



Image: Almstead is working to preserve three beautiful (but struggling) Beech trees at Untermyer Park in Yonkers, which is undergoing a striking restoration.

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Notes _____

After Untermeyer's death in 1940, the City of Yonkers



Parking: On-street parking.

Almstead Around Town

The Prehistoric Garden should be ready for visitors next spring. This is just the first phase of Almstead's commitment to the Thielke Arboretum. Over the next few years, we are planning to develop an Asian-themed garden and a butterfly garden.

This August, we had the opportunity to conduct a workshop on Compost Tea and Air Spading for the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA). Led by Michael Almstead and arborist Dan Dalton, the day-long workshop hosted by Rye Country Day School (an organic care client of ours) was a forum to share our knowledge and experience with other professionals interested in organic tree, shrub and lawn care. The workshop was intensive, covering both the science behind compost tea brewing and soil aeration, as well as the practical issues and hurdles involved in running an organic plant care operation. It was great to see the enthusiasm of the 50 or so participants in the workshop. We've seen great results with our organic care programs, especially in the realm of mature tree preservation, and this is an excellent set of tools and skills for any landscape professional to be able to offer their clients.



Arbor Notes

Fall/Winter 2012

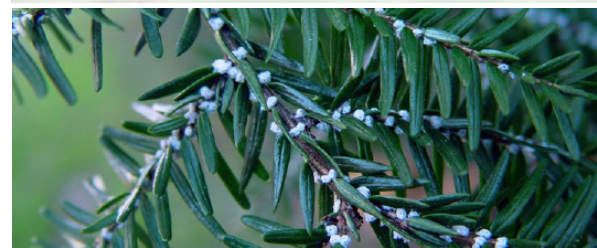


Organic care specialist Russell Wagner gave a soil aeration demonstration as part of a seminar on organics for professionals taught by Almstead staff.

Where Do All the Insects Go? Understanding Overwintering



Bagworm larvae mature in these woody bags built by their parents over the winter.



Hemlock woolly adelgid nymphs are active in these small white protective sacs throughout the winter.



Adult lace bugs of deciduous trees overwinter under bark. You can see them where the bark is pulled away.

You probably know of the astounding 3,000 mile annual migration of Monarch Butterflies to spend the winter in Mexico. Every local insect species has a strategy for surviving freezing weather. The Monarch's incredible journey is one dramatic, but atypical, example. Most insects don't get to vacation abroad. In fact, most pass the winter within a few feet (or millimeters) of their summer homes.

When the days grow shorter and temperatures drop, insects' winter survival behaviors are triggered. For most, that means finding someplace warm to avoid the freezing temperatures to come. Some insects, however, are actually able to freeze through and "come back to life" when they thaw. These freeze tolerant insects encourage ice crystals to form within their bodies, but they control the timing. They typically expedite their freezing through a quick-chill adaptation. Just like freezing ice cream, the results are best if you freeze it fast and then keep it from thawing. The banded woolly bear caterpillar is an example of a freeze tolerant insect in our region. Come spring, it thaws and begins to spin a cocoon for metamorphosis.

Most insects need to avoid freezing if they want to survive the winter. Ladybugs, for instance, are notorious for overwintering in the comfort of human homes. Though we love to see them in the garden, we prefer that they stay out of the living room! Other freeze avoidant insects find shelter from external icing by burrowing into the ground, snuggling in beneath the bark of a tree, or hiding in leaf litter. In the case of immature insects, the eggs are deposited in a sheltered place to await the spring.

As you might expect, it still gets pretty cold underneath the bark of a tree during the winter, so these freeze avoidant insects have some biological tricks up their sleeves. The goal is simply not to freeze, but 32° isn't the limit. Instead, these insects have developed methods to stay unfrozen down to temperatures well below that. Some produce personal antifreeze proteins that keep ice from crystalizing in the bloodstream. Many are able to turn their body fluids into non-freezing liquid by expelling particles from the gut—the fewer particles there are in water, the slower it will change to ice (pure water won't make this transition until -42°).

Understanding the over-wintering behaviors of insects is fundamental to controlling them. This type of knowledge is one of the cornerstones of our plant health care monitoring programs. By knowing when an unwanted insect is vulnerable, we can narrowly [\[continued inside\]](#)

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Inside This Issue:

- Where Do All the Insects Go?
- 5 Reasons for Winter Pruning
- Make a "Big" Mistake?

