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Product Review

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Trees in Trouble

by Andrea Torrice

Price at time of review: \$250.00

Bullfrog Films, Inc.

Oley, PA

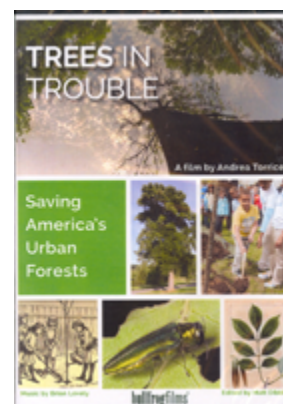
2015

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Grade Level: **7-College**

Reviewed by **Richard Lord**

High School Biology Teacher



From a public health standpoint, trees can be a matter of life or death. Trees clean the air and water, cool the surroundings, and create animal habitats; and studies show that their presence in communities appears to lower the incidence of cardiac and respiratory disease.

Focusing on Cincinnati, Ohio, this video addresses the serious problems facing trees in urban forests. An outstanding feature of Cincinnati is the presence of many trees, which cover 39% of its land, filling parks and lining streets. But the Ash trees, which comprise a large portion of the foliage, are in trouble. A tiny green Asian beetle, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), has invaded and spread rapidly throughout the trees. It has caused much devastation because the Ash trees have no natural defenses against the insect and the insect has no natural enemies in the United States.

Ash trees are very important in many parts of the country and are found in a variety of settings including flood plains, riparian environments, uplands, and swamp ecosystems. These trees are valuable for feeding birds and animals, providing wood for baseball bats, flooring, and other products, and their brilliant yellow leaves are a major contribution to autumn color panoramas. As the Ash trees die, there can be a "cascading effect" on other forest plants as well as animals. Many of the trees have had to be removed, causing changes in city landscapes, reducing the

amount of shade, and affecting property values, cooling costs, and community health. The problem has spread to a number of other states and, by 2019, could spread to all areas where Ash grows, leading to a possible extinction of native Ash trees. Cincinnati uses pesticides to treat some of the trees and is removing many others and replacing them with species not endangered by the EAB. But this causes another real problem as the high cost of keeping trees healthy impacts already stretched city budgets. The dying trees must be removed, since they present a serious potential hazard of falling and destroying buildings and killing citizens. By 2015, the crisis had already cost Cincinnati \$3.7 million.

Keeping trees healthy is not a new problem. Concern about the state of the nation's forests began more than a century ago and the first National Forestry Convention took place in Cincinnati in 1882. But, despite what has been done in past years, the problems still exist. Several suggestions have been offered to help reverse the current tree crisis, including planting a diversity of trees, increasing inspections of incoming produce on ships as well as the wooden pallets used to support them, training citizens to look for signs of invading insects and disease symptoms on trees, improving community street tree ordinances, and developing hybrid plants that are pest resistant. As the video notes, "Trees will take care of us, but we need to take care of them, too."

This engaging 27 minute film explores an ecological problem and shows how the problem can be addressed. It could stimulate student interest and perhaps encourage some of them to get involved in identifying and helping with community ecological programs. It is short enough to be shown in a single class period with time for discussion afterward or its nine scenes can be shown separately with discussion in between. The footage of trees, insects, landscapes, and historic events is captivating and the video has optional subtitles. It would be appropriate to use in biology and environmental science classes. Also included on the disk are two pdf documents that can be downloaded and printed. A five page viewer's guide to the video includes thought-provoking questions for discussion. A 13-page community guide provides information expanding and reinforcing the content of the video. It also includes additional background, resources, and "Taking Root, a Community Action Toolkit," which suggests activities, including some that students could do, that can help communities with tree conservation.

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