damage includes ridges in tree bark, bumps on limbs and branches as well as D-shaped adult emergence holes.





*Adult Bronze Birch Borer
Emergence*

Bronze Birch Borer

- **Viburnum Borer:** Viburnum borer is a shrub insect that attacks the base of viburnums, causing dieback of the stems. There are actually two major species involved, the viburnum clearwing borer, *Synanthedon viburni*, and the lesser viburnum borer, *S. fatifera*. The larvae tunnel in the cambium from the soil line to several inches below the soil. Severe attack results in girdling below ground and death of the plant. Attack may also occur as high as 18 inches above ground, resulting in gnarled and scarred stems.





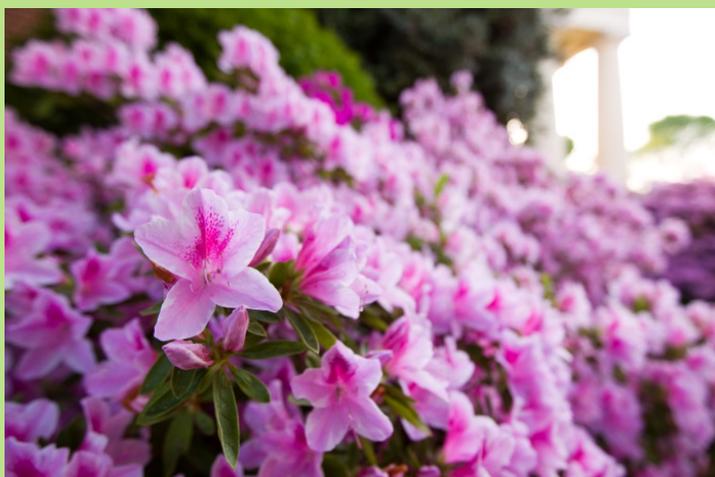
Viburnum Borer

Our experts use a variety of treatment methods on common insects such as spray programs, soil systemic insecticides and other techniques. Now is the time to treat before they emerge!

The ABCs on Pruning Shrubs this Spring

Many homeowners like a perfectly pruned shrub. Understanding the natural habit or shape of shrubs can help homeowners determine how to prune them. We have compiled a list of frequently asked questions about how to properly prune shrubs and tips to help you as you get out your tools this spring!

- **What time of year should I prune?** Anything that blooms in the early spring on last year's growth should be pruned right after it flowers. This includes lilacs and azaleas. If these are not trimmed in the spring, they may not flower next year.



Azaleas

Lilacs

Anything that blooms on the current year's growth should be pruned in winter or early spring. This encourages new growth and a beautiful bloom. These shrubs include spiraea, potentilla and some hydrangeas.





Spiraea

Hydrangeas

- **Why should I prune?**

- Prune to promote plant health. If your shrubs have dying or dead branches, severe insect infestation or damage, it is crucial to prune out those sections. Pruning older woody growth promotes the development of new healthy tissue.
- Prune to maintain shrubs by encouraging flower development. Make sure your shrubs will look their best by pruning them at the proper time.
- Prune to protect people and property. If your shrubs grow near your house or a walkway, prune them to prevent injury to family and friends or damage to your property.

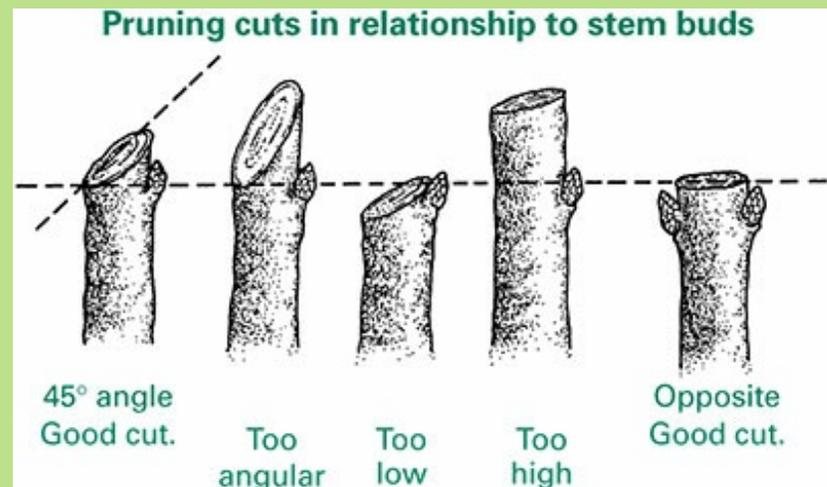
- **What is the difference between shearing and pruning?** Shearing shrubs involves shaping the plants into formal hedges for aesthetic or privacy purposes. You can use long-bladed hand or electric shears to shape your shrubs into a form you desire.



Pruning involves trimming your shrub into a more natural form. You can use two methods - thinning or gradual rejuvenation.



