

Hawthorne, NY (914)741-1510
Stamford, CT (203)348-4111
North Haledon, NJ (973)636-6711

arbor care plant health care organic consulting lawn care

Presorted First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
White Plains, NY
Permit No. 1408

Arbor Notes

Spring/Summer 2009



Organic Care Specialist Russell Wagner gave visitors an up-close look at the living microorganisms in Almstead's freshly brewed compost tea at the Norwalk Tree Festival.

Have You Considered...

A good alternative to the Flowering Dogwood, the Kousa Dogwood has proven to be more resistant to anthracnose (a fungal disease that's killed many Flowering Dogwoods in our region). In addition to flowering in late spring to early summer, Kousa Dogwoods also display beautiful foliage in the fall.

Latin name: Cornus kousa
Common Name(s): Kousa Dogwood, Japanese Dogwood

Tree Type: Flowering ornamental

Sun and water requirements: Plant in partial to full sunlight in an area with good air circulation; water occasionally during droughts to feed the shallow root system.

Expected Growth: 15'-30' in height with a 25' spread.

Foliage: 2-4" medium to dark green leaves in the summer, turning shades of red and purple in the fall.

Fruit: Red drupe type fruit in the summer resembles a raspberry and attracts birds

Landscape Value: An attractive ornamental year-round with flowers in spring, brightly colored fruit in summer, striking leaves in the fall, and beautiful exfoliating bark.



Images: The Dow Gardens Archive, Dow Gardens



Sites Worth Seeing: Skylands, New Jersey Botanical Garden

Images courtesy of Skylands, NJBG

Immerse yourself in the wonderful scents and hues of spring at Skylands, the New Jersey State Botanical Garden! Registered as one of the state's historical sites, the 96 acres of formal gardens and gentle paths winding through woods quickly remind you how the state got its nickname.

Formerly a country estate, the Tudor-style mansion and gardens at Skylands once entertained prominent guests such as Grover Cleveland, Andrew Carnegie, Ethel Barrymore, and J.P. Morgan. Designated the official botanical garden of the state in 1984 by Governor Thomas Kean, Skylands is now part of the Ringwood State Park, New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry and the Department of Environmental Protection. Its mission is to stimulate a greater appreciation of the relationship between gardens and people through education, research, and the conservation of natural and architectural heritage.

One of the finest collections of plants in the state, Skylands hosts specimens

“Of particular interest are the century old weeping beech, the Algerian fir that bears seven-inch purple cones, and New Jersey's largest Jeffrey pine.”

found not only on New Jersey roadsides but also those native to different parts of the world including Spain, Africa, and Japan. Of particular interest is the century old weeping beech, the Algerian fir that bears seven-inch purple cones, and New Jersey's largest Jeffrey pine. Whether you stroll through the different specialty gardens, catch a jazz concert on the lawn, or enjoy a free guided tour of this botanical showcase, the New Jersey Botanical Garden has something to offer for everyone!

The New Jersey Botanical Garden at Skylands
Address: Morris Road, Ringwood, NJ 07456-0302
Telephone: (973) 962-7527
Hours of Operation: Open every day of the year from 8am – 8pm
Admission: Free
Parking: \$5 on summer weekends and holidays
Website: www.njbg.org

- Our Approach to Lawn Care
- What Does a Plant Health Care Scouting Technician Do?
- Keeping an Eye Out: Invasive Pests & Disease
- And more...

Branch Highlights

Stamford, Connecticut

This spring, Almstead's Stamford branch joined forces with another local company: Second Nature Tree & Landscape. We share similar values in business practice as well as the importance of holistic property care and pursuing organic solutions. Our branch has also been involved in many exciting Arbor Day events this year, including our ever-popular tree climbing station at the Norwalk Tree Festival!

Hawthorne, New York

Our branch is working for the Town of New Castle as well as the Village of Pleasantville this season. In both towns, our focus is to maintain the street trees and keep them safe. For Arbor Day, Arborist Patrick McVey gave a presentation to first graders and planted a tree at Transfiguration School in Tarrytown.

New Rochelle, New York

The New Rochelle branch recently donated time to establish a rain garden at the Ward Elementary School. The project is now a finalist in the RNN-TV "I on the Environment" contest! In NYC, we are continuing to care for the trees on Governors Island and are pruning as part of a restoration project at Riverside Park. Arbor Day was full of school visits for us, including Horace Mann and Barnard Elementary.

North Haledon, New Jersey

In North Haledon, our branch has started caring for the grass in parks in Waldwick as well as Franklin Lakes, NJ this season. We've had great success restoring the lawns to peak condition and look forward to seeing the communities enjoy the parks as we head into summer.

