



TREE, SHRUB & LAWN CARE

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...and more!



# Arbor Notes

Spring/Summer 2017

## Almstead Around Town: Arbor Day Celebrations

It was another successful Earth Day and Arbor Day at Almstead this year! Our participation included events in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

**North Haledon, NJ:** Branch Manager, Ryan Duff, arborist Oscar Winfrey, and the Almstead team organized a junior tree climbing station at the Ridgewood Earth Day Fair, where children had memorable views from a tree-climber's perspective! There were tree seedling giveaways as well as Almstead memorabilia. Ryan planted a tree at the Felician Sisters campus and took part in Arbor Day activities at the Almstead Tree Nursery at Russell Farms Community Park. Oscar shared his knowledge and expertise on trees and planted a tree at Sanfordville School in Glenwood.

**Stamford, CT:** Arborist Isaac Taylor organized a tree-planting with students at the New Canaan Nature Center. Branch Manager, Gary Norman, and Vice President, Michael Almstead, connected with students, teachers

and elected officials for Earth Day celebrations and planted a tree at Brookside Elementary School.

**Hawthorne, NY:** Arborist Patrick McVey presented a show-and-tell demonstration on the benefit of trees in our environment to students at Transfiguration School in Tarrytown while Assistant Branch Manager, Jeff Thrasher, and arborist, Russell Wagner, planted a tree at the Somers Public Library.

**New Rochelle, NY:** Arborist, Michael Marks, Michael Almstead and the Almstead crew supported an Eastchester Girl Scouts Troop at a tree planting event at the Magic Treeture Forest Nursery. Almstead also sponsored the popular junior arborist station and handed out saplings at Wave Hill Public Garden.

For more information and pictures of all our 2017 Arbor Day activities, please visit [almstead.com/arborday](http://almstead.com/arborday) or scan the QR code on right.



## Invasive Pests Update



The **Southern Pine Beetle** (SPB) has expanded from New Jersey to Long Island and further north into Connecticut. It is an aggressive bark beetle that invades pine trees, hemlocks and spruces. The adult beetle enters a tree through crevices in the bark and then creates S-shaped tunnels in the cambium tissue, just beneath the bark. This disrupts the flow of nutrients, killing the tree in typically 2-4 months.

**Emerald Ash Borer** (EAB) is another invasive pest that continues to wipe out trees in our region. It is a metallic green insect that only attacks ash trees. It feeds on the layer of the tree just under the bark and prevents the movement of life-sustaining sugar, water and nutrients through the tree. Most trees die within 2-4 years after being infested with EAB. *If you haven't yet identified and qualified ash trees that are worthy of preservation with your arborist, do not delay any longer.*



**Gypsy Moth Caterpillars** are also destroying trees in our region. These voracious leaf eaters are capable of defoliating a tree very quickly which can lead to the death of the tree.

*Almstead offers treatment options to protect trees from these pests. Please contact your arborist for more information or a free consultation.*

## Places to Visit: Governors Island, New York

**Governors Island** is a 172-acre island in Upper New York Bay, approximately 800 yards from the southern tip of Manhattan. The island has been designated as a national historic landmark district. It is open to the public from May to September. The website for the island notes that, "it is a world unto itself, unique and full of promise." Almstead is proud to be involved in evaluating and maintaining the trees on this beautiful refuge in the heart of New York City.

The island has a history that pre-dates the Dutch settlers. The Dutch bought it from the Lenape Indians in 1637 for "two ax heads, a string of beads, and a handful of nails." The British captured it in 1664 and renamed it Governors Island. The state of New York inherited the Island after the American Revolution. In 1966, the Island was transferred to the United States Coast Guard. In 2003, the federal government sold 150 acres of Governors Island back to the people of New York. The Island's remaining 22 acres were declared the Governors Island National Monument, which is overseen by the National Park Service. The island was opened to the public in 2008.

Visitors to the island are transported to a historical military village and scenic park with breathtaking views of Manhattan. History buffs can wander through the forts and military homes, while others can enjoy various activities including bike rides, guided tours, kayaking, picnics, and festivals. There are several food vendors on the island, including many vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options!

Governors Island is only accessible by ferry. There are two free ferry services: one operates to and from the Battery Maritime Building in Lower Manhattan daily, while another operates from Brooklyn Bridge Park on weekends.

