

## **Top Ten Messages About Emerald Ash Borer and the OCF in 2024**

The following is a list of messages to convey as part of Emerald Ash Borer education for the Oregon Country Fair community—for fair family, leadership, participants, and partners. The essential “Top Ten” are the items in bold after the numbers, with additional text and supporting talking points. These messages can be customized and updated, depending on the intended audience and as new information comes to light. Please feel free to suggest edits or adapt to your needs. See “Additional Resources” at the end of this document if you’re just learning about this issue or would like to refresh with some recommended info.

Please keep in mind that this is not just a natural resource issue with technical and logistical issues to consider, but also that your audience members may have a profound emotional reaction to hearing that we expect to lose most or even all Oregon Ash at the site, and that therefore we anticipate that the Fair site will dramatically change in the future. Consider acknowledging this early in your educational efforts and giving space for people to grieve or process, particularly if you’re at the Fair event and/or in person.

- 1. Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a non-native beetle that has severely impacted Ash tree forests in the eastern and mid-western U.S., and a population found in Oregon in 2022 is anticipated to spread and eventually reach the Oregon Country Fair.**

This insect has the potential to severely impact Oregon Ash trees and forests in our region, which would have profound effects on our ecosystems and iconic species, such as salmon that depend on the cooler temperatures that shaded river and stream systems provide.



- 2. Oregon Ash trees comprise the vast majority of shade-producing tree canopy at the Oregon Country Fair site, and it is almost certain that EAB will infect and severely damage or kill virtually all of the Oregon Ash trees at the fair site in the coming decades.**

The OCF's EAB Task Force is coordinating a tree inventory to determine the extent of potential damage/loss of ash tree canopy cover throughout the fair site. While much of the “8” and other public areas have a mix of Oregon Ash, Oregon White Oak, Big Leaf Maple and openings for paths and stages,

most of the public and non-public areas of the site are located where the majority of shade is created by Oregon Ash canopy. Oregon Ash is the only tree species that is readily visible from virtually every location in the public areas of the fair site. Try looking around wherever you are at fair—most likely it is Ash you're seeing. If you're in the shade of a tree, it's most likely Oregon Ash.

- 3. Experts currently estimate that some EAB may arrive in the southern Willamette Valley and start infecting individual Oregon Ash trees in anywhere from 3 to 10 years, though there is a lot of uncertainty at this time. While an EAB infection at the OCF site is all but certain, the date or time of infection is not certain. The best strategy is to try and slow the spread and keep it from getting on site.**

A small population of Emerald Ash Borer was found in Washington County southwest of Portland in the summer of 2022 and is anticipated to start spreading to other counties and eventually arrive in the southern Willamette Valley. Currently (spring 2024), efforts are being made to eradicate this initial Oregon population, but that effort is not likely to succeed. Some experts currently anticipate EAB could arrive in the vicinity of the OCF site within 3 to 10 years. The OCF's EAB Task Force, including the Site Manager, are **collaborating with state forestry and insect experts to monitor for the presence EAB at the OCF site using standardized trapping methods**. We will update the fair community with the latest information and predictions as they become available

- 4. No Firewood is to be brought to the site, unless approved by the Site Manager or designee. This represents a key part of OCF's use of the S.L.A.M. ("SLOW Ash Mortality") strategy.**

**The OCF has new guideline language** to inform fair family about the requirement to NOT bring firewood or other wood to the site. From Guideline #40, "Environment":

"INVASIVE SPECIES: To help prevent the invasion of the tree-killing beetle known as the emerald ash borer, and other harmful insects, fungi, and blights (e.g. sudden oak death), ash wood is prohibited, unless previously coordinated with and approved by the OCF Site Manager. Crafters or booth representatives who utilize wood or plants in their products should contact the Site Manager for discussion of environmental safety protocols and best practices. Firewood, plants, soils, woodchips, wooden booth construction materials and decoration materials (excluding de-barked, kiln-dried professionally milled lumber) can be vectors for disease and invasive species. To obtain firewood burning on site, please contact QuarterMaster or site employees.

Additionally, in efforts to prevent the spread of pests and diseases, no firewood is to be taken from the site. Individuals observed bringing firewood from offsite or removing firewood from the site are subject to confiscation of firewood". Fair members are also asked to not bring pallets to the site, and also to inspect their vehicles and gear before journeying to the site.

- 5. After the initial infections at the OCF site, it will likely take 3-5 years before damage begins to be widespread and becomes a site-wide safety and ecological issue.**

After the Emerald Ash Borer arrives at the OCF site (which most experts currently believe is an inevitability): a) it may be several years before it is detected, as the initial signs can be subtle and also

start at the top of the trees where it is less detectable, and b) it will likely take 3-5 years before any significant impact on our tree canopy occurs (after multiple individual trees are impacted and start to lose major branches and crowns). EAB is capable of killing entire stands of ash, and it can cause nearly complete mortality of ash trees at a site within 4 to 10 years after detection. It is assumed that widespread death of Oregon Ash will lead to ecological changes in water quality, stream temperatures and riparian plant communities in western Oregon. There are options for protecting individual trees (e.g., via pesticides) and currently no options for eradicating this insect from a site. Oregon State's departments of Forestry and Agriculture and other agency and research partners are attempting several options, including conducting research on a parasitoid wasp.