Almstead's Approach to Lawn Care

Starting this season, Almstead has expanded our Lawn Care division from operating exclusively in New Jersey to servicing each of our branches. We've put a lot of time into training our staff and perfecting the program, and we're excited to introduce this unique line of services to you.

Having one company care for your trees, shrubs and lawn is more than just a convenience to you. It can also greatly benefit your landscape. That's because the more we learn about soil biology and the tenets of organic property care, the more obvious it has become that our landscapes need to be treated as integrated systems. On most properties, tree roots extend beneath turf grass, but in nature trees and grass rarely coexist. In fact, the two have very different soil requirements. So if we aren't careful, how we treat our turf may negatively effect our trees, and vice-versa (especially when we introduce synthetic products).

[continued inside]

Our Lawn Care Services

Comprehensive Lawn Care Programs:
Organic Based, Pure Organic and Traditional Care Options

- Soil sample testing
- Core aeration to relieve soil compaction
- Slice Seeding to establish new turf
- Overseeding for increased turf growth
- Surface and subsurface insect control
- Lime application for proper nutrient uptake
- Fungicides to prevent and suppress disease
- Winterizer to increase cold hardiness of grass
- Top dressing of compost to improve soil quality



A Letter from the CEO



Choices for more sustainable living are everywhere today: from reusable bags, to products made exclusively with wind-generated power, to an increasing number of community supported agriculture (CSA) programs.


By shifting our focus to making decisions that are good in the long run for our communities and the environment as a whole, we only stand to gain. It's no wonder that the sustainability movement has really taken off, and we're excited to be a part of it.

One facet of sustainability we're deeply involved with here is green recycling through the mulch recycling center run by my father, Richard Almstead. Utilizing the wood waste generated by our Arbor Care division,

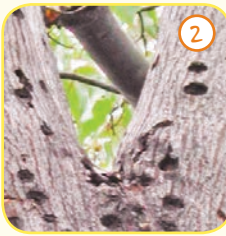
the recycling center produces 100% organic mulch, which is then resold in our region to increase healthy soil conditions for plants.

As sustainability has become more mainstream, researchers have made many advancements in the field of organic landscape care. For years, we've been following and utilizing that research here at Almstead by working to correct damaging cultural practices that affect our greenscapes: by selecting native species for new tree and shrub plantings, offering state-of-the-art compost tea brewing services, and more.

With our increased understanding of soil science and how it relates to plant health, along with advances in organically derived insect and disease controls, sustainable landscape care is a very solid option for our clients today. Making the choice to practice organic property care at our homes and businesses is an important step in creating more sustainable, healthier communities for ourselves and future generations. The progressive attitude we encounter with so many of our clients is truly inspiring, and we look forward to expanding our organic services as research continues to develop.

Sincerely,

Ken Almstead, CEO
International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist

Keep an Eye Out: Invasive Pests & Diseases



Images: 1. Joseph O'Brien, USDA Forest Service 2. PA DCNR-Forestry Archive 3. Paul Weston, Cornell University 4. Brian Sullivan, USDA APHIS PPQ

With live plants and wood being transported around the country (and the world), the chances of spreading non-native insect and disease problems are essentially unbeatable. That's why it's so important to remain vigilant about the health of your trees and shrubs. Our Arborists and Plant Health Care technicians always stay apprised of the latest threats to the plant material in our area so that we can take the proper course of action and not waste time with misdiagnosis. These are a few of the more serious insect and disease threats to our native trees and shrubs.

Traveling up from Texas, **Oak Wilt** has recently been detected in Upstate New York—the closest it's gotten to us so far. Primarily affecting trees in the Red Oak family, the disease is caused by the fungus *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, which clogs the vascular system of a tree. The leaves on trees with the disease begin to wilt in late May to early June, with the edges appearing scorched. Trees killed by Oak Wilt often house pads of fungal spores beneath the bark and emit a strong fruity wine smell.

The **Asian Long Horned Beetle** (ALHB) made it's way to the US via wood palettes being shipped from Asia, with its first outbreak in the New York metro area. In their larval phase, ALHB's cause irreparable damage to a variety of hardwoods by boring deep into the trunk and branches. In addition to decline, one of the easiest to spot symptoms of an ALHB infestation are the large exit holes created by the beetles.

Originally from Europe, adult and larval **Viburnum Leaf Beetles** feed on the leaves of the popular ornamental trees and shrubs in the Viburnum family, leading to very heavy defoliation. With this beetle, prevention has proven to be the best medicine: the most effective control is to interrupt the life cycle by removing twigs containing the beetles' eggs in the fall or winter before they hatch in the spring.

Named for its brilliant color, the tiny Asian **Emerald Ash Borer** was first noticed in Michigan and Ontario and is quickly encroaching on the Northeastern US. The beetle larvae bore into the trunks of Ashes and feed on the inner bark, leaving D-shaped exit holes and cracks in areas with high activity. The destruction of tissue in the tree disrupts nutrient flow and causes parts of the canopy above the infestation to die.

