



Inside This Issue:

- Almstead's 50th Birthday Party
- Soil Food Web
- Staying on TRAQ
- Preparing for Seasonal Storms and more...



**ALMSTEAD**  
 TREE, SHRUB & LAWN CARE  
 58 Beechwood Avenue  
 New Rochelle, NY 10801, (914)636-TREE  
[www.almstead.com](http://www.almstead.com)

arbor care   plant health care  
 organic   consulting   lawn care

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

Presorted Standard  
 U.S. Postage  
 PAID  
 Mail From Zip Code 08360  
 Permit No. 543

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

Have you seen this weed?



**Japanese Stiltgrass** has become all too common in our area recently. It makes its home in any untended areas and easily invades our lawns, especially in moist, shady areas.

To get rid of it, build healthier turf. Well-nourished grass in well-drained soil will crowd out this invader. Selective tree pruning to give more sunlight to problem areas will also help. Finally, a pre-emergent weed treatment next spring will stop stiltgrass (along with crabgrass and most other annual weeds) from germinating.

Why Prune in Winter?

There are so many reasons -- including saving money. Your arborist can tell you more.



**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.

Madava Farms: Makers of Crown Maple Syrup

Sugar maples are more than just a pretty face – they provide the syrup for our pancakes! Madava Farms, in Dutchess County is worth a trip to see – and taste – how maple syrup is made. Although syrup production takes place in spring, Madava Farms has tours throughout the fall. In their hour-long tour, they'll show you how maple syrup is made, and offer a 5-stage tasting of their organic, artisanal syrup.



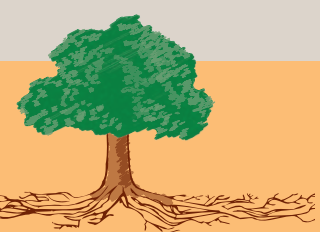
The sandwiches, salads, panini and maple-accented desserts at their Farm Stand Café make this a destination for a family trip. You can also stroll through the property and admire the beauty of sugar maples in autumn.

Visit Madava Farms

**Where:** 47 McCourt Road, Dover Plains, NY  
**Hours:** Most Saturdays and Sundays 11–5  
 Call to check: (845) 877-0640  
**Admission:** \$10 adults; \$5 children 10 and under  
**Parking:** On-site  
**Website:** [crownmaple.com](http://crownmaple.com)



**Did You Fertilize Yet This Fall?**  
 Call your arborist -- there's still time to develop a stronger root structure before winter. Your lawn and trees will thank you.



Fall/Winter 2014

Almstead's 50th Birthday Party

On July 20, Almstead held a Carnival to celebrate the company's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Employees and their families, as well as former employees, friends and business associates joined the Almstead family at Tibbetts Brook Park in Yonkers, NY.

Over 300 people enjoyed kiddie rides, bungee trampolines and an enormous inflatable obstacle course. They could try their luck at the Carnival Midway or be entertained by the stilt-walking juggler. In addition to a buffet of American and Mexican foods, there were popcorn, cotton candy and Italian Ice carts.



Three generations of the Almstead family at the 50th anniversary carnival.



The entire Almstead family, arborists and staff would like to thank everyone who has supported us over the past 50 years!



Soil Food Web: Building Soil the Natural Way

*"Feed the soil, not the plants" is the mantra of organic gardening. Whether you're ardently green or just interested in a beautiful landscape, developing the soil makes sense.*

Healthy soil is an ecosystem. The "Soil Food Web" is a term created by Dr. Elaine Ingham, for the community of organisms that live in the soil and how they interact with the environment, plants and animals. Improving the soil is a process of encouraging beneficial natural organisms to proliferate.

A teaspoon of soil can contain billions of microorganisms – but it's not an idyllic community. At a microscopic level, a battle rages for control of the root zone.



Fungi, bacteria, protozoa and nematodes are some of the biota engaged in the conflict. Many of these microorganisms are beneficial to growing plants, while others are destructive to the root system. We seek to maximize the presence of beneficial organisms which actively repel the pathogenic organisms.

How do we tilt the balance in favor of beneficial biota? Compost! The temperature attained when creating compost inhibits pathogens in favor of beneficial organisms. When we add top quality compost (i.e. compost rich in decayed matter and active microorganisms) to the soil, we are boosting the activity of the microbes defending the root zone, and promoting a healthier soil ecosystem.

