



TREE, SHRUB & LAWN CARE

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Registration #:s: WC-16727-H05 CT-B1068 NYC-1331916
NJ Home Improvement #13VH06221500



Arbor Notes



Summer 2019

Almstead Around Town

Arbor Day Celebrations

We continued our tradition of celebrating Arbor Day by participating in many significant events in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut during April and May. They included tree plantings, talks by arborists at local schools, kids tree climbing stations, and booths at several Arbor Day festivals and events. Almstead arborists also handed out thousands of Eastern Redbud, Norway Spruce, Red Pine, and High Bush Cranberry saplings this year. Our arborists and crews donated and planted trees, talked to students, and gave away saplings at **Matthew Paterson Elementary School** (Carmel, NY), **Transfiguration School** (Tarrytown, NY), **Jefferson Elementary School** (New Rochelle, NY), **Mohawk Country Day School** (White Plains, NY), **Wolfpit Elementary School** (Norwalk, CT), **Salem Drive School** (Whippany, NJ) and **William Patterson University** (Wayne, NJ). Almstead also set up junior arborist stations, sapling giveaways and information booths at local public events including the **Earth Day Fair** (Ridgewood, NJ), **Arbor Day at Wave Hill Public Garden** (Bronx, NY), and **Down On The Farm** at Darien Nature Center (Darien, CT).

Boxwood Blight is Here

What you can do to protect your shrubs...

Boxwood (*Buxus sp.*), because of its vibrant green color and woody evergreen growth, is an important but frequently over-utilized ornamental shrub on some landscapes. It is known to get infected by a number of plant diseases, including boxwood blight, boxwood dieback, macrophoma blight, phytophthora root rot and Volutella blight, as well as some common pests such as boxwood leafminer and psyllid. Boxwood blight however is by far the most serious of these issues and we are seeing a surge in our region.



What is Boxwood Blight?

Boxwood Blight is a relatively new fungal disease that has only been around globally since 1994. It was first seen in the U.S. in 2011 in Connecticut and North Carolina. Since then, it has spread to several other states and Canada. Recently, this disease has become particularly widespread in Westchester County (NY), Fairfield County (CT) and Bergen County (NJ) landscapes. It is caused by *Calonectria pseudonaviculata*, a fungus that can be confused with similar-looking forms of dieback in boxwood. However, Boxwood Blight is much more devastating and can take out complete plantings. The spores can also be transmitted through pachysandra, which is also a host.

How do you identify Boxwood Blight?

You can identify Boxwood Blight by dark or light brown spots on the leaves and dieback on stems girdled by black cankers (see image). This is followed by severe leaf drop, either on a section of the shrub or the entire shrub.

Can Boxwood Blight be treated?

Boxwood Blight cannot be eliminated with fungicides but it can be treated to slow its spread to healthy plants. Whether or not your boxwood dies from the infection depends on plant vigor, weather, and factors such as irrigation type and shading. Even if not entirely killed, a shrub's value as an ornamental is often destroyed by boxwood blight. The best course of action is to remove and destroy the infected shrubs, as well as all of the leaves and top 1/2 inch of soil and stump. Scientists are recommending that diseased plants and leaves be sanitarly removed and not used for composting, since the fungus can stay in dead leaves for up to 5 years. The removed shrubs, leaves and soil should be placed in a thick plastic bag and sent off for incineration.

Can I protect my Boxwood shrubs from Boxwood Blight?

There is no guaranteed program to prevent or treat Boxwood Blight. However, there are careful maintenance practices that can be followed to decrease its spread. They include proper trimming and pruning techniques as well as being on an annual plant health care program. It is best to prune Boxwood in spring and to avoid pruning it in fall or winter. If you already have a valuable boxwood collection, do not introduce new boxwood to your property unless it is from a trusted source. And, only use clean and disinfected pruning tools when shearing or pruning your shrubs.

If you have any additional questions about Boxwood Blight or other plant diseases, please call and schedule a visit with an Almstead arborist.

