

INSIDE AURORA

By Scott Johnston

Once again the well-intentioned folks at the Town have presented me with one of those good news/bad news scenarios. As you may be aware, a non-native insect called the Emerald Ash Borer is thriving on the local smorgasbord of ash trees, and is rapidly cutting a swath of devastation across the province. In the not too distant future, the growing multitude of borers is expected to kill off most of the ash trees in southern Ontario.

Soon, we could be left with just a few stately survivors, like the local elms that managed to avoid succumbing to Dutch Elm disease many years ago.

Recently, the borer has weakened many of the trees in Toronto, so it's no surprise that inevitably, it now has a toe-hold, or at least some sort of articulated appendage-hold, in Aurora.

Facing the potential demise of thousands of ash trees, the Town initially thought it would allocate funds over the next several years, and just replace the ones that were killed, hopefully, with a less tasty species.

Then it was discovered that the previously high cost of treatment had come down, so instead, the Town is spraying hundreds of our ash trees in an effort to save them (and the Town's budget).

As has been noted in recent weeks on the Notice Board on page 2 of The Auroran, trees to be treated are being identified with an unobtrusive painted dot.

Which brings us to the good news/bad news.

We have an ash tree on the boulevard in front of our house, which in recent weeks has sported an orange dot. So the fact that the Town is spraying it is good news.

The bad news is that our ash was obviously the runt of whatever tree nursery it grew up in, and over the years has demonstrated a number of less endearing personality quirks.

These include being the last to come out in leaf in the spring, and the first to drop its leaves in the fall. And sometimes during the year, just to be different, it has been known to jettison them all for no apparent reason.

Of course, it isn't a particularly straight tree, having a kind of vertically zigzag shape, despite the efforts of the Town's arborists, who trim boulevard trees every few years.

It also has an unusual branching habit. Many of its limbs grow downwards, as if it was more interested in the sunlight reflecting off of the grass than was available from the sun itself. Or maybe it thinks it's a banyan tree.

It got to the point that several years ago, we planted a maple tree on our front lawn, mainly to provide some additional shade, but I expect at least in part to hide the view of our boulevard tree.

This isn't just our opinion, and we have received comments from others. In fact, the ash's quirky nature was reinforced by the young man who came around to do the anticipated pesticides spraying last week.

His unsolicited observation; ?it's not the best looking tree, is it??

So now our tree has been treated, and should be able to fight off any borers who would like to call it home.

But saving it is a bit of a mixed blessing.

On the one hand we will have an older tree at the end of our driveway, and not have to wait another 20 years for a younger replacement to mature.

On the other hand, that tree will be the decidedly odd one we have now.

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