At Almstead, we also custom brew compost tea. Starting with top quality compost, we create a liquid filled with beneficial live microorganisms. In our lab, we microscopically analyze each batch of

compost tea to ensure the right population density of healthy microorganisms; we add extra biota, such as beneficial nematodes, as well as organic amendments like fish hydrolysate to encourage their growth. When the compost tea is finished brewing, we apply the organism-rich liquid onto lawns or into root zones to soak the soil and increase the population of beneficial biota.

When we "feed the soil," we promote a healthy ecosystem for our landscape. Almstead has also developed our own compost-based topdressing for lawns. In combination with core aeration, this organism-rich dressing penetrates the soil to bring new life to depleted earth. We use compressed air with a specialized tool (known as an AirSpade™) to safely decompact and till the soil. We work in top quality compost and amendments in order to create the healthiest growing environment for root systems: conditions that mimic a forest floor.



# A Letter from the CEO



2014 is an important year for us: it's the 50th Anniversary of our company! We celebrated with a Carnival for our employees and their families as well as many others who have been important to our company's success. In addition to thanking them, we're also thanking many of the communities and organizations that have helped us grow, by donating, planting and caring for 50 trees.

One of the things that helped our company grow was the high professional standard set by my father, the company founder, Richard Almstead. In the article on TRAQ, we detail some of the continuing education certifications received by our arborists. We demand a high level of professional expertise and technical training from our arborists and technicians: it's what our clients deserve and should demand as well.

In this issue, we also give you the "real dirt" on soil. The more we understand the complexity of the ecosystem beneath our feet, the more we appreciate the value of compost. Investing in compost is probably the best gift you can give your trees, shrubs, gardens or lawn.

Finally, I'd like to remind you that storm season is here. This is a good time to schedule a free seasonal inspection with your arborist; he'll help get your property storm-ready and make recommendations for next year's lawn and tree health care programs. We hope you and your trees remain safe through winter's storms. We're here if you need us.

Sincerely,

Ken Almstead, CEO  
International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist NY0335

# Staying on TRAQ

Continuing education is vital for arborists to stay at the peak of their profession. The science of arboriculture is constantly expanding its knowledge base, both in terms of what we know about trees, and about ways to keep ourselves, and our clients, safe. Conscientious arborists pursue the voluntary certifications offered by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and other professional organizations.

At Almstead, we require our arborists to be certified or licensed. Many of our arborists have additional levels of certification as well. This year, four of our arborists (one in each of our offices) and our CEO became Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ). We congratulate **Ken Almstead, Gary Norman, Tim Katenkamp, Dan Dalton** and **Ryan Duff** for reaching a new level of expertise.

Tree Risk Assessment is a process of estimating the probability of tree failure – an essential part of any arborist's work – using criteria



Almstead's 2014 Annual Plant Health Care Seminar

developed by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). In their intensive TRAQ training, they learned more about how to evaluate the level of risk presented by a tree based upon its location, its physical characteristics, and many other criteria such as wind exposure.

The methodology behind TRAQ provides a systematic way of evaluating and communicating the level of risk associated with any tree. This evaluation is a tool to help tree owners decide whether a tree should be retained, removed, or whether risk mitigation techniques (pruning, cabling, etc.) should be considered. As our professional

education expands, we now understand more about the science behind why some apparently healthy trees fail – while others continue to grow with a cavity big enough to drive a car through!

Our arborists are not the only ones going back to school at Almstead. All our crews meet weekly for a class to review safety procedures, tree care techniques, important changes in regulations, and other issues.

We've even developed our own training program for Plant Health Care and Lawn Care Technicians who, under the direction of our arborists, are responsible for keeping our clients' trees, shrubs and lawns healthy. One of the things that differentiates Almstead from

many other companies that care for properties, is the level of expertise and education of our technicians. They are trained to understand the signs of disease, pests or lack of proper nutrition in the landscapes they work on. Because of this expertise, they are able to recommend the right solution for the right situation.

Understanding what they see when they visit a property allows our technicians to intervene before many problems become serious. Tailoring the remedy to each situation is environmentally responsible, encourages a sustainable landscape, and reduces the cost of maintenance.



An "ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is true of tree care. Pruning and extra attention before storm season can decrease the danger -- and expense -- caused by falling trees and branches.

