

MountainTimes.com

The Absentee Gardeners: Invaders: This pest attacks up to 70 different plant species



The adult spotted lanternfly may be headed soon to North Carolina.

Tales of invaders overwhelming and displacing locals repeats throughout history — change the continent, species and timeline but the story is the same. Locals here tell the tale of the mighty American Chestnut tree decimated by an imported Asian fungus. Now a new version of this same old story has breached the boundaries of Watauga county and another is on its way.

In June, the Emerald Ash Borer, *Agrilus planipennis*, was identified in Watauga County. First observed in Michigan in 2002, the Emerald Ash Borer has made its way across the upper Midwest, North and Southeast decimating millions of ash trees in its path.

Female borers lay their eggs in tree bark crevices. Two weeks later when the larvae hatch, they begin chewing their way down through the bark making their way beneath the tree's outer bark and inner cambium, thereby disrupting the tree's ability to move water and nutrients along its

trunk. When the larvae reach maturity, they gnaw their way out, leaving distinctive D-shaped holes in the trunk. Infestation often results in sudden dieback of a section of branches.

It can be difficult to successfully treat trees that have sustained damage to more than 50 percent of their canopy. As there are treatments available to stave off infestations or treat trees with minimal damage, homeowners should contact a certified arborist to develop a treatment plan.

If, however, you are unsure but suspect your ash trees might be infected with emerald ash borers contact James Hall, Watauga County Ranger with the N.C. Forest Service at the Boone office, (828) 265-5375 for an assessment.