Ash trees can be treated, saved

Pottstown’s Riverfront Park has been devastated by the removal of some 70 ash trees by the Pottstown Parks and Recreation Department. Even more will be removed shortly.

The department of parks and recreation decided to remove the trees before they could be killed by the emerald ash borer.

It wasn’t necessary. Some of the trees could have been treated, and others might have had their lives prolonged by a policy of watchful waiting.

We know that all living things die, eventually. The question is when.

Since the emerald ash borer was first discovered in Michigan in 2002, accidentally imported from China, it has killed tens of millions of trees.

But researchers believe there are genetic variations among ash trees that will allow some to survive. And the density of emerald ash borers will decrease as they kill off their own food supply.

And ash trees can be injected with an insecticide that will protect them from the emerald ash borer for years at a time.

Pottstown has 159 ash trees in the public right of way (street trees) that have been inventoried by Trees Inc., a private non-profit. All but 15 have been treated with an insecticide starting in 2014, and thus far only five have been infected.

All the ash trees will be treated again this spring, at a cost of about $18,000, which should give them three more years of protection.

Cutting them down and replacing them would cost more than $200,000, and it would take 30 years for new trees to reach the size the ash are today.

A QUEEN STREET ASH TREE, above, is treated with an insecticide called emamectin-benzoate, which is injected directly into the tree trunk. One injection can protect the tree for two to three years.

ASH TREES on Charlotte Street, above, and Queen Street, below, have been treated twice since 2014.