

# Tiny emerald ash borer beetle is a huge threat to 900 million New York trees

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The emerald ash borer grows to half an inch but can create gigantic trouble for ash trees, of which there are 900 million in the state.

Tiny bug, big trouble.

The feds are placing 9,800 traps across the state this month to catch a small but nasty beetle that could kick [New York's](#) ash.

The emerald ash borer first surfaced in the state last June - wiping out 39 ash trees in upstate [Cattaraugus County](#). It hasn't been seen in the state since, but the feds aren't taking any chances.

They are putting purple box traps in ash trees - the pest's prey - in 42 counties, but none in the city, said [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) spokeswoman [Sharon Lucik](#).

"We are looking for areas that are closer to known infestations," she said.

The state counts more than 900 million ash trees, about 7% of all trees in the state. Ash trees in campgrounds are at greater risk because the bug travels on firewood that tourists bring in from heavily infested states like [Michigan](#) and [Ohio](#), Lucik said.

So far, city trees are more vulnerable to the Asian long-horned beetle, which comes in through shipping.

About 4% of city trees are ash, and there are no plans to add more.

"We do not plant ash trees anymore because of the impending threat of the emerald ash borer," said [Tim Wenskus](#) of the forestry division of the city Parks Department.

Unlike the Asian long-horned beetle, the emerald ash borer is difficult to detect, making it a far greater threat statewide, said [Jerry Carlson](#), who handles forestry at the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

"Emerald ash borer is one insect that so far we have no way to really spot," Carlson said.

The bug resembles a skinny torpedo that is a quarter- to a half-inch long and flies fast. It leaves a D-shaped exit hole on the bark that is barely noticeable, and infestations aren't generally found until the tree is dying.

"If we find a big infestation, it becomes a multimillion-dollar problem very quickly," Carlson said.

Emerald ash borers first surfaced in Michigan in 2002 and have since spread to 14 states, where they have killed tens of millions of trees.

"It's pretty much on the way to eliminating ash trees in Michigan and Ohio. We are suspicious that it may be coming into [New York City](#) environments," Carlson said.

He's relying on dozens of park workers to search city trees for any cases in the five boroughs.

"The probability of a large infestation is very low because the people who work for New York City parks know what they are looking for," he said.

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