

MUNICIPAL ARBORIST EXCHANGE REPORT: CANADA, EH?

By Sarah Anderson



Tami (L) and Sarah. Photos: Sarah Anderson

What a wonderfully beneficial exchange. The experience and education I received while in Hamilton, Ontario on the Municipal Arborist Exchange Program sponsored by the SMA will stick with me for a lifetime.

I was most impressed with the action the forestry professionals in Canada have taken in trying to control two very serious invasive pests: the emerald ash borer (EAB) and the Asian

longhorned beetle (ALHB). Tami Sodonoja is one of these professionals, and she is whom I was paired with for this year's arborist exchange. She spends a lot of her time dealing with the issues associated with these pests, from meeting with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), to giving talks to concerned groups of citizens, to checking out potential homeowner sightings. After listening to her presentation about the emerald ash borer, I realized I hadn't ever dealt with this type of problem at work, and for this I was glad.



Emerald Ash Borer adult stage.

Emerald Ash Borer

The emerald ash borer is scary, nothing like the fall canker worm that is our "big" pest problem in Charlotte. The problem with the emerald ash borer is it is very difficult to detect, with no outward signs of first year infestation. An arborist's nightmare, it can kill a tree within six months, before any signs of infestation. The EAB is also capable of flying up to several kilometers. To combat this beetle the CFIA and all other Canadian Forestry professionals would have to act fast.

After positively identifying the beetle and its presence in Windsor, Ontario in August of 2002, the CFIA continued to conduct surveys through the following July. In August of 2003, five new infested areas would be revealed by aerial helicopter surveys. All of Essex County would be declared infested and on September 17th, under the Plant Protection Act, the CFIA placed the known infested area under quarantine. The concern was real, as the EAB attacks and kills all species of ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), thus putting one billion ash trees at risk in Ontario alone.

The next step would be difficult for forestry professionals and would upset much of the public in Essex County. The CFIA mapped out an ash free zone, 25 km long and 10 km wide, to keep the beetle contained. Luckily Essex County had a natural barrier to the north, Lake St. Clair, but nothing to keep the beetle from moving south. And as the name implies, the ash free zone would mandate that all ash trees be removed within this zone. As arborists and forestry professionals, we understand that removing all ash trees along the eastern edge would reduce the populations of adult beetles emerging in the spring, but more importantly remove the feeding and breeding materials of the EAB prior to emergence. But imagine explaining this to the homeowners that may not understand this, that their ash trees were going to be removed. Eighty five thousand trees were removed in the ash free zone, all in a matter of months – an amazing effort. Unfortunately, despite the professionalism and speed in which the CFIA and forestry personnel reacted to the EAB, thirteen new EAB infestations have been identified outside the ash free zone.

Asian Long-Horned Beetle

While this tree removal within the ash free zone didn't contain the EAB, it did work on the Asian long-horned beetle. The forestry professionals in Canada were able to contain this pest with a similar tree removal plan in Vaughn and Toronto where ALHB infestations were found in 2003. Fifteen thousand host and infested trees were removed and the beetle is believed to have been eradicated. However, Tami and all the other forestry professionals are on constant lookout and continue to educate the public about both pests.

These issues shocked me. I cannot imagine dealing with not only one but also two potentially devastating pests within the same year. I cannot imagine overseeing that kind of tree removal. I realized our number one pest in Charlotte, *development*, was tame in comparison.

While we have a plan in place to tame our development "pest", Hamilton does not. This is where I think the exchange will benefit Hamilton, Ontario. Charlotte has a tree ordinance, and while I think it needs to be more stringent, it does provide some mechanism for tree protection and tree replacement as development swallows open space and urban forests. Hamilton does not have a tree ordinance; therefore no mitigation is in place if a developer

continued...



One of Hamilton's horsechestnuts (Aesculus hippocastanum) in full flower.

decides to build a shopping mall on 200 acres of forest. However, development of a tree ordinance may not be the top priority for Hamilton, as Hamilton's staff is stretched tight now.

The City of Hamilton amalgamated five new towns but hired no additional staff. Roughly eighty percent of their current staff is involved in line clearance for Hamilton Hydro and there is, surprisingly, a backlog of at least two to four years for work orders. Despite a limited staff for tree planting and few rules and regulations for preservation, Hamilton has a surprising amount of open space and a good tree canopy. Hamilton also has an amazing trail system in the Niagara Escarpment, something we really need in Charlotte.

The Niagara Escarpment

The Niagara Escarpment is a wonderful 725 kilometer long green corridor that runs from Queenston near Niagara Falls to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula. The Niagara Escarpment was designated a World Biosphere Reserve in 1990. It is a beautiful, contiguous forested area that supports a richness of plant and animal species. The Escarpment was easily accessible from many points in Hamilton and I thoroughly enjoyed both my trail runs. I wish, as a resident of uptown Charlotte, I had an accessible trail like this that within minutes, would put me in the middle of a lush forest.

continued...



ArborMaster[®] T R A I N I N G

Offers Another – **safer solution**

ArborMaster Training Offers Aerial Lift Courses!

ArborMaster offers specialized training programs for organizations (at your site/location) & are available in Spanish upon request. Other modules offered in the following subjects: Climbing, Felling, Rigging, Pruning, Structural Risk Assessment, Emergency Response. Call today for a customized proposal!

Receive a 10% savings by confirming a group by February 28, 2005 for programs conducted by December 2005. (certain restrictions apply)

To Request a Custom Proposal:
In the U.S.: 1-860-429-5028
In Canada: 1-877-268-8733
Visit our website at:
www.arbormaster.com



Emerald Ash Borer damage is easily seen in this aerial photograph from one of the scenic areas in the Niagara Escarpment.

I would like to thank the SMA for this program. I really appreciate the opportunity I had to visit Hamilton and partake in the Municipal Arborist Exchange Program. Charlotte and Hamilton are very different cities with very different programs. However, this exchange provided greater insight to the fact that we all have challenges at work, yet we also have successes.

Sarah Anderson, Natural Resource Manager, Audubon International, formerly with the City of Charlotte, North Carolina.

Vital Statistics, Hamilton, Ontario

- Population 500,000
- Tree population: 300,000 street trees, 120,000 park and open space trees, 500,000 rural trees
- Full-time park forestry staff: 36
- Management plan: no
- Street Tree Inventory: sample area

- *Program Description: mainly line clearing operations for Hamilton Hydro*
- *Pruning cycle: 12 years*
- *Ten most common trees: Acer platanoides, Acer rubrum, Acer saccharum, Fraxinus pennsylvanica, Gleditsia triacanthos, Platanus x acerifolia, Tilia cordata, Syringa reticulata, Pyrus calleryana, Quercus alba*
- *Source of pride: A highly trained staff.*
- *Biggest challenge: Interpreting tree bylaws from six municipalities after amalgamation into one management jurisdiction.*
- *Impending challenge: Emerald Ash Borer*



The SMA is the sole sponsor of this year's highly successful Arborists Exchange Program.