There are still several exciting festivals and events scheduled for this year on the island. Please visit the events section at [govsland.com](http://govsland.com) for more information.



## Tree Disease Alert

**Oak wilt disease** is a devastating disease capable of killing maturing oaks in only a few weeks. Outbreaks of the disease have been recently confirmed in Brooklyn and Long Island. Forestry officers in New Jersey and Connecticut are keeping a sharp eye out for signs of this deadly fungus. There is no cure once a tree is infected. Inoculating trees prior to infection and stopping the disease from spreading are the only options available.

Oak wilt disease is caused by a fungus called *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, which causes the vessels that carry fluids up through the tree to become clogged. The tree is unable to circulate water and nutrients to its branches and leaves — so it wilts and dies. The species commonly affected are black oak, pin oak, Northern red oak, burr oak and white oak.

Symptoms include leaf discoloration, loss of tree crown, fungal spores under the tree bark, early leaf drop and death of the tree. Leaves turn dull green or bronze, look water-soaked, wilt, and then turn yellow or brown and begin to fall.

The fungus that causes oak wilt disease can spread both above ground and underground. The fungal spores emit a sweet odor that attracts sap-feeding beetles and bark beetles, which can pick

## Oak Wilt Disease and Bacterial Leaf Scorch



up the spores and spread the fungus from infected trees to healthy trees sometimes miles away. It spreads underground through the connected roots of trees or root grafts. It is reminiscent of Dutch elm disease that devastated the elm population in the country in a similar way. Infected firewood and other wood materials pose a threat as well because they can harbor the fungus and spread the disease to other regions far away.

There is currently no treatment for oak wilt disease. All that can be done is to try to prevent infection and to stop it from spreading through various means:

- Macro-injections of individual trees with a special fungicide prior to infection has been found to offer resistance for the disease.
- Trenching: Once a tree is infected,

digging down and severing the root connections with other nearby trees can prevent the disease from spreading.

- Trees that have tested positive need to be removed and their stumps ground or treated with herbicide to stop the spread of the fungus. Removed trees should be chipped entirely if possible, and if necessary burned, debarked or buried.
- Quarantines that prohibit/regulate the movement of potentially diseased wood including firewood are already in place and will be expanded as the disease spreads.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Bacterial leaf scorch** is another tree disease that we are seeing more of in our region. It affects shade trees such as oak, sycamore, maple, and elm. The disease is caused by the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*, which grows and multiplies in the water-conducting tissue (xylem) of affected trees. It is spread by leafhoppers and treehopper insects. As the disease spreads through the tree, it disrupts the transport of water resulting in scorched leaves, decline, and death of the tree.

Bacterial leaf scorch usually appears in late summer and continues through

autumn. The margins of leaves on affected branches (typically in the upper third) dry up and turn brown in an irregular pattern. There is often a yellow or brown region between the margin of scorched and healthy tissue. Affected leaves may fall prematurely. Periods of drought can increase the severity of the disease.

There is currently no cure for bacterial leaf scorch. It is a chronic disease that causes a slow decline in the aesthetic beauty of the tree, and ultimately kills it. Increasing the vitality, health and vigor of a tree through mulching, watering and fertilization can make it more resistant to the disease. Injecting a tree with an antibiotic such as Oxytetracycline (OTC), periodically, can also reduce symptoms and slow down the development of the disease.

*Talk to your arborist about testing for oak wilt disease and bacterial leaf scorch — as well as treatment options. Cost, location, and value are factors that can determine the course of action.*





## A Letter from the CEO



We have all been waiting to spend time in our yards this year. If you have a plant health care and lawn care contract with us, you're well on your way to a beautiful and healthy landscape in 2017. If you haven't renewed it yet, there's still time to perform the essential services for the rest of the year. Once you have the basics in place, please reach out to your arborist for expert advice on management and improvements.

We celebrated Earth Day and Arbor Day once again this year with events in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Please see the lead-in article on the front page and visit our Arbor Day portal on our website for complete coverage off all the events. Unfortunately, this year, Oak Wilt Disease and Bacterial Leaf Scorch are both spreading in our region. Our cover story has information and advice on identifying and slowing down the spread of these deadly diseases. We also have an update on Southern Pine Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, and Gypsy Moth Caterpillars — yes, they're back in localized areas. Ticks and mosquitoes are always a danger to ourselves and our families during the warmer months. This year, experts predict that there will be a surge in the tick population in our region. The good news is that Almstead offers both traditional and organic options for controlling ticks and mosquitoes. Please contact your arborist or branch office if you have concerns, or notice the presence of diseases or pests on your property.

