



## Ash Trees and More: Your Source for Urban Wood Use News

A report from the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council's Ash Utilization Options Project  
Primary project funding is from the USDA Forest Service Wood Education & Resource Center

August 2008

Greetings from the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council!

Let's start with the bad news... the emerald ash borer keeps marching on. [Michigan's Upper Peninsula](#), [Wisconsin](#), and [Missouri](#) have all found new outbreaks and are quickly implementing response strategies.

But, there is good news: We're learning more about these pests every day, developing new ways to slow the spread, and doing a much better job of [sharing information](#). We hope that this newsletter will be of help to those of you who have been fighting the bug for a while already, as well as to those of you who are just entering the battle. As you read on, you'll find some of the few positive stories following the EAB crisis. By finding good uses for dead ash, along with other removed urban trees, we can bring value back to our communities in these tough economic times. If ideas from this newsletter pique your interest, be sure to check out the [Ash Utilization Options Project](#), [Michigan Wood Energy](#), and [Urbanwood](#) websites for even more information.

So, what are *you* planning to do with your dead trees?

In this issue...

- **Urbanwood Marketing Program Takes Off**
- **New City Milling Mini-Grants Available**
- **City of Taylor Ready to Use Wood Energy**
- **Ann Arbor District Library Opens Traverwood -- A Showplace for Ash Wood**
- **Look for "It Grows on Trees II" at a Gallery Near You**
- **RC&D Receives Grant to Launch Safe Firewood Program**
- **Rising From Ashes in Chicago**

### *Urbanwood Marketing Program Takes Off*



The Urbanwood Project is a marketing and networking effort to promote the growth of Southeast Michigan's urban wood products industry. Word is beginning to spread, with even national media starting to take notice of this unique partnership and its environmentally-friendly line of wood products. Led by the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council and Recycle Ann Arbor, this group of nearly a dozen of the area's small sawmills launched a website, [urbanwood.org](http://urbanwood.org), in early 2008 and has several exciting new plans for how to increase the demand for their innovative and sustainable products:

- The Urbanwood website now features an [online shopping section](#), with photos and descriptions of the inventory available from participating mills. This will give

our local producers an exciting new way to reach out to builders, architects, homeowners, and woodworkers. As always, lumber and other wood products are also available at [Recycle Ann Arbor's ReUse Center](#). Be sure to stop by to check out the new display area in RAA's Environmental House which shows finished flooring and paneling in a variety of different species.

- Several Urbanwood partners participated in the [National Network of Forest Practitioners'](#) (NNFP) [People and Land Photography Fellowship](#) in July. The NNFP provided the Urbanwood Project with a skilled photojournalist, Peter Hoffman, to help tell the story of how urban trees become finished wood products. Peter's photos will be used on the website, in print brochures, and in other promotional materials.
- The Urbanwood Project's new logo, seen above, will also be used on many of the marketing materials to help customers better understand the unique origins of reclaimed urban wood products.
- Wood from several of the Urbanwood sawmills was used in the [A3C \(Ann Arbor Architects Collaborative\) green office remodel](#) for their new conference room floor and exterior retreat deck. This building is pursuing a LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Additional funding for the Urbanwood Project comes from the [USDA Federal State Marketing Improvement Program](#) with technical support provided by the [Michigan Department of Natural Resources](#).

[Visit Urbanwood.org](#)

### ***New City Milling Mini-Grants Available***

The Southeast Michigan RC&D Council has just launched [City Logs to City Lumber](#), a new program that will award at least seven \$500 mini-grants to foster the growth of partnerships between municipalities and urban wood businesses. The funds will allow community managers or private arborists to hire a local sawmill to process removed city trees into lumber or other products.

Funding preference will be given to local governments, public institutions, community groups, and tree care industries within the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council area (Lenawee, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties). Qualified proposals will be awarded funding on a rolling basis as they are received, with preference given to projects with milling activities scheduled to occur before September 30, 2008. Prompt applications are strongly encouraged. Additional proposals received after this date may be considered if adequate funds remain.

If you've always thought about hiring a mill, but were unsure if it would be right for your city, now's your chance to give it a try!

[View the Request for Proposals](#)

### ***City of Taylor Ready to Use Wood Energy***

The City of Taylor has been awarded a \$65,000 grant from the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council to install a wood-fired boiler system at their Heritage Park Petting Farm. The City is working to create an [Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy Demonstration Center](#) at the site, potentially using biomass, wind, and solar to heat and power the facility. The new wood biomass system, which is anticipated to use 500 tons of wood chips per year, will use fuel collected at Taylor's Racho Road compost facility which receives and processes wood residues from throughout Wayne and Monroe Counties. A wood- fueled boiler is estimated to save the city \$11,000 annually when compared with the existing natural gas system. The project will be a high-profile installation that will attract thousands of visitors each year.

