



TREE, SHRUB & LAWN CARE

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Inside This Issue:

- Arbor Day Celebrations
- A Healthy Lawn Can Resist Pests & Diseases
- Air Spading • Tips for Watering

...and more!

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Invasive Pests: Southern Pine Beetle

Until recently, the **Southern Pine Beetle** was never found beyond the pine forests of American South because it could not survive cold winters. But warmer winters in the northeast have allowed them to migrate to our region.

The Southern Pine Beetle was first discovered in New Jersey in 2002 and seen in Long Island, New York in the fall of 2014. It has destroyed thousand of trees since. Several thousand more trees have been chopped down intentionally in an effort to limit their spread. Scientists believe that the Southern Pine Beetle could destroy **pitch pine, white pine, red pine, hemlock** and **spruce trees** on the Eastern Seaboard as it travels farther north.

The adult beetle enters a tree through crevices in the bark and then creates S-shaped tunnels in the cambium tissue, just beneath the bark. This disrupts the flow of nutrients, killing the tree in typically 2-4 months.

Signs of infestations include:

- Pitch tubes or popcorn-shaped resin on the exterior of the bark
- Shotgun patterned holes in the exterior of the bark
- S-shaped tunnels under the bark

Call your arborist if you notice these signs in your trees.



Places to Visit in the Tri-State Region

New York: Hallet Nature Sanctuary

The recently opened, Hallet Nature Sanctuary is a 4-acre piece of land located next to the Pond at the southeast corner of Central Park. It was closed to the public in 1934 to be preserved as a bird sanctuary and remained untouched until 2001 when the Central Park Conservancy took up its restoration and maintenance (which Almstead participated in). The sanctuary is now more diverse and healthier than ever. Public visiting days and hours can be found on the Central Park website. www.centralparknyc.org



New Jersey: Teaneck Creek Conservancy

The Teaneck Creek Conservancy in Bergen County consists of 46 acres of repurposed "waste" land that includes trails, art installations, trees, shrubs and birds. It was formerly an unofficial dumpsite that was repurposed by a group of environmentalists, educators, and artists with the support of The Puffin Foundation. Visitors can take guided tours, hike on over 2 miles of trails, do some bird watching, and view the several temporary and permanent eco-art exhibits. Visit the Conservancy's website for more information. www.teaneckcreek.org



New Canaan Nature Center

The New Canaan Nature Center is a 40-acre botanical garden, arboretum and nature preserve. It includes both wet and dry meadows and woodlands, ponds, dense thickets, orchards, marshes and a 4,000 square foot greenhouse. Almost 90% of the plants in the garden are native species. The arboretum includes a variety trees including Japanese umbrella pine, moss sawara cypress, weeping Norway spruce, eastern redbud, and more. The nature center includes live animals, including a "Birds Of Prey" exhibit as well as a maple syrup shed. Admission is free. www.newcanaannature.org



Arbor Notes



TREE, SHRUB & LAWN CARE
The science of preserving nature since 1964



Spring/Summer 2016

Almstead Around Town: 2016 Arbor Day Celebrations

Almstead participated in several events in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut to celebrate Earth Day and Arbor Day.

In **New Jersey**, Branch Manager, Ryan Duff and arborist Kevin Tode set up booths and junior tree climbing stations at the Ridgewood Earth Day Fair and the Spring Fest at the Teaneck Creek Conservancy. They handed out free tree saplings and Almstead water bottles, pens, and re-useable grocery bags. Kevin also gave a talk about trees and planted a Kousa dogwood at Roosevelt School in Hawthorne.



(L to R) A young climber enjoys the view from a tree top at Wave Hill; Gary Norman, Stamford Branch Manager, hands out saplings to students at Marvin School in Norwalk, CT; Arborist Dan Groves, at Queens Botanical Gardens Arbor Day Fest; Almstead technician, Sergio Anguiano, fits up a junior arborist.

In **Connecticut**, Gary Norman, Branch Manager and Michael Almstead, Vice President, joined students, teachers and elected officials, including the Mayor of Norwalk, Harry Rilling, for Earth Day celebrations and to plant a tree in front of Marvin Elementary School. Gary, Michael, and Ken Almstead, CEO, also exhibited at the popular Connecticut Tree Festival in Cranbury Park, Norwalk and thrilled kids with a junior arborist tree climbing station. Arborist, Isaac Taylor, planted a tree and handed out persimmon and Colorado spruce saplings to students at the New Canaan Nature Center Preschool and set up a tree climbing station at "Down on the Farm" at Darien Nature Center.

Arborist Patrick McVey from our **Hawthorne, NY** office gave a show-and-tell presentation on how trees benefit our environment to 1st and 2nd Grade students at Transfiguration School in Tarrytown.

In our **New Rochelle, NY** office, arborist Dan Dalton planted a pink dogwood tree at the Bartlow-Pell Mansion while arborist, Dan Groves, set up a table at the Arbor Day Fest at the Queens Botanical Gardens. Arborist Jeff Delaune and Michael Almstead planted an 8-foot

river birch tree in Crawford Park, Rye Brook. Arborist, Michael Marks, Michael Almstead and several of the Almstead crew worked with an Eastchester Girl Scouts Troop to plant and transplant trees in the Magic Treeture Forest Nursery. Joining them were Judith Blau, creator of Treetures and the Treetures character, Steward. Almstead also sponsored the junior arborist station at Wave Hill Public Garden in the Bronx. For more, please scan the QR code or visit almstead.com/arborday.



A Healthy Lawn Can Resist Pests And Diseases — Grubs Can Be Tough



The healthier your lawn, the more likely it is to resist pests and diseases.