# What to do BEFORE the Storm

As we all know, fall and winter storms can be devastating to trees. Before extreme weather arrives, you can reduce the likelihood of tree or branch failure. These failures can be damaging or fatal to the tree, but more importantly, they can be dangerous for people and property.

Our arborists are skilled in evaluating the risk presented by each tree (see our article on TRAQ). We can check your trees for dead branches and internal cavities, along with other warning signs of potential failure. Pruning will minimize the risk of damage in most situations. For especially vulnerable trees, such as mature or over-mature trees, specialized pruning techniques or additional support from cables can prolong their life and vitality.

Though falling shrubs don't pose much danger to us, they are often vulnerable to weather and can require some special care to stay healthy and beautiful through a tough winter. Winter winds and the freeze/thaw cycle typical of our area can exact a heavy toll from evergreen shrubs. Antidesiccant applications will help these shrubs still look green and healthy when spring finally arrives.

We also recommend a 1 -2" layer of mulch to insulate the roots of trees, shrubs and perennials. Winter mulch has many benefits:

- It stabilizes temperature fluctuations in the soil and mitigates the upheaval caused by the freeze-thaw cycle.
- It helps to retain moisture in the soil.
- It reduces weed germination in spring.
- It gradually decomposes and releases nutrients to the soil.

As a final preparation, make sure you have the telephone number of your local Almstead office stored along with your other emergency numbers.

Southern Westchester & NYC	914-576-0193
Northern Westchester	914-741-1510
Fairfield County, CT	203-348-4111
Bergen & Passaic Counties, NJ	973-636-6711

If you have any concerns about your property, please call us for a free consultation as soon as possible.

# Pernicious Pests Update

These two pests are a lethal threat to our trees. One way to halt their progress: **DON'T MOVE FIREWOOD!**

## **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB):**

- Can kill an ash tree within 3 -5 years.
- Currently in Fairfield County, CT at the borders of Westchester County, and Northern NJ.
- We can inject ash trees to successfully resist EAB when treatment is begun BEFORE the first attack. For more information, please visit [emeraldashborer.info/index.cfm](http://emeraldashborer.info/index.cfm)



## **Asian Long-horned Beetle (ALB):**

- Favorite host trees are maple, willow, birch and elm while occasional hosts include poplar, ash and plane.
- No cure for infestation – every tree needs to be removed and destroyed.
- Not believed to be in our area at present (although there is currently an eradication campaign in Long Island).
- Signs: Perfectly round exit holes from trees. Beetles are black, spotted and HUGE! If you suspect ALB, immediately contact [asianlonghornedbeetle.com](http://asianlonghornedbeetle.com)



# Request a Free Consultation!

Call 914-636-TREE and schedule a complimentary seasonal inspection with a professionally certified arborist.

Or, you can scan the QR Code (on right) using your smart device (you may need to download a QR Code Reader app).



# Have You Considered...

**Cockspur Hawthorn** is a small tree with glossy leaves and a beautiful display of creamy white flowers in spring. Though long thorns are characteristic of the genus, the cultivar "inermis" is thorn-free.



**Latin Name:** *Crataegus crus-galli* 'Inermis'

**Common Name(s):** Cockspur Hawthorn, Cockspur Thorn

**Tree Type:** This small, ornamental tree has a short trunk with long branches that can sweep the ground.

**Sun and Water Requirements:** Hawthorns are not fussy about soil type. They like full sun and well-drained soil. Cockspur Hawthorns are less susceptible to fungus (rust) than most other hawthorns.

**Expected Growth:** Trees typically reach 20' – 30' and can spread almost as wide.

**Foliage:** Small, glossy leaves turn red, orange and purple in autumn.

**Flower and Fruit:** Flat clusters of creamy flowers in late spring make this hawthorn a beautiful specimen. In fall, it is covered in red berries



which often last into winter. The berries are food for migrating birds and other animals in winter.

**Landscape Value:** This native tree is one of the beautiful showpieces of late spring. The flowers have a mildly unpleasant scent, so you may want to plant it away from the house.

**Trivia:** Cockspur Hawthorns have been popular since Colonial times. Their long thorns were used as sewing needles.

Join the Conversation!



[www.facebook.com/Almsteadtree](http://www.facebook.com/Almsteadtree)