See <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/Documents/forestbenefits/fact-sheet-emerald-ash-borer.pdf> for a fact sheet.

Timeline of Infestation from the OR EAB Response Plan (Jul 2021): “Since ash often do not show symptoms during the first years of an infestation, EAB can go unnoticed for several years after it is introduced. Cities already dealing with EAB (in the Midwest or Eastern US) have estimated that EAB was present for 2-3 years before detection. As local populations enter the fourth year post-establishment, EAB larval densities build high enough to cause rapid mortality of ash trees. Previous studies have suggested that ash populations in forested sites can go from healthy to nearly 100% mortality of mature trees within 6 years of an infestation.”

## 6. 6a: Learn to identify Oregon Ash and other shade-producing trees.

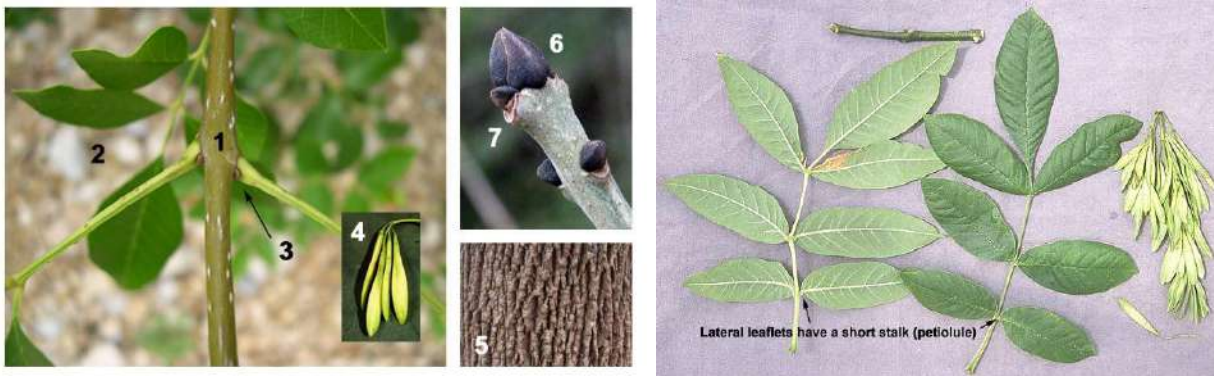
The majority of booths and camps are in areas where Oregon Ash contributes most of the available shade, so one typically doesn't need to look long to find ash on the OCF site. [Provide photo or drawings, showing compound leaves of 9-ish leaflets etc. Go over ID criteria.]. Compare Ash leaves with the more “simple”, lobed leaves of Oregon White Oak, “palmate” style of Big Leaf Maple, simple leaves from Cottonwood, Alder, etc. I suggest bringing samples from these species and passing around, and then making people look around to pick out Ash (nearly everything) from the darker green oaks, and any other species around. One can use the free “Seek” app from iNaturalist to identify trees and plants.

–See following link for excellent 2-page primer on Ash ID and signs of EAB infection:

<https://www.oregon.gov/odf/forestbenefits/Documents/eab-monitoring-guidance.pdf>

–For a detailed discussion of ash tree identification and look-alikes, see

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gallery/recognizing-ash-trees-oregon-washington-northern-california>



**6b: Learn to identify the signs of Emerald Ash Borer infection** in an ash trees—be on the lookout for thinning of leaves and dead/dying branches in the upper tree canopy, epicormic growth (spouting branches) from the lower trunk, and 1/8-inch D-shaped holes on the bark (where adults emerge from), and vertical bark splitting with winding S-shaped tunnels underneath.

Ash leaves start turning brown and falling in the summer (don't always wait till fall), especially when it's dry out or there are other stressors--this is common during most summers and these **are not** good indications of stress from EAB.

- 7. Protect what we have, i.e. “Sapling Stewardship”. Strongly encourage Fair Family get to know the tree and shrub species in their booths, camps, and other areas and start protecting oaks and other species that are already present. In addition to having a higher likelihood of being tolerant and adapted to local conditions, any extant plants will have a several-year head start over trees that would need to be planted.**

The OCF site's yearly flooding, hydric and clay soils can be challenging for most tree species and Ash's tolerance to these conditions has led this tree species being the most common at the OCF site.

Nonetheless, there are other species that are present at OCF and we can encourage these non-ash tree species to thrive. Any local native, non-ash tree species already established as saplings have the best chance of becoming the tree canopy of the future. And they are free. Protect these well-adapted tree saplings by delineating a buffer around them at fair, perhaps changing the layout of your camps or work areas and flagging them off to avoid random stomping. Get materials (flagging, rope, barriers) and other support to delineate areas through QM, VegManECs, or the Site Manager. A “Green Zone” application can be submitted for formal recognition and protection of an area, see

<https://lump.oregoncountryfair.org/Documents/DocumentsHome.html>

- 8. Develop neighborhood stewardship plans that assess the impact of losing Oregon Ash, protect existing non-ash saplings and trees as well as planting new trees where appropriate, but get approval for all tree planting plans.**

After learning to identify Oregon Ash and other non-Ash shade trees, begin discussions with others that camp or work in the areas you inhabit at Fair to determine the likely impact of an EAB infection on your fair activities. The EAB Task Force is developing a customizable approach to localized stewardship planning that different camps/neighborhoods can adopt, and get assistance with.

