Trees Inc. protects 131 ash trees

Covid-19 is not the only disease unwittingly imported from China.

In 2002, an insect called the emerald ash borer was discovered in Michigan, probably hitchhiking on some imported wood packing material from China.

Since then the borer has spread in all directions, killing tens of millions of ash trees, gradually spreading from the Midwest throughout the country.

It's another example of how America can't wall itself off from an interconnected world.

For decades, the ash tree has been one of the most common shade trees in America.

The Pottstown Parks and Recreation Department has cut down more than 75 ash trees at Riverfront Park as a "preventative" measure.

But ash trees can be injected with an insecticide that will protect them from the emerald ash borer for about three years.

Although street trees are the legal responsibility of the adjacent property owner in Pottstown, Trees Inc., a private nonprofit, contracted with Davey Tree Expert Co. to treat Pottstown's ash trees in 2014 at no cost to the property owner.

Last month, Davey treated Pottstown's ash trees for the third time, at a cost of $21,000.

Initially, 148 trees were treated. Since then, 17 have died (four from causes other than the ash borer). Without treatment, the rest would likely be dead or dying.

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

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. This plague will pass.

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