Our Approach to Lawn Care [continued from front]

The lawn care services we offer at Almstead are all prescribed with special attention to maintaining a healthy balance between turf and your other landscaping. For instance, our compost tea treatments infuse soil with microorganisms that release nutrients naturally as your grass needs them. Products like these compost teas (as well as slow-release versions of traditional fertilizers) keep the soil being shared by trees and grass balanced, rather than saturated with nutrients that could actually stress plant material.

It's important to note that most problems in lawns don't start with the introduction of a pest or disease. Damage is more likely the result of improper practices such as over-watering, mowing too low, over-using fertilizers and pesticides, not aerating the soil, and even improper turf grass selection. While our lawn care programs do include a wide range of pest and disease controls, our focus in on creating self-sustaining turf that is healthy enough to fight off problems on its own.

In order to create long-lasting results for any plant material, the key is to improve the soil. Turf needs nutritionally balanced soil, teaming with microbial life to achieve productive growth as well as protect against pests and diseases. In addition to soil amendments and fertilizers, a pivotal element of this process is actually core aeration. When soil becomes compacted, its particles are pressed close together, restricting the movement of oxygen, nutrients, and water to the turf's roots. This leads to slow growth as well as increased susceptibility to drought, disease, and insect damage. Core aerating allows air, water, and nutrients to penetrate deeper into the soil, promoting root growth and healthier grass.

By caring for your turf from the roots up, we can create a more sustainable lawn that requires less reseeding and fewer applications to control insects, diseases, and weeds. Instead, you'll have a thick, healthy lawn that's ready for you to enjoy all season long.



What Does a Plant Health Care Scouting Technician Do?

From performing soil injections to sanitation pruning, in our experience, Almstead's Plant Health Care (PHC) Scouting Technicians do more than most people expect. At the same time, our technicians apply fewer controls (like pesticides and fungicides) than expected. The two actually go hand in hand. By approaching each landscape with an emphasis on observation, spot treatment and holistic care practices, we're able to limit unnecessary treatments and focus our efforts where they're needed.

So, what does a PHC Scouting Technician do? Let's start with soil and root care. Trees with stressed root systems and those without access to nutrient-rich soil are less capable of fighting off insect and disease problems. Based on an arborist's recommendations, technicians may apply custom blends of fresh-brewed compost teas, fertilizers and/or a variety of organic soil amendments to increase the overall health of the trees and shrubs on a property. Technicians often apply these treatments by injecting them beneath the surface, reaching roots directly and breaking up oxygen-starved, compacted soils at the same time.



Custom-blending a compost tea application



Sanitation pruning to prevent spreading disease



Inspecting a leaf to identify an insect problem

That said, the primary function of a Scouting Technician is just that: scouting. The technician assigned to a property takes time to inspect each tree and shrub every two to four weeks throughout the growing season.

Depending on the problems they encounter, technicians take a variety of actions. For instance, they may hand prune branches to stop a disease from spreading, or apply horticultural oil to a group of shrubs exhibiting mites. At the end of each visit, technicians leave behind reports detailing their observations and actions (*Scouting and PHC Services Reports* pictured right).

The individualized attention that technicians give to each tree and shrub is where the effectiveness of the PHC Scouting program really lies. We provide our technicians with a full range of controls and products (many of them organic) that safely and effectively treat the majority of problems they encounter. However, when a situation requires further attention, the property's arborist is notified immediately.

Once they understand the extent of PHC Scouting, most people expect the price to be much higher than it is. We encourage you to call our office to have that expectation shattered as well!

“You can't underestimate the importance of knowledge with a job like this. After I've been on a property for a season or two, I know it so well that I can dramatically cut back on the amount of controls I use.”
— Peter, PHC Scouting Technician



Spot treating for targeted, safe insect control



Reporting a conk to an arborist for further care



Plant Health Care Contracts
The growing season is here! If you haven't approved your Plant Health Care contract yet, it's imperative that you do so as soon as possible to get the best results for your landscape.

Lawn Care Programs
Almstead now offers lawn care services in all of our branches! Call our office for a complimentary assessment to discuss our lawn care program options (Organic Based, Pure Organic and Traditional) with an expert.

Pruning Flowering Ornamentals
Flowering trees and shrubs require specially timed pruning to look their best in bloom. Depending on when they flower, ornamentals may require pruning in Spring, Summer, or Fall. Ask your arborist about creating a schedule.

Hazard Assessment
Summer storms can wreak havoc on trees with preexisting structural problems. Have your landscape assessed before the storm season kicks in to prevent unnecessary and costly damage to your property.