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# Arbor Notes

FALL/WINTER 2017



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## Almstead Around Town

### Wave Hill Gardners' Party

For the fifth year, Almstead sponsored the Gardners' Party at Wave Hill Public Garden and Cultural Center in the Bronx. This annual benefit raises crucial funds to support Wave Hill's renowned gardens and horticulture program. We are always pleased to have the opportunity of giving back to this magnificent public garden and organization.



Wave Hill Gardners' Party (L-R) Dan Dalton, Isaac Taylor, Peggy and Ken Almstead.

## Ken Almstead named an ISA "True Professional of Arboriculture"

Almstead CEO, **Ken Almstead**, has been named a "2017 True Professional of Arboriculture"™ by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). He is one of five arborists selected in 2017 as an ISA "True Professional."



Ken Almstead (R) with Lauren Lanphear, ISA Awards Committee Chair (L)

"Ken leads by example," said Michelle Mitchell, ISA board president. "He not only believes in community outreach for himself, but encourages all of the Almstead arborists to contribute and give back to each community they serve. Educating the public about trees and tree care is crucial to the future of arboriculture."

Though he holds several awards, credentials and memberships in professional organizations, Ken feels very honored to be selected as an ISA True Professional. "I am truly humbled that I was even considered, let alone awarded this recognition," he remarked. "Knowing the contributions and accomplishments of past fellow recipients, I will strive to uphold this honor and distinction."

## Pruning & Shrub Care Workshop

Almstead arborist, **Dan Dalton**, recently conducted a Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) workshop about proper pruning techniques and the essentials of organic tree and shrub care at Broken Arrow Nursery in Hamden, CT. The seminar included hands-on time at the native-plant focused nursery. *Photo: Dan Dalton (right) with workshop participants.*



## Inoculating Ash Trees at Liberty State Park

Almstead visited Liberty State Park in New Jersey to continue our commitment in treating this important collection of ash trees against Emerald Ash Borer. The park has been proactive in their fight against EAB since 2016. *Photo: Almstead PHC technicians/arborists Jim Hurley (L) and Russell Wagner (R) injecting ash trees at LSP.*

(Please see EAB update on the following page)



## Winter Checklist

### Treat Your Evergreens

Winter can be harsh on trees and shrubs in our area. When the weather is very cold and the ground freezes, plants are unable to absorb water from the surrounding soil. So, instead, they use up the water stored in their leaves and stems. This can be very damaging for evergreens, which retain their leaves in winter. An antidesiccant application adds an additional waxy coating to the leaves, keeping the moisture inside. Many evergreens in our area are especially vulnerable to winter damage — particularly holly, rhododendron, cherry laurel, skip laurel, mountain laurel, Japanese skimmia, leucothoe, aucuba and boxwood. We recommend using an antidesiccant on these plants in early winter, and another application in late-January to mid-February if the weather breaks. The actual "winter" burn becomes evident as temperatures rise in early spring.

### Prune Your Deciduous Trees

Winter is a good time to prune your trees for several reasons. The leaves of deciduous trees drop in winter so we can see the structure of the tree better, allowing us to identify weak, cracked and crossing branches. Also, we can typically move our trucks and equipment closer to the tree without harming lawns or herbaceous perennials and annuals. And finally, you can take advantage of our winter pruning rates which will save you some money.

Call your arborist for more information or to schedule an inspection of your property.



## Places to Visit: Brooklyn Botanic Garden

The **Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBC)**, opened in 1913, is a 52-acre botanic garden located in the Prospect Park neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. Originally a marshy wasteland, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden has been transformed into one of New York City's most beautiful parks. The Wisconsin Iceberg that shaped Long Island, Manhattan, and the Bronx millions of years ago gave this land its unique knob-and-kettle terrain of small ponds and hills by carving depressions in the soil.

The BBC was designed by brothers Frederick Jr. and John Charles Olmsted (*sons of Prospect and Central Park designer Frederick Law Olmsted*) but the present garden is largely the product of Harold Caparn, a landscape architect. He let the Garden organically grow over the course of decades, adding sections as he could and refurbishing others when needed. It now includes over 13 separate themed gardens including: Cherry Esplanade, The Children's Garden, The Cranford Rose Garden, The Discovery Garden, The Fragrance Garden, The Herb Garden, The Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden, Lily Pool Terrace, The Native Flora Garden, The Osborne Garden, The Rock Garden, The Shakespeare Garden, and The Shelby White and Leon Levy Water garden.

