

Canopy: Government works to save trees

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possible for the tree to move water and nutrients from the roots to the leaves and back, eventually killing it.

“We know from field tests back East that emerald ash borer will attack Oregon ash,” Williams said. “Although not an important timber species, Oregon ash withstands flooding, stabilizes banks against erosion and provides crucial habitat for wildlife. Losing it will greatly harm the ecology

of wetlands and streamside forests.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service division is collaborating in the effort to save Oregon ash by storing the seed at its Dorena Genetic Resource Center in Cottage Grove.

Some of the seed will be put in long-term storage and some will be sent to field research sites in the Midwest already infested with emerald ash borer, said Richard

Sniezko, who holds a doctorate in agricultural research. Researchers there will plant Oregon ash to see if any of the seedlings show natural resistance to the pest.

If they do, seeds from those same batches could be sown and the resulting seedlings used in restoration of natural areas, Sniezko said.

“The hope is that we might be able to have some resistant trees already growing in the landscape by the time

emerald ash borer gets to Oregon,” he said.

If emerald ash borer wipes out Oregon ash in the future and is then successfully controlled, the stored seeds could be used to reintroduce Oregon ash in all the places it once grew. Or if the pest becomes entrenched, as seems likely, then crosses could be made with the few resistant trees to build genetically diverse stocks of resistant trees.

“Since resistance is likely



Sniezko

to be quite rare, there is a real danger that those few surviving trees won’t have the full range of genes a species has built up over hundreds of thousands or millions of years,” Sniezko said. “This effort is insurance against that kind of genetic loss.”

The most likely way the pest will arrive is through people bringing in firewood, unaware that it is from trees infested with emerald ash borer larvae, Williams said. That’s why he urges people not to transport firewood from one area to the next.

“Buy it where you plan to burn it,” he said.

The Role of Red Alder

Oregon Ash isn’t the only tree important to the state ecosystem.

The Lower Nehalem Watershed Council is sponsoring a virtual presentation on the Role of Red Alder in the Oregon Coast Range at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 10. The red ash is common in the Nehalem Watershed and throughout the coast range.

The talk will be led by Andrew Bluhm, director of Oregon State University’s Hardwood Silviculture Cooperative. He is an expert on the red alder, a foundational tree in the region.

The free talk will be live on Facebook (facebook.com/lnwc1) and Zoom (us02web.zoom.us/j/86320883649). For more information, visit the council’s website, lnwc@nehalem.tel.net.

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