Invasive Pests Update

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

EAB is a metallic green insect that has killed tens of millions of ash trees in the U.S. and Canada — including ash trees in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Experts estimate that, without intervention, all ash trees could be destroyed by EAB within a decade. We are recommending that everyone with ash trees on their property discuss a management plan for EAB with their arborist — whether it is treatment or tree removal. Almstead has been at the forefront of the fight against EAB since 2016. Please visit our dedicated Emerald Ash Borer portal www.almstead.com/eab for more information or to schedule an arborist visit.



Spotted Lanternfly (SLF)

There is evidence that nature might be fighting back against the Spotted Lanternfly. Scientists have found two naturally-occurring fungi — *Batkoa major* and *Beauveria bassiana* — that are infecting and killing lanternflies. However, until commercial formulations of the fungi are available, lanternfly is still controlled through

a combination of physical removal of life stages and host trees and pesticide applications. The insect has so far been reported in eight New York counties including Albany, Monroe, Yates and Suffolk. Nymphs are black with white spots that turn red as adults. They are approximately 1-inch long and 1/2-inch wide at rest, with eye-catching wings. If you spot one on your property, take a picture and send it to your arborist or report it to nyimainvasives.org.

Places to Visit: Boundless Adventures, NY

We love climbing trees. Now you can too at Boundless Adventures! Located on the college campus of SUNY Purchase, NY, it is a park that features nine eco-friendly treetop obstacle courses to challenge outdoor fun-seekers, ages seven and up. There are courses for all skill levels. Beginner courses are closer to the ground, and do not require much strength and stamina. Advance courses are higher up in the canopy, and require more strength, stamina, and courage!

Safety is a priority at Boundless Adventures. "Participants wear a full-body harness and are locked on to a safety line through an always "on belay" system. Two carabiners are connected together and do not allow users to fully disconnect from the safety line. Participants are unable to come "off belay" until they are firmly on the ground. Trained monitors are stationed throughout the park to provide assistance as needed."

The Park is open in the summer from 10AM to 8PM on weekdays and 9AM to 8PM on weekends. Pricing is \$59 for adults, \$54 for youth (7-11) and \$45 for college students. **You can receive a 10% discount by typing "Almstead" at checkout.** All tickets are valid for 3 hours of climbing time from time of purchase. All visitors must sign a waiver.

Location: Purchase College, 735 Anderson Hill Road in Purchase, NY. Parking is conveniently located at the gravel lot between East 1 and East 2. Overflow parking is available in East 2.

For more information, visit boundlessadventures.net/ny-park/ or call 914-893-4550.



(1-2) Arborist **Ryan Duff** at Ridgewood Earth Day Fair
(3) Arborist **Jeff Thrasher** at Matthew Patterson School (4) Arborist **Dan Dalton** at Jefferson Elementary School (5) Arborist **Ryan Duff** at Salem Drive School (6) CT Office Manager **Maria Amador** in costume at Wolfpit Elementary School (7) CEO **Ken Almstead** at Wave Hill

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A Letter from the CEO



April and May are probably our favorite months of the year because we get to celebrate Arbor Day in the various communities we serve. It is a tradition started by my father, Richard Almstead, more than 50 years ago. Over the years, we have been able to develop strong relationships with community organizations, including schools, nature centers, town boards, and garden centers. It has given us the opportunity of connecting with local children, teachers, parents and others to share our knowledge and love of arboriculture. We participated in many significant events this year and

gave away over 1,000 tree saplings — take a look at our article in the *Almstead Around Town* section.

We've had a very cool wet spring this year and various diseases received ideal conditions to spread. As I write this, almost every sycamore I've seen, unless treated, has anthracnose and most Kwansan cherries have brown rot. These trees should rebound with proper care. Lawn diseases will also be greater in intensity. So, if you do see any of these outbreaks, please contact your local Almstead arborist for a second look and direction of care.

Summer is a good time to decide if you would like to plant trees or shrubs in fall or next spring. Selecting the right tree or plant, planning ahead in sourcing, and planting it correctly are critical decisions that will affect your landscape for decades. Your arborist can recommend your best options based on your desired goals, location and landscape.

I hope you have a wonderful summer!