Events for this fall and winter season include kids' activity stations, workshops on composting, edible & medicinal roots, food fermentation, natural perfume blending, floral arranging, and more. Visiting the entire garden could take a full day, but the garden offers guided tours, and even has suggested itineraries on its website.

The BBC has three entrances: 150 Eastern Parkway, 455 Flatbush, and 990 Washington Avenue. Parking is available and it is accessible by bus and subway. Visit [www.bbg.org](http://www.bbg.org).

We encourage you and your families to take part and enjoy these wonderful parks and local treasures when considering activities.



## How Trees Communicate and Network With Each Other

Just like the ever-expanding social networking that impact many of our lives, our trees are talking to their neighbors through an underground network of roots and fungi. Two decades ago, Canadian ecologist, **Suzanne Simard**, discovered that trees communicate their needs and send each other nutrients via a network of fungi buried in the soil. Since then, she has been pioneering further research into how trees communicate, including how fungi help trees send warning signals about environmental change, search for kin, and transfer their nutrients to neighboring plants before they die.

Simard's current research is focused on understanding how these communication networks could be disrupted by environmental threats, such as climate change, pine beetle infestations, and logging. She believes

these networks will go on -- whether they benefit native plants, exotics, or invader weeds.

Recently, her team also discovered what they termed "hub" or "mother" trees. These are the biggest, oldest trees in the network and the most connected to other trees. "Mother" trees recognize their kin and favor those seedlings with nutrients and defense enzymes over other trees in the forest. Simard believes that damage to these "hub" trees through logging, climate change or pest infestations can



negatively affect the whole forest.

In a recent bestselling book called *The Hidden Life of Trees*, German forester **Peter Wohlleben** goes further with the idea of communication among trees. He claims that trees have friends, feel loneliness, scream with pain and communicate through the "wood wide web."

They are also very tribal and support their own species while harassing other species. He says trees such as beeches, oaks, Douglas firs and spruces all form forests that last for thousands of years because they take care of their own species

while weakening trees from other species. Willows are like loners that grow fast but don't live long. He likens city trees to street kids – isolated and struggling against the odds without strong roots.

Other researchers believe that even trees of different species communicate with and support each other through their mutual root zone. Warnings about insects, pathogens, and even herbivores are passed on to other trees in the neighborhood. They also share nutrients and carbon.

As arborists, it is important for us to consider and communicate these inter-connections and potential impacts like tree removals or changes in the environment that may disturb these networks.

Next time you take a walk in a park, look at the trees around you and imagine the chatter that is taking place underground.

## A Letter from the CEO



Fall is a perfect time to both critique and establish proper management plans for your trees, shrubs and lawns so they thrive through winter and are prepped their best come spring. We recently sent you a mailer with an invitation for a complimentary seasonal inspection. Our staff may also reach out to you to schedule your appointment if we don't hear back from you. We believe this complimentary seasonal inspection is critical to the health and beauty of your landscape.

This summer, I was honored to be named as an ISA "True Professional of Arboriculture." This recognition, and my career this far, would not have been possible without the guidance and support of many people. Please allow me to thank them publicly here:

There has been no bigger role model for me than my dad, Richard Almstead. He founded Almstead Tree & Shrub Care Co. in 1964 and I developed a love for arboriculture by watching and working with him ever since I was a young boy. So, thank you dad, and my mom, Jean, for inspiring and guiding me professionally and personally. My brother, Michael Almstead, has been my partner in the company for many years and I would like to sincerely thank him for his steadfast support. It's so much easier to run a company when you have a partner who works as hard as you, who you respect, and you know has your back.

Relationships and life experiences are a big part of this challenging and rewarding profession. I have had the honor to work with a lot of amazing people over the past 25 plus years and I continue to do so today: employees, team members, peers, business associates and partners. I have learned so much about the industry from them which has made me the arborist and person that I am today. They know who they are — so again, thank you for your support.