As a family-owned business, we pride ourselves on staying in touch with our customers. Everyone in management is easily accessible by phone, email, and our website. We value your feedback and we are grateful when you leave a comment either on our site or on other consumer sites such as AngiesList, HomeAdvisor or Yelp. I am happy to know that almost all the input we receive is very positive. Allow me to share a couple of the recent comments we've received.

Daniel K. from Briarcliff Manor gives us a 5 Star Rating and writes: *"Knowledgeable, courteous and professional... Can't say enough good things about the team."*

Here's a voicemail from a customer in New Jersey: *"I just wanted to give you a call to say you guys are amazing. I had 10 trees taken down and the crew was incredible... every time I see your work it's awesome! They did a beautiful job and I just wanted to call and thank you."*

Helene C. gave us a 5 Star Rating on Home Advisor and writes, *"The whole experience was enjoyable! Employees are highly professionals and very polite."*

I wish you a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Ken Almstead, CEO  
International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist

## All in a Day's Work: Saving a beehive in a felled tree



What do you do when a tree you're about to take down has a large beehive in it? Here's how arborist **Dan Dalton** and the Almstead crew (along with beekeeper Tony Bees) preserved a beehive in a tree that needed to be taken down in Pelham, NY, and moved it to its new home in Sandy Hook, CT.

Photos: (1) Beekeeper Tony Bees examines the hive and covers it. (2) The trunk is carefully lowered to the ground with pulleys and then cut to the smallest size possible without disturbing the hive. (3) The exposed hive is covered with burlap. (4) & (5) Transporting and relocating the hive to its new home.



### Tree Risk Assessment

Summer storms can wreak havoc on trees with preexisting structural problems. Have your landscape assessed before the storm season kicks in. All Almstead arborists have training in tree risk assessment and some have also undergone the extensive Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) from the ISA. Talk to your arborist about inspecting your trees.

## Best Lawn Care Practices: Creating and Maintaining a Beautiful Lawn

Having a beautiful lawn requires paying attention to it. There are some important dynamics that are involved in creating and maintaining a lush, green turf.

### Choosing the Right Grass Seed

There is no "right" grass for all lawns. It all depends on your soil, sunlight and priorities. Do you want a lawn that stays green into fall? Or grass that can take a beating from active play? Or a lawn that can survive with less water? Kentucky Bluegrass is popular and durable but doesn't like shade. Fescue and perennial ryegrass are also common in our area, and are more shade tolerant. Most lawns are planted with a mix of these grasses, and different grasses will dominate different areas of your lawn.

### Fertilization

The next step is fertilization. How you nourish your lawn depends a lot upon your "turf philosophy." A wide range of choices are available, from totally organic to traditional synthetic products — and combinations in between. Whatever your philosophy is on type of care, it's useful to begin by having your soil tested. The cost is nominal and your arborist can do it for you. Once you have a soil analysis, you can fertilize with the products that are right for your property.

One thing to remember is that organic fertilizers break down slowly and gradually release their nutrients to improve the structure of the soil. This means that it will take longer to see results from organic products compared to traditional methods.



### Weed Control

Having a completely weed-free lawn is setting the bar rather high, and will require frequent application of weed control products. There are two major categories of weed control: pre-emergent and post-emergent. The pre-emergent treatments prevent seeds from germinating. This helps control weeds like crabgrass, which begin from seed each year. Post-emergent treatments target broadleaf weeds, such as dandelions, plantain and ground-ivy.

How often you apply weed controls depends upon your philosophy and your budget. Although pre-emergent controls are usually applied in early spring, the post-emergent controls can be applied as you notice the weeds appearing. Almstead technicians typically perform two applications of pre-emergent herbicide in spring, and then follow up with monthly inspections applying post-emergent controls as necessary, based upon your program.

### Pest/Disease Control

The healthier your lawn, the more likely it is to resist pests and diseases. Some pests, however, can be hard to avoid—particularly white grubs. Grubs are the larvae of beetles (primarily Japanese beetles and masked chafers) that develop in the ground.

