

Replacement Trees
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By Lesley Bruce Smith

This summer has been a record breaker for folks asking us for good suggestions to replace their dead or dying Ash trees. A sad discussion, always because it implies they have lost a tree, but hopeful because it has provided an opportunity to increase the diversification of our urban forests by planting a new tree that is not as common and will have a greater chance for long term survival.



Dead Ash trees along a boulevard in Vernon Hills

Urban trees already have lots of strikes against them due to the difficult circumstances of living in and around people. However, we don't have to add insult to injury by planting lots of replacement trees of the same species creating the setup for another catastrophic loss like what has happened with our beloved American Elms with Dutch Elm Disease, so named because the fungus that carries the disease arrived on the feet of a little beetle from Holland. Or the current heartbreak of Ash trees with Emerald Ash Borer, which probably arrived in shipping pallets that were brought from Asia carrying auto parts into Michigan. Something that many people do not realize is trees are propagated asexually. That means, in effect, that we create millions of clones that are susceptible to devastating and catastrophic loss if only one weakness in that species is found. The sad news or the good news, depending on one's perspective, is that nature

is always looking for opportunities to exploit weaknesses.

Did you know that many of our Chicago suburbs have lost over 50% of their urban canopy due to over planting of Ash trees? Gil and I are desperately trying to spread the word to not plant too many of any one species again, so we do not have to repeat this sad event. When we were young,



More dead Ash trees in Vernon Hills

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our neighborhoods were lined with American Elm trees and when they were all removed our communities replaced with too many Ash trees. Yet, we see so many Ash being replaced with Maples, Maples and more Maples...with maybe a few other options. Please check out our list of **Ash replacement trees** so that we can all help to be part of a solution, instead of creating this heartbreaking event, yet again.

Here's to species diversification and planting trees you have never heard of before!

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