If this project has you wondering what impact switching to wood fuel might have on your own facility, visit the [Michigan Wood Energy Calculator](#) to generate an estimate of the costs and savings for your site.

## *Ann Arbor District Library Opens Traverwood -- A Showplace for Ash Wood*



The Ann Arbor District Library's (AADL) new [Traverwood Branch](#) opened its doors on June 30, 2008. This stunning new building not only provides traditional library services, with a vast collection of reference materials, computing resources, and study areas, but it was also "designed to have as little impact on natural landscape features as possible."

Perhaps the most exciting feature of the new building is how the AADL was able to create an unprecedented tribute to the legacy of ash trees in the region. Using a \$30,000 grant from the Southeast Michigan RC&D, the library used dead ash trees removed from the building's construction site to create flooring, paneling, and beams for the structure. Johnson Hardwoods of Troy, MI, milled and installed these beautiful wood features.

The library fittingly uses a quote from renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright in describing the new building on their website:

*"It is in the nature of any organic building to grow from within on its site: come out of the ground an organism into the light-the ground itself held always as a component part of the building itself... A building dignified as a tree in the midst of Nature."*

You can see photos of the Traverwood Branch at the [AADL's Image Gallery](#) or at the new [Ash Wood Hall of Fame](#) photo-sharing group on Flickr. The Flickr photo site was recently established by the Southeast Michigan RC&D to help users from across the entire EAB-affected area to share ideas for using ash wood, learn from each other, and find inspiration.

[View the Ash Wood Hall of Fame at Flickr.com](#)

### *Look for "It Grows on Trees II" at a Gallery Near You*



[Gallery](#) in Ypsilanti, from September 4-27.

Building on the success of last year's exhibit, "[It Grows On Trees II](#)" again showcases how local woodworkers can transform ash and other salvaged wood into art. David Gendler, who was awarded an RC&D grant to coordinate last year's show, again organized this exhibit to support the recognition of woodworking as an art form in Michigan.

The exhibit opened this summer in Manistee's [River Street Gallery](#) and can currently be found at the [Huron Valley Council for the Arts](#) in Highland. The show will close at [Riverside Arts Center](#)

Several awards have been announced from this year's exhibit. Carol Kent, of Jackson, was awarded First Prize for her work, *Dryad, of wind and water* (shown above). Second Prize went to John Kiley, a resident of Dexter, for his work, *High Water Mark*. Kentwood's James VanderWoude was awarded Third Prize for his work, *Mountain Dulcimer*.



## *RC&D Receives Grant to Launch Safe Firewood Program*

The Southeast Michigan RC&D Council has just been awarded a \$97,900 grant from the [USDA Forest Service Wood Education and Resource Center](#) to create an affordable system to treat firewood at risk of carrying invasive species.

[Firewood movement](#) remains the likely cause of much of the spread of the [emerald ash borer](#) and other invasive insects. Quarantine regulations, while effective in limiting the spread of pests, can particularly cripple small industries that do not have access to sophisticated treatment options. The proposed project will accomplish several key objectives:

- The team will work with design professionals to create publically-available plans for a simple, effective, "build-it-yourself" firewood debarking system. The intent is to allow small firewood dealers the opportunity to build their own affordable, small debarking machine at a very low cost.
- Working with partners at Michigan State University, the new system will be tested for efficacy against EAB (with and without basic chemical pesticide treatments).
- Additionally, burning pesticide-treated firewood may create concerns about health and safety. Laboratory testing will be performed to evaluate these risks.
- Provided that the testing is successful, the RC&D and its partners in the local Conservation Districts will conduct educational workshops and outreach activities to educate firewood dealers on safe treatment options.
- Finally, the Council will continue to provide technical assistance to those seeking support for developing ash and other urban wood utilization projects.

The results of this program will help wood products businesses to remain competitive, while also ensuring that their products are safe and free from risks of transporting EAB and other invasives. The RC&D will solicit proposals for partners to develop the new debarking system within the next month.

## *Rising From Ashes in Chicago*

Our partners in the Illinois EAB Wood Utilization Team, together with the Chicago Furniture Design Association, have created the [Rising From Ashes - Furniture From Lost Trees](#) exhibit to "use this surplus of salvaged lumber to make inspiring and thoughtful furniture." The traveling exhibition, which displays more than twenty pieces of fine furniture, begins at Chicago's [Morton Arboretum](#) on August 22, 2008.

[Learn more](#)



## *For More Information*

- [Ash Utilization Options Project](#)
- [Urbanwood](#)
- [Ash Utilization Resource Library](#)
- [Southeast Michigan RC&D Council](#)
- [Michigan Wood Energy](#)
- [Emerald Ash Borer Information](#)
- [Ash Wood Use Photo Gallery](#)
- [USDA Forest Service WERC](#)

email: [jessica.simons@semircd.org](mailto:jessica.simons@semircd.org)