While planting trees will likely be very important for ensuring OCF has sufficient forest canopy in the future, we ask that all fair family adhere to current OCF guidelines and other direction regarding planting trees or other plants. **All planting projects need to be reviewed and approved by the Site Manager.** Currently, no non-native plants are allowed, and even nursery stock of native plants may be infected with different pathogens. OCF is developing a native nursery for tree stock as well as developing partnerships with suppliers. The EAB Task Force will be finalizing recommendations for local neighborhood stewardship plans in the coming year.

**9. Do not cut down ash trees, limbs, or any vegetation, without the direct involvement of the Site Manager, Tree Crew, Site Crew, or VegManEC crew. Trees that do need to be cut will be utilized for on-site firewood needs.**

Oregon Department of Forestry has confirmed that it is much too early in the planning and response process to begin preemptively removing ash at our location. Eventually we will need to clear dead/dying ash trees for safety, and it may make sense to do some of that work preemptively before the die off occurs and it's very dangerous to be cutting with dead trees and limbs potentially falling on the workers. We are consulting with experts and doing outreach with fair members to develop a plan for when trees need to be cut. For now, OCF will only be removing downed and dying/hazardous trees, in coordination with tree-removal experts on our crews, and/or after consulting with additional experts. The OCF is utilizing Ash and other wood cut on site for lumber (milled on site) or for firewood needs, including the Ritz Sauna's firewood (by 2025, all firewood on site is expected to be from the OCF site).

**10. The fair is actively working to plan to respond to a potential EAB infection on site, including convening an Emerald Ash Bore Task Force that includes management, board members, forest and ecology experts, members of crews and committees including Tree Crew, Site Crew, the Land Use Management Planning Committee, and others. The EAB Task Force is engaging in a structured decision-making process using the "Open Standards for Conservation" model. We are developing an OCF Response Plan for Emerald Ash Borer, working with the Oregon Department of Forestry to trap and monitor for EAB, and actively engaging with the fair community to respond to this issue. Through protection of our other canopy-creating, native trees and supplemented with strategic planting of other well-sourced trees that will tolerate conditions at the site, we hope to ease the impact of this on fair family and our site. See update on next page from the Task Force regarding where we are in the planning process.**

**Additional Resources:**

Below are some additional introductory resources, for anyone to study up on if you're delivering EAB education.. Each of these has additional resources that are good, too, but I think these three are some of the most relevant to OCF educational efforts:

- Very helpful, comprehensive website from City of Salem:  
<https://www.cityofsalem.net/community/natural-environment-climate/trees-and-plants/emerald-ash-borer>
- See this link for excellent 2-page handout for Oregon Ash ID and signs of EAB infection:  
<https://www.oregon.gov/odf/forestbenefits/Documents/eab-monitoring-guidance.pdf>
- A great primer on EAB and *how* it affects trees:  
<https://botanish.com/why-are-there-so-many-dying-trees-what-emerald-ash-borer-damage-looks-like-and-what-we-learn-from-it/>



## **Emerald Ash Borer Response Planning Task Force**

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### **EAB Task Force Update (July 7, 2024)**

**In 2024, OCF created an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Task Force to develop a Response Plan that will ensure a coordinated approach to address this threat and help OCF raise money to fund our response. This spring the Task Force identified a variety of ideas and options for:**

- **Documenting the current conditions of our forests,**
- **Identifying EAB response focus areas at the Fair site,**
- **Assessing available EAB prevention and control mechanisms,**
- **Outlining forest management and restoration alternatives,**
- **Envisioning desired outcomes resulting from our EAB threat response, and**
- **Designing an approach for monitoring the effects of EAB and our response to it.**

**We also identified priority strategies for immediate implementation. These included education, prevention, early detection, and forest assessment actions that are now underway.**

**After this year's Fair, the Task Force will reconvene to continue to evaluate our options using a structured decision-making process. In the spring, we initiated this process by articulating a set of land stewardship, social, and operational values related to EAB response objectives. The response objectives include:**

- **Maintaining the health and integrity of the OCF Woodlands and the ecosystem services they provide,**
- **Creating an adaptive plan to ensure a safe and resilient Fair environment into the future, and**
- **Nourishing and sustaining the Fair family and community through transparency, communication, and involvement in EAB response planning and implementation.**

**Our Task Force will be keeping these collective values and long-term objectives at the forefront of our decision-making process as we engage with the OCF community over the next year in developing and evaluating preferred alternative actions and measured outcomes. We envision an EAB response plan that will include prioritized strategies for forest assessment, management actions, desired outcomes, monitoring, and fundraising.**

**FAIR-thee-well**

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