I would like to thank my wife Peggy and my sons. I would not have been able to accomplish what I have without their love and support all these years and putting up with my long hours on the job and understanding why I do it.

Lastly, thank you dear clients and patrons for putting your faith and trust in Almstead by having us care for your cherished green surroundings.

Sincerely,

Ken Almstead, CEO  
International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist NY0335

## Staff News



Erick Fields

Congratulations to arborist **Erick Fields**, from our New Rochelle branch who successfully attained his International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certification recently. This credential ensures that arborists have demonstrated the proper knowledge and skills, and have a high level of dedication to their profession.

Welcome to arborist **Mark Kalish** who joined our New Rochelle branch. Mark has over 25 years of experience as an arborist and landscape designer.



Mark Kalish

## Emerald Ash Borer Update

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has expanded the eight existing **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)** Restricted Zones and merged them into a single zone to strengthen the State's efforts to slow the spread of this invasive pest. They include all or part of Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster counties. EAB is a small green beetle that has destroyed millions of ash trees in the United States since it found its way here from Asia in 2002. Several counties in New Jersey and Connecticut have also placed quarantines on EAB host material.

Talk to your Almstead arborist to find out how you can protect your ash trees from EAB. A health assessment of the ash trees in question as well as its overall contribution to the landscape and a cost analysis should be evaluated prior to treatment.



## Arboriculture 101

Here are some topics we frequently review with clients about their trees. There are **always exceptions** to the information here, so please consult your arborist as site and tree conditions vary!

**Roots:** They are the most important part of a tree, shrub, or any plant. ALL tree roots are typically found within the first 36 to 42" of soil with most of the small fibrous absorption roots located in the upper 6 to 10." They extend at least 1/3<sup>rd</sup> past the "drip-line" (AKA Critical Root Zone) or ends of the tree branches if not greater. The most important of these roots to ensure not to scar, sever or damage are those directly surrounding the tree as it may compromise stability and could lead to further decay. Species matter, as well as percentage of root zone impacted, age, and condition of the tree. It typically takes anywhere from 2 to 10 years to fully realize the impacts from these changes which most of the time are related to construction of some kind and site improvements. Our plea as arborists is to be given the opportunity to discuss and review best management tree preservation practices during the design phase or prior to commitment of the project with contractors.

**Cavities/Holes in trees:** Not all cavities render a tree as a potential hazard that needs to be removed. A proper Tree Risk Assessment, which takes into consideration many factors such as (a) site (b) species (c) loads like wind exposures and crown density (d) condition of tree parts (crown/branches, trunk

and roots/root collar) with assessment of surrounding targets, likelihood of failure, impact and consequences of that impact all equate to a risk rating. Most of the Almstead team have taken the intensive TRAQ (Tree Risk Assessment Qualified) course provided by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Because of this training, we find ourselves looking at the health and vigor of a tree rather than just the cavities present when considering tree removal.

**Tree Pruning:** Concentrate on removing dead, diseased, decayed, and cracked branches, known as a crown cleaning. Some select live branches or inferior interior water sprouts may be removed but as a rule, *less is better*. Crown reduction through selective branch end thinning is an acceptable means of reducing branch failure especially on mature trees and ones with new exposures. Young trees should be pruned for structure and trained properly every few years to avoid future failures.

Almstead arborists have 100s of years of combined knowledge and experience on tree, shrub and lawn care spread amongst us. We are ready and available for expert advice when needed, use us!



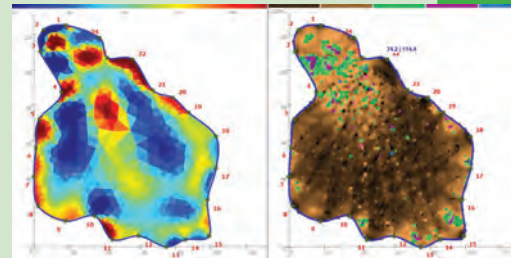
## Testing and Inoculating Elm Trees on Governors Island

Almstead was on Governors Island, NY over the summer to inoculate the specimen and historic elms against Dutch Elm Disease. We were fortunate to be joined by **Dr. Robert E. Marra**, Ph.D., Associate Scientist, Department of Plant Pathology & Ecology at The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. He was there to conduct tests and sample elms that had been innoculated in the past against Dutch Elm Disease for potential internal decay. His primary goal was to evaluate the long-term effects of the innoculations to see if it has been detrimental or promoted decay. Preliminary feedback from his findings indicates that it hasn't.