When the population of grubs is significant, you will start seeing brown patches in your lawn — particularly toward late summer. To make matters worse, grubs are a delicacy for some animals, such as skunks and raccoons. Sometimes the problem goes unnoticed until you see holes dug in your turf one morning. Grubs like sunny areas with moisture, and are not often found in shade or in dry lawns. Although mid-summer and fall treatments are sometimes effective, June is the best time to prevent grubs from damaging lawns in our area.

Other insects, such as chinch-bugs, can also be damaging to lawns. When you see yellowing patches, or grass blades that have been notched and nibbled, we try to identify the insect responsible and narrowly target it with the appropriate control.

Some lawns can be more predisposed to lawn diseases than others. However, the best prevention against diseases and pests in lawns is maintaining the health of the lawn. A well-nourished, watered, well-mown lawn becomes a self-sustaining system that is hostile to predators.

*If you have any questions about your lawn or would like to schedule a complimentary consultation, please contact your Almstead arborist or your local branch office.*

## Awards

### Almstead Receives Professional Communications Award

Earlier this year, Almstead was awarded a Professional Communications Award from the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) in the "Flyers/Postcards/Ads" category. The annual award program recognizes marketing and communications excellence in the tree care industry.



Almstead entry was a brochure created by our in-house marketing department that promoted our seasonal inspection program. Almstead has won other TCIA Communication Awards in the past, including in the "Digital/Social Media" and "Website" categories.

## In The Field



The Empty Sky Memorial at Liberty State Park, NJ. The Almstead crew performed air spading, root collar excavations, and vertical mulching at the Grove Of Remembrance.



## Almstead Arborist: Dan Dalton



**Dan Dalton** is an arborist, educator, public speaker and recognized expert on trees, shrubs and lawns — as well as on the pests and diseases that afflict them in our region. He has been an arborist at Almstead since 2011 and is one of the senior arborists and mentors at our New Rochelle branch. He services clients in the Bronx, New Rochelle, Pelham, as well as selected areas of New York City and Connecticut.

Dan's credentials are enviable. He is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, a NOFA Accredited Organic Landcare Professional, and holds the Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) from the ISA.

Dan likes to share his knowledge through teaching and community outreach. He is an adjunct professor of horticulture at Naugatuck Valley Community College, as well as an instructor for several industry organizations and programs, including the NOFA Accredited Organic Landscape Professional Program, the Accredited Nursery Professional Program for the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association. Dan is on the board of directors of the Newtown Forest Association. He also talks about arboriculture and career paths in the field at industry events and college fairs.

Dan has a Bachelor of Science degree in Resource Management from Syracuse University and the State University of New York College of Environmental Sciences and Forestry. He has also taken courses in arboriculture and lawncare at Cornell University.

Dan's interests include kayaking, music, camping, hiking and community gardening.

## Trees to Consider: Bald Cypress

**Bald cypress** is a unique tree that is often mistaken for an evergreen. It is not a true cypress at all but is actually in the same plant family as the sequoias or giant redwoods. Its name is derived from the fact that, unlike most other conifers, it is deciduous, losing its leaves in the winter months.

**Latin Name:** *Taxodium distichum*

**Common Name(s):** Bald cypress, Swamp cypress, Southern cypress

**Origin:** Southeastern United States.

**Requirements:** Thrives in full sun, tolerant of permanently wet soils and normal soils as long as they are not excessively dry, prefer acidic soils, tolerant of strong winds.

**Expected growth:** 70-130 feet

**Foliage:** Needles arranged in two rows on either side of a narrow stem.

**Flowers:** It produces flowers in the spring and winter, and small brown or green cones in the summer.

**Bark:** Attractive reddish-brown, vertically fibrous, fissured.

**Landscape Value:** Bald cypress, a fast-growing, bog-friendly tree which can thrive in places where other trees may not, such as areas with poor drainage, heavy soils, or excessive runoff from neighboring yards.



## Alert: It's Time To Be Ticked Off

Experts predict that the tick population will be high this year. Almstead provides safe and effective tick (and mosquito) control for your property. We offer a range of treatment options, including organic programs. Our arborists and technicians are licensed experts and understand how to make your property less hospitable to these dangerous insects.

