

## Replanting for Diversity After Invasive Ash Borer

### The Challenge:

The emerald ash borer, an invasive insect native to Asia, is decimating ash tree populations in North America. Onondaga County in central New York is facing a major challenge; about 13 percent of the forests across the county are made up of ash, with some pockets of trees containing up to 100 percent ash. The county is losing tens of thousands of ash trees due to this invasive insect. One county park, which had sections of pure ash, developed huge public safety and fire risks when nearly all the ash trees died at roughly the same time.

### The Solution:

The Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District received a USDA Forest Service grant for \$100,000 to address the issue. The grant was part of the Emerald Ash Borer Management Program. The county partnered with the Town of DeWitt to match the Federal funding with \$61,840 worth of labor and equipment. The county and town split the total grant amount of \$161,840. They contracted with Onondaga Earth Corps, a local inner-city not-for-profit modeled after the Youth Conservation Corps, to plant 637 trees and to lead community outreach and tree planting events. The District also treated approximately 400 ash trees of the highest quality, function, and value across the county to stave off the tree-boring insect.

To improve forest resilience to invasive insects and diseases, organizers followed what is known as the 10-20-30 Rule to ensure diversity in tree selection. This guidance recommends trees in an urban setting be limited to 10% of any species, 20% of any genus, and 30% of any family.

### Resulting Benefits:

The new trees are naturally buffering traffic and other sound sources for neighboring communities.



Volunteers plant a tree during an Earth Day celebration in 2017. (Courtesy photo by Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District)

They also provide shade, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, water filtration, and soil erosion prevention, among other benefits. This diverse forest is creating an enhanced habitat for migratory birds, many of which are species of concern. The replanted sites are now popular locations for birds and birdwatchers alike.

### Sharing Success:

The grant recipients provided a report to the county leadership. The project included a community tree planting event, which served to educate local citizens about the value of trees and to develop community buy-in for the initiative. A local news outlet featured the project in a news story. Signs posted at the Town of DeWitt site and at the Onondaga County site raise public awareness of the project.

*Organizers followed the 10-20-30 Rule to ensure diversity in tree selection.*

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**Forest Service**  
**Eastern Region**  
**State and Private Forestry**

Robert Lueckel, Acting Regional Forester  
 626 E. Wisconsin Ave.  
 Milwaukee, WI 53202  
 414-297-3765  
[robert.lueckel@usda.gov](mailto:robert.lueckel@usda.gov)

Mark Buccowich, Acting Deputy Regional Forester for State & Private Forestry  
 626 E. Wisconsin Ave.  
 Milwaukee, WI 53202  
 414-297-3663  
[mark.buccowich@usda.gov](mailto:mark.buccowich@usda.gov)

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