

NEWS RELEASE

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Minnesota seeking to train a new set of lookouts for invasive pests

ST. PAUL, Minn. – You don't need to be an entomologist to tell the difference between emerald ash borer and two-lined chestnut borer, but it sure helps. The destructive invasive pest (emerald ash borer) and its native look-alike are both tiny, metallic-green beetles, but they are worlds apart in their impact on Minnesota forests and urban landscapes.

Fortunately, Minnesota entomologists and other experts with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are now offering another round of workshops to teach tree care workers, community foresters and others the basics of how to tell the destructive invasive pests from harmless doppelgangers. In the process, the state hopes to build its established network of so-called "first detectors" who help regulators spot infestations early.

In late February and early March, MDA and its partners will offer six one-day workshops to provide in-depth information on identification of invasive tree pests. After completing the training, participants are qualified to serve as volunteers in the state's First Detector Program. The role of these first detectors is to serve as public contacts for information about these pests and to help investigate reports of potential infestations.

"Minnesota faces a growing threat from invasive pests like emerald ash borer," MDA Plant Protection Director Geir Friisoe said. "One key to slowing the spread of these pests is to find new infestations quickly. The idea behind the First Detector Program is to train people around the state to know what to look for and who to call when they find something. The more help we have, the better our chances to contain infestations."

Forest Pest First Detector training sessions are scheduled as follows:

- February 16 – Twin Cities - 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Fort Snelling State Park, Thomas Savage Visitor Center
- February 18 – Morris – 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. – USDA Ag Research Service, NC Soil Conservation Research Lab Conference Room
- February 23 – Albert Lea – 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Riverland Community College, Skylight Room
- February 25 – Brainerd – 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Northland Arboretum
- March 2 – Colleagueville – 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. – St. John's Arboretum/Museum
- March 4 – Farmington – 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center

More details about the workshops can be found online at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/pesticides/2010/eab>.

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