

Unable to see the forest for the trees? Or, ALB and You.

From: Cincinnati.com 07/03/12 at 12:37pm Written by pkoloszar

Arboreally, or perhaps dendrologically, we appear to be at a historic cusp. Even as the impact of the emerald ash borer (EAB) is just barely becoming apparent (over the past 2 years, an overwhelming number of ash trees have been transformed from cooling canopies to bunches of dead branches that do little to block the sunlight), we are faced with the threat posed by the **ASIAN LONGHORN BEETLE**. Many have already heard a little about the imported wood-boring insect called the Asian longhorn beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*), and referred to as ALB, for short. A great deal of what is known can be found at the Beetle Busters websites: (<http://www.beetlebusters.info/>).

What is the potential here?

Consider the effect some invasions of the past had:

Few who read this have seen, or will ever see, a mature American chestnut. They were, for all practical purposes, obliterated from our country by chestnut blight, a pathogenic fungus. Of the chestnut, Donald Culross Peattie, naturalist and author of "A Natural History of Trees in Eastern and Central Northern America," wrote:

"All words about the American chestnut are now but an elegy for it. This once mighty tree, one of the grandest features of our sylvia, has gone down like a slaughtered army before a foreign fungus disease, the Chestnut blight. In the youth of a man not yet old, native chestnut was still to be seen in glorious array, from the upper slopes of Mount Mitchell, the great forest below waving with creamy white Chestnut blossoms in the crowns of the ancient trees, so that it looked like a sea with white combers plowing across its surface. Gone forever is that day; gone is one of our most valuable timber trees, gone the beauty of its shade, the spectacle of its enormous trunks sometimes ten to twelve feet in diameter. And gone the harvest of the nuts that stuffed our Thanksgiving turkey or warmed our hearts and fingers at the vendor's street corner."

While a few large American elms persist in the landscape, due to Dutch elm disease they no longer have the presence they once did, branches of trees on opposite sides of neighborhood streets arching over to meet in the middle, providing valuable shade for drivers and pedestrians alike.

Unchecked, ALB could finish off the American elm, as well as any other elm species (red, Siberian, lacebark,...). And ash trees (white (or American), green, blue,...). And maples (sugar, red, silver, Japanese, Norway, and other species and hybrids). Birch, poplar, buckeye, willow, mimosa, and sycamore species, among a few others are also threatened. Efforts are underway locally (in Bethel, Ohio) to contain and eradicate an outbreak of this pest. Estimates of the cost that may result if it is not contained range from a few (still barely comprehensible) billion dollars (not even counting the affects on the lumber, maple syrup, or other industries dependent upon those trees) to the (astronomical!) trillions. Take the time to learn about it, as it may well affect us in very profound ways.