- **What cut should I use?** Heading-back cuts are used to restrict the size or shape of a shrub. These cuts remove terminal branches to an intermediate point. Prune ¼ inch above the bud, sloping down and away from it.



Thinning cuts remove material to a point of branch origin, removing entire buds, twigs or branches. Make thinning cuts just above parent or side branches and roughly parallel to them. Be sure your tools are very sharp!

- **What about special circumstances?** Not all shrubs are created equally, and need different pruning techniques because of that. Here are some tips for different pruning situations:
 - Once shrubs reach their desired height, they should be pruned after every six to eight inches of growth.
 - For older or overgrown shrubs, major thinning cuts should be used to remove one third of the oldest, thickest stems or trunks right down to their point of attachment. This can be done annually or every other year. Doing so helps promote the growth of new stems from the root crown. This is the best method for maintaining the natural form of the plant.
- **What equipment should I use?**

- Pruning shears cut up to ¾ inches in diameter. They have shorter handles that are easy to hold in one hand. For the best cuts, we recommend that you use a high quality by-pass style of hand pruner.
- Lopping shears are similar to pruning shears, but have longer handles for greater leverage. These cut up to 1 ½ inches in diameter.
- Hedge shears cut hedges only. They cut succulent or small stems best.



Two types of pruning shears

shears



Lopping



Hedge shears

Celebrate Arbor Day, April 29, 2016 By Planting a Tree!

First Choice Tree Care partners with WCTGA to donate a tree to UWM for Arbor Day

Arbor Day was started in April of 1872 by J. Sterling Morton, a pioneer who had moved from Detroit to Nebraska and was disappointed with the lack of trees in his new home. To increase foliage in Nebraska, Morton proposed an annual tree-planting holiday. The first Arbor Day was a huge success with more than one million trees planted. Since then, the custom has caught on and individuals across the nation celebrate the holiday by planting and caring for trees.

In Wisconsin, Arbor Day is celebrated on the last Friday in April. This year, Arbor Day will take place on April 29! We have compiled some tips on our website on how to successfully plant a tree this Arbor Day, check them out [here!](#)

In the spirit of tree planting, First Choice Tree Care is partnering with the Wisconsin Christmas Tree Growers Association to donate a concolor fir tree to University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's sustainable campus project to be planted as part of a campus-wide event on Arbor Day. The project is an effort to receive Tree Campus

USA recognition from the National Arbor Day Foundation, which requires a campus tree advisory committee, a campus tree care plan and an Arbor Day Observance.



From the Professor's Pen

Spring: A Tree's Perspective

Hopefully spring is here to stay! Spring is my favorite season for many reasons, but I suspect the primary reason is the promise that comes with warming temperatures and increased day length.

As discussed in the previous article, spring in Wisconsin is when trees break dormancy and begin growing again. From a biological perspective, the process of renewing growth can be thought of in terms of metabolic activity and the energy necessary to support it. There are several things going on inside the tree before the first leaves start to appear. From a management perspective, the biggest and most critical is the mobilization of stored energy reserves and essential mineral elements to support the first flush of growth. The principle source of the energy used to fuel renewed growth is stored carbohydrates. In deciduous trees, excess sugar produced during photosynthesis last year was converted to a starch and stored in various locations such as sapwood in the trunk and roots. Conifers tend to store excess sugar in a form of oil. In the spring, stored starches/oils are converted back to sugars, the breakdown of which supplies energy to support increased activity within living cells and cell division in the apical meristems (the growing points on the ends of twigs). As mentioned, all of this occurs before the leaves have formed. As a result, the period of time just prior to bud break represents a low point in the tree's energy cycle. For this reason, we do not prune living branches while the trees are breaking bud. The process of removing live branches

creates a wound that the tree must respond to. Similar to growth, the wound response requires energy and the energy used in wound response is diverted away from growth. As you probably suspect, the removal of dead branches during this period of time is still acceptable.



Similar to starch and oil, the tree relies on stored essential mineral elements, most notably nitrogen, to support early season growth. To understand this process we must go back to last fall. Prior to leaf drop, approximately 50% of the nitrogen within the leaves is stored for future use. The reason for the removal is because nitrogen is an energy-expensive element to acquire and synthesize. Nitrogen is used to make amino acids. Amino acids are used to make proteins. Proteins keep the tree alive. The most abundant proteins in a tree are associated with photosynthesis, namely chlorophyll and the protein that captures carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. As a result, there is a strong positive relationship between the nitrogen content in leaves and rates of photosynthesis, and tree growth is one of underlying reasons we fertilize trees. With that being said, proper tree fertilization requires a fair amount of evaluation. The arborists at First Choice Tree Care evaluate the site's ability to supply critical resources against the tree's demand for resources and then make decisions regarding when the fertilizer should be applied. My general rule of thumb: fertilizers should be available when the tree has a high demand for external resources.

The next article will explore tree fertilization in more detail.

Dr. Les Werner, University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point