Ken Almstead, CEO
International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist



Here's an interesting recent project I'd like to share... along with the experts at East Coast Landscaping, we transplanted several 8"-15" caliper crab apples through a property redevelopment.

DutchTrig: A New Vaccine for Dutch Elm Disease

Almstead has partnered with BTL Bomendienst, manufacturers of the vaccine **DutchTrig**, to treat elm trees in several New York parks against Dutch Elm Disease (DED). Although it has been used in Europe since the early 1990s, DutchTrig is new to the United States. Unlike fungicides, that need to be injected into the trunk flare of trees with pressurized microinjectors (and require root collar excavation and drilling), DutchTrig is injected directly into the stem of the tree just below the bark (into the outermost ring) at chest height. The vaccine consists of fungal spores and water. It is preventative only and cannot cure trees that have already been infected.

DED is caused by a fungus called *Ophiostoma ulmi* and is spread by bark beetles. The American elm, *Ulmus americana*, is extremely susceptible and the disease has killed hundreds of thousands of elms across the U.S. since the early 1930s. DutchTrig has been found to be very effective in protecting elm trees on a large scale. It should be applied in spring annually, before Dutch Elm Disease can occur. The vaccine consists of spores of a specific strain of Verticillium fungus that activates the elm's natural defense mechanism, just like human immunotherapy. Because elm trees grow a new outer layer of sapwood every year, the treatment has to be repeated every spring.

DutchTrig was developed by the University of Amsterdam in the late 1980s but it was approved by the EPA for use in the U.S. only in 2005. The vaccine needs to be temperature controlled and can only be injected by specialists who have been trained and approved by BTL Bomendienst. Almstead is currently the only partner listed for the New York region. Compared to Arbotect's tree injected systemic fungicide (another treatment for DED), DutchTrig appears to be more efficient. Once we have a few seasons of proven care with it, we will look to extend this option to all our clients.



Almstead PHC technician **Leo Ibarra** (1) and arborist **Nick Tripsas** (2) receiving training on DutchTrig equipment and treatment. (3) The chisel is designed so that the latest annual ring can be penetrated without penetrating and damaging older annual rings.

Gearing Up for Safety

Almstead is a company that has always had work-safety as its top priority. We go well beyond just conforming to required OSHA safety standards for our industry. It is a cornerstone of our TCIA accreditation and includes weekly tailgate safety meetings as well as formal classroom training through the use of videos and presentations. This year, we also introduced high-visibility shirts and chainsaw pants from Arborwear (the leading supplier of quality tree care clothing and frequently seen on the TV show *Treehouse Masters*) to the spring uniforms of our tree-care crew.

Images: Almstead crews from our New Jersey and New York branches in their new uniforms and safety gear.



Lawn Care: Summer Tips

Summer can bring quite a bit of stress to lawns. In addition to keeping it healthy while temperatures soar, it also needs to withstand the foot traffic from barbecues, games and parties. Here are our recommendations for July and August (keeping in mind that sites, situations and conditions vary).

Lawns need the proper amount of fertilization and water to thrive in summer. However, too much water or fertilizer can also be harmful. Less frequent deep watering will train your lawn to grow deeper roots and withstand drought — as long as you don't have a hardpan compaction layer or rock outcropping. These spots will be the first to burn out in summer. You should water until about 6 inches into the soil is moist. The best time to water is in the morning when it is cooler. If you have our Lawn Care Program, our technicians may have added slow release fertilizer with micronutrient soil supplements to your turf to keep it healthy during the summer. Top dressing with a compost/sand mix in fall will also aid in tolerance. When it comes to mowing, ask your maintenance provider to mow to about 3" and to ensure the mower blade is sharp. Jagged and uneven edges can create openings for pests and diseases. You can also tell your provider to skip the weekly mowing to every other week and have them spend the time instead on weeding or select pruning. For high-traffic areas consider installing stepping stones to minimize damage to your grass.



For more information about our Traditional, Organic-Based, and Pure Organic lawn care programs, please contact your local Almstead branch office.

Kudos

Connecticut Tree Climbing Competition

Two Almstead climbers, **Jonathan Peragine** (photo on right) and **Jamie Gonzalez-Moran**, participated in the 2019 Connecticut Tree Climbing Competition. Congratulations to Jonathan for taking the first place in the Throw Line Accuracy event!