Dr. Marra used sonic and electrical impedance tomography to conduct the tests. The advantage of tomography is that it is a nondestructive method of assessing the internal condition of trees. It identifies cavities, rot, and incipient decay. Tomography uses sound waves and electrical currents, similar to CAT scans used in medical diagnostics, to detect irregularities in structure and composition as well as water content. It can result in a remarkably accurate depiction of a tree's internal condition.

Almstead has found that inoculating Elm trees is the best way to prevent Dutch Elm Disease. Please contact your Almstead arborist for more information.

Right: Tomography of an elm tree on Governors Island. (L) Electrical Impedance (R) Sonic



Dr. Robert Marra (L) with Almstead arborist Dan Dalton (M) and CEO Ken Almstead (R).

## 2017 Summer Picnic

Employees from Almstead's four branch offices, and their families, enjoyed a beautiful day of food, fun, and frolic at our annual summer picnic at D'Onofrio Park in New Rochelle. The event also included our annual service awards. This year, 9 employees received awards for service, ranging from 5 years to 25 years, including PHC technician and arborist **Leo Ibarra** (photo #3) who received a special anniversary watch for 20 years of service, and brothers **Antonio Barajas** (photo #5) and **Raul Barajas** (photo #6) who received all-expense paid getaway packages for their 25 years of service.



## Almstead Arborist Isaac Taylor

**Isaac Taylor** is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist® at our Stamford, Connecticut branch, serving the communities of Darien, Fairfield, New Caanan, Norwalk, Stamford, Southport and Westport in Fairfield County. He has over 15 years of field and consulting experience in the green industry including a wealth of knowledge on the proper care of trees, shrubs and lawns in our region. He has also been a climbing forman and PHC technician during his tenure.

Isaac has a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Southern Connecticut State University. He is a Connecticut Licensed Arborist, an International Society of Arboriculture Board Certified Master Arborist®, and a NOFA Accredited Organic Land Care Professional. He has also completed the Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) program offered by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) as well as the Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP) program from the TCIA.

Isaac enjoys finding environmentally-friendly solutions to tree and pest problems as well as educating people about proper arboriculture practices. He is a competitive tree climber who has placed 2nd in the Connecticut climbing competition and 3rd in the New York State competitions. When he's not working, Isaac enjoys spending time with his children, as well as mountain biking, cycling, fishing, learning, and living a healthy lifestyle.

With his unyielding focus on providing top-notch customer service, we are proud to have him on the Almstead team.



## 2018 CONTRACTS

We'll be mailing out our **2018 PHC and Lawn Care Contracts** during the first two weeks of January. Please call your branch office you do not receive your contract in January or would like to review any changes of concerns.

## Have You Considered...

**Carolina Silverbell** is a very attractive ornamental flowering tree, especially against an evergreen background. Native to the Eastern United States, this small-to medium-size deciduous tree blooms in the spring and has white, bell-shaped flowers that hang in clusters.

**Latin Name:** *Halesia tetraptera*

**Common Name(s):** Carolina silverbell

**Tree Type:** Ornamental; deciduous, flowering tree.

**Sun and Water Requirements:** It does well in full sun/partial shade and thrives in rich, well-drained soils containing abundant organic matter.

**Expected growth:** 30' to 40' feet in height.

**Foliage:** The deciduous leaves are elliptic and dark yellowish green in the summer, turning to yellow in the fall.

**Flowers:** The entire tree is often covered in inch-long, bell-shaped white flowers in the spring.

**Other:** This tree is resistant to most insects and diseases in our area.

**Landscape Value:** The Carolina Silverbell is interesting all year long. It has an attractive medium green foliage, pretty flowers, showy fruits, and exfoliating bark. It makes for a nice lawn or specimen tree with branches close to the ground. The bark shows off nicely with foliage removed from the lower branches. It is also a splendid tree to locate near a patio or deck and, when lit from below, can look very beautiful at night.