Image Credits: Bugwood.org; Bagworm - Brian Kunkel, University of Delaware; Hemlock wooly adelgid - Chris Evans, Illinois Wildlife Action Plan; Lacebug - Richard Turcotte, USDA Forest Service; Coffeetree foliage - Bob Routledge, Sault College; Wikimedia; Coffeetree flower - Gillian; Tree pods - MCA73hot2; Tree habit - Bruce Madlin

Woolly bear caterpillar

A Letter from the CEO



As I write this, the trees are still deep green with only a hint of fall color. A steady drizzle, though inconvenient for me, is helping them get well hydrated for the winter ahead. Some of our evergreen shrubs, such as rhododendron, yew, arborvitae and holly, can use a little extra help keeping their moisture through the winter. I like to apply an antidesiccant as winter gets close to keep many broadleaf evergreens from drying out in cold or windy winter weather.

Among the trees that grace our streets, yards and parks, Ash trees are still gloriously evident. A mature ash tree is simply beautiful—big, broad, graceful and welcoming. Unfortunately, I’m all too aware that the enemy of these trees is at our gates. The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has been found in our area. This pest is deadly, with virtually no Ash trees escaping alive from areas it’s hit.

Fortunately for individual Ashes, the trees can be inoculated against EAB. I recommend that owners of mature Ash trees take preventive measures now. At the very least, understand that a decision not to inoculate is essentially a decision to let your tree die. Treatments need to be repeated every 1 to 2 years until the borer has passed through our areas, but the cost of removing a mature tree and replanting is much higher than ongoing preventive treatment. Not to mention the cost to all of us when an iconic native tree disappears from our community. If you think you might have an Ash, please call us and we’ll come and verify free of charge.

On a final note, I’d like to introduce you to a new Notable Trees program we’re launching to recognize the many beautiful and unique specimen trees that grow in the New York metro area, which you can read more about on the opposite page. I hope you’ll help us by recommending your own favorite trees.

Sincerely,

5 Reasons for Winter Pruning

1. It’s like reading an x-ray. In winter, deciduous trees have cast off their covering, giving us a much better view of their structure. We get a clear picture of the entire tree, allowing us to identify weak branch connections, cracks in limbs, unsafely crossing limbs and dead wood. Winter is the ideal time to uncover and address the structural flaws that can eventually lead to branch or tree failures.



2. Winter storms are dangerous pruners. High winds, heavy ice and wet snow all put tremendous strain on branches. We can identify and remove dead or cracked branches before winter does its own pruning, which can be dangerous for property, people, and the tree.

3. Your yard won’t mind. Although we’re always careful of your property, pruning and removing trees is easier when the ground is frozen. We are typically able to move heavy equipment closer to the trees we are working on without harming lawns or herbacious perennials and annuals. Removing dead trees is often simpler when surrounding trees are bare. Plus, we’re less likely to inconvenience you or your family when most people are staying indoors anyway.

4. Make spring more beautiful. Many of the flowering trees and shrubs we love, like Apples, Cherries, and Magnolias have already formed their buds for spring flowers by the end of fall of the previous year. By selectively pruning in winter, we can improve the saturation of flowers and fruit they have in the growing season. Winter is a busy pruning season for orchards!

5. You save money. Without leaves, we have easier access to your deciduous trees, and pruning typically goes faster. Trees are easier to access, and of course, there’s less clean up. Since pruning takes less time in winter, our estimates reflect the lower labor costs.

Emerald Ash Borer

If you have an Ash tree, preventative treatment is critical to saving it from the Emerald Ash Borer. Not sure if you have an Ash? Ask an Almstead Arborist to compile an inventory of your trees.

Have You Considered...

The Kentucky Coffee Tree is a memorable and unusual native tree with an extended winter form—it is the first to lose its leaves and the last to gain them. Many people like the sculptural look of the twisted, coarse branches, especially adorned with the long seed pods that sometimes hold on until spring, rattling in the wind. Large compound leaves with oval leaflets gracefully drape the branches during summer. This is a striking tree showing intriguingly different personalities in each season.

Latin Name: *Gymnocladus dioica* **Common Name(s):** Kentucky Coffee Tree

Tree Type: Trees tend to divide into several sections as they mature, giving an overall pyramidal shape.

Sun and Water Requirements: These trees prefer deep, moist, alkaline soil and full to partial sun, but will grow under a variety of conditions.

Expected Growth: Trees typically grow 60-75’ tall, with a spread of 40-50’.

Foliage: The large, compound leaves emerge pink-tinted and then turn to a deep bluish-green. Early-turning, brilliant yellow-to-orange fall foliage.