New York City Half-Marathon

Congratulations to **Darresa Rodriguez** (photo on right), from our New Rochelle branch, for placing 7,735 out of 24,645 runners in the 2019 United Airlines NYC Half-Marathon. Almstead sponsors her running team, the Boogie Down Bronx Runners (BDBR), a 34-runner club that participates in races in our region and across the country.



Organic Tick & Mosquito Control

TICK CONTROL: The CDC recommends controlling the tick population in your yard. When applied properly, tick controls can be extremely effective. One of the options we use is CedarCure™ which is organic and uses cedar wood oil to kill and repel ticks. In addition to treating your property, our arborists can make recommendations on how to make your yard a less tick-friendly environment.

MOSQUITO CONTROL: Spraying your yard for mosquitoes can help keep you and your family safe. Almstead offers safe and effective mosquito control options, including the organic MosquitoCure™, which contains a mixture of Cedarwood Oil, Lemongrass oil, Citronella Oil, Rosemary Oil, Garlic Oil, and Red Thyme Oil, and is highly effective in controlling mosquitoes while being safe for children and pets.

Your Almstead arborist can create a program to help you enjoy your yard this summer, while enjoying peace of mind as well. Call your local branch office.

Trees to Consider: Green Giant Arborvitae

Green Giant Arborvitae is a hybrid cross between western redcedar and Japanese arborvitae. It is a large, hardy evergreen with a pyramidal to conical, uniform appearance. It is extremely popular as a screen or hedge in landscapes.

Latin Name: *Thuja standishii x plicata*

Common Name(s): Green Giant Arborvitae, Thuja Green Giant.

Tree Type: A narrow, pyramid-shaped tree, both a hedge tree and a specimen tree.

Sun and Water Requirements: Full sun to partial shade, thrives in evenly moist soil. Wet or poorly drained sites should be avoided.

Expected growth: A fast grower, its mature size reaches 50' - 60' with a spread of 12' - 20', growing as much as 3' in one year. *Note: Keep this in mind when choosing quantity, size and spacing.*

Foliage: Flattened, lacy sprays of fragrant evergreen needles, producing half-inch oblong cones that emerge green and turn brown.

Landscape Value: Green Giant is often used to screen out undesirable landscape elements. Consider a staggered double row and a triangular format, rather than in-a-line to reduce unwanted sounds as well. Symmetrical plantings can lend a touch of formality to foundations, entry ways, sidewalks or garden elements in addition to the usual screening arrangements along fences, borders or driveways. The Green Giant has also shown tolerance to deer browsing and is one of the easiest and most reliable choices you can make for your landscape!



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Sustainability Seminar

Ken Almstead, CEO, was the moderator of a seminar titled, "Sustainability of Trees in the Urban/Suburban Landscape: Spotting Hazards, Remediation, Planting & Maintenance," presented by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Westchester County. (Image 1)

Presenters included **Tom Zazzarino** (Line Clearance/Vegetation Management Manager, Con Edison), **Scott Martta** (Line Clearance/Vegetation Management Planner, Con Edison), **Navé Strauss** (Director of Street Tree Planning, NYC Parks) and **Benjamin Osborne** (Director of Tree Preservation, NYC Parks).

Tradeshows and Expos

Almstead exhibited at both the New York and New Jersey Co-Op Expos this spring. (Image 2: Arborist **Erick Fields** from our New Rochelle Branch at the NY Co-Op Expo).

Jeff Thrasher, our Hawthorne Branch Manager, was at the 2019 Home, Lifestyle & Family Show in Yorktown Heights, NY. (Image 3)

Paul Smith Career Fair

HR Manager, **Ben Groff** and Operations Manager, **Marc Viggiano**, were at the Spring Paul Smith College Career Day (Image 4). **Joshua Mikolay**, an Arboriculture major, was the winner of the Almstead Raffle Basket (Image 5). For information on internships and job opportunities at Almstead, please write to jobs@almstead.com or visit the career section of our website at www.almstead.com.