Flower and Fruit: The female Kentucky Coffee Tree bears sweetly-scented, green rose-like flowers in long panicles in spring. 8-12” seed pods often stay through winter.

Landscape Value: This is a large, striking, disease-resistant tree. Although many people prefer the flowers and seed pods of the female Kentucky Coffee Tree, others dislike the litter of the fallen pods. Also, though once used as a coffee substitute, the pods are toxic in large quantity to people and livestock. (Male trees have no pods.) Because this tree has a longer period of leaflessness than most, it is good for locations where you prefer more fall and spring sun.

Flowers



Compound leaves



Beans



Images: John Hagstrom, taken at the Morton Arboretum

Make a “Big” Mistake?

Sometimes people plant trees without fully appreciating how big they’ll get. A good example: those lovely rows of white pines that so quickly grow into a wind break or screen, and then keep on growing until they’re upwards of 80 feet tall. A growth regulator treatment can dramatically slow further expansion of the canopy by blocking the formation of the growth hormone gibberellen. It can be a valuable tool in handing a tree that’s heading for the power lines, or your windows.

Along with reducing the rate of growth (by up to 60%), this treatment has other benefits. Growth is redirected into strengthening the tree, so leaves are typically greener, growth is fuller, and fine roots are more robust. This makes it helpful in managing street trees, which have little room for lateral root growth and can use as many fine roots in a tight space as possible. It also appears to help trees resist some diseases (for example, treated Oaks are unlikely to develop bacterial leaf scorch, a disease moving towards us from the south).

The effectiveness of growth regulation varies by species, but it’s worth considering if you or a previous property owner made a “big” mistake.

Win Tea for Two!

Win a compost tea treatment for your trees and shrubs, and a delicious sampler basket of tea for yourself by entering our online drawing. Entering is quick and easy. Visit facebook.com/almsteadtree for your chance to win.



Antidesiccant Applications

Protect your evergreens from losing moisture through leaves or needles this winter with an organic antidesiccant application. Desiccation can lead to brown, curled foliage when spring arrives.

Where Do All the Insects Go? [continued from front]

focus on that window of opportunity. Scale insects, for example, spend the winter as larvae on branches or leaves covered by a hard or waxy shell. Aside from scraping them off by hand, they are virtually impervious to attack. But by understanding the timing of their emergence in the spring, it’s possible to use a foliar spray that targets these colonies as they leave hibernation.

It’s also possible to take action against many insects before, or while, they overwinter. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is actually more active during fall and winter than in summer, so a horticultural oil treatment in the fall to smother these insects helps to prevent damage that would occur over the winter months. Likewise, many types of mites and scale insects are still vulnerable in October and November. Foliar applications during this time can dramatically curtail their chances of surviving the winter and causing damage in the spring.

NOTABLE TREES

As arborists, we have the privilege of seeing many truly spectacular specimen trees. We’ve decided to start documenting these unique trees in the New York metro area landscape with our new Notable Trees project. Images and information about the trees will be compiled online. If you know of a tree that you think deserves this recognition, let us know. We’ll send an arborist out to take measurements and photos, and we’ll also offer to tag the tree with its name and newly recognized notable status. For more information, please visit the site at notabletrees.almstead.com. We hope this becomes a valuable compendium for the community and look forward to your participation.



Weeping European Beech
Fagus sylvatica ‘pendula’
Belongs to an Almstead client in Harrison, NY

This beautiful multiple stemmed Weeping European Beech has a 47” diameter trunk, a 70’ diameter canopy spread, and is at least 80 years old. The view from below the canopy is simply stunning.

Get an Annual Check-Up

It’s common knowledge that prevention is the best medicine—and that goes for trees and shrubs too. Unfortunately, we often feel like ER doctors for trees when we’re called to a property for the first time. Once a plant is exhibiting symptoms noticeable to an untrained eye, it is often either too late to save it, or treatments are more costly than they would have been earlier on.

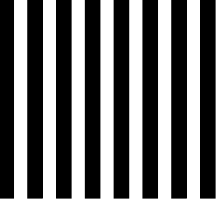
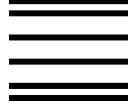
For this reason, one of the most valuable services we offer our clients are expert visual ground inspections of their trees, shrubs and turf on an annual basis—and these inspections are completely complimentary.

As a property owner or steward, it is in your best interest to stay informed about the state of the health and safety of your landscape. We encourage you to schedule an inspection with your Almstead arborist to prepare your trees, shrubs and turf for the upcoming trials of winter and next year’s growing season.

To schedule an inspection, simply return the attached card. We’ll make sure it gets to your arborist!

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