• **A good variety of turf species** (some with natural resistance to insects

and diseases; enriched with non-disease causing fungal endophytes) for the site conditions. These turf species are more drought tolerant, more competitive with weed species, able to recover more rapidly from injury and require lower inputs.

• **Non-compacted soils** that are biologically rich (compost/sand mix) and drain well.

• **Properly irrigated** (water for longer periods every other day or odd/even days rather than every day) with some seasonal adjustments as required.

• **Cut at the right height** (2.5 to 3.5") especially in the summer; consider cutting every other week, July through August.

Some pests, however, can be hard to avoid and control—especially white grubs. Grubs are the larvae of beetles (primarily Japanese beetles and masked chafers) that develop in the ground. When the population of grubs is significant, you will start seeing gradual thinning & weakening of turf, followed by scattered, irregular dead patches, particularly towards late summer.

To make matters worse, grubs are a delicacy for some animals, such as skunks and raccoons. Sometimes the problem goes unnoticed until you see holes dug in your turf one morning. Grubs like sunny areas with moisture, and are not often found in the shade or in dry lawns.

If you see this type of damage in your turf, you should be able to easily lift up a piece of turf where the brown patch meets green lawn and inspect the upper 1-2" for the presence of grubs. Grubs are white and C-shaped. It only takes about 10 grubs per square foot of lawn to cause visible damage.

Two different strategies are available for controlling grubs: curative and preventive. Each approach has its

own merits and limitations. Our technicians and arborists can discuss and recommend the best option for your lawn.

The best prevention for lawn disease and pests is maintaining the health of the lawn. A well-nourished and well-mown lawn with superior turf species becomes a self-sustaining system that is hostile to many predators; just keep a look out for grubs this summer season.

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A Letter from the CEO



I believe most will attest that it has been another abnormal weather season these past several months. Very dry conditions last fall, with below normal snowfall amounts this winter as well as rainfall deficits this spring have us in moderate to severe drought conditions. As the summer heat is now in full swing, it has only intensified the challenges in our landscapes. These stress conditions have contributed to various outbreaks of diseases as well as excessive dieback and decline in varying species. The summer months and into early fall can be the optimal time to detect many of these issues and provides us, as arborists, an opportunity to develop and manage the best course of action and long-term management for your trees, shrubs and lawn.

Here are a few additional comments to supplement some of the articles in this issue:

We have received many requests in regards to **tick and mosquito** control this season as well as a lot of positive feedback about reduced populations with focused control. Knowing the habitats of each pest and working with proper management strategies with the client makes the difference. Be on the lookout for **grubs** this summer season, we provide a few points and conditions to help us monitor. Various turf diseases have been severe this season and the damage can appear similar.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and **Southern Pine Beetle** have devastated thousands of trees in our region already and are on our doorstep if not already in the house. We collaborated with the Arborjet Company to donate **EAB treatment** to 41 ash trees in Liberty State Park and recommend inspection for treatment.

Arbor Day activities have become a tradition with us as it truly provides an opportunity to give back to all of the communities that support our endeavor. Let us know if we can participate with any organization you may contribute to or with for next season.

I would be remiss, if I did not mention all of the new “smart” systems available on the market for **irrigation of landscapes** nowadays. With water conservation a major issue worldwide, if you are able to incorporate this technology into your landscape, you could significantly reduce wasting water and at the same time better manage your landscape as well as your budget.

Finally, **congratulations** to Ryan and arborists Isaac, Kevin and Leo who have expanded their certifications and knowledge for our team and clients!

Sincerely,

Ken Almstead, CEO

Almstead Partners With Arborjet to Protect Trees at Liberty State Park from EAB

In May, Almstead partnered with Arborjet to donate treatment for forty-one ash trees at Liberty State Park in Jersey City, NJ in preservation efforts against **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)**, an invasive tree pest that is currently threatening ash trees in our region.

“Our native North American ash trees do not have a natural resistance to Emerald Ash Borer. Although efforts are being made with the release of parasitic wasps it will take several years for those populations to develop into a potential effective deterrent. In the meantime, the most effective treatment to preserve our ash is to inoculate them prior to infestation,” said **Ken Almstead**, CEO of Almstead.

Emerald Ash Borer (Latin name *Agrilus planipennis*) is a small metallic-green insect that only attacks ash trees. Scientists believe that it came to the U.S. in solid wood packing crates from Asia in 2002. It was first seen in New York in the spring of 2009 and in New Jersey in the spring of 2014. EAB has already cost municipalities, property owners, nursery operators, and the forest-product industry hundreds of millions of dollars. Protecting ash trees from this deadly beetle requires a combination of quarantines, that regulatory agencies are already enforcing, and insecticide treatment, such as the one performed by Almstead and Arborjet at Liberty State Park.

Our recommendation is to first have an arborist identify if you have any ash trees and then assess the quality, health and location in order to validate the treatment as a worthy investment. The treatment will have to be repeated every few years based upon the choice of delivery and product until the infestation leaves our area.



Almstead technician, Jim Hurley, injects an ash tree with Arborjet insecticide to protect it from EAB.

Air Spading: Getting to the root of the problem

There are a number of reasons for accessing the below ground root system of a tree with this specialized tool that safely removes soils without damaging significant roots. An arborist may want to:

- 1) Inspect for root rot or damaged roots beneath the surface.
- 2) Relieve compacted soil that encourages anaerobic (without oxygen) conditions that harbor disease and prevent nutrient, moisture and oxygen to roots.
- 3) Assess and correct as much as possible girdling (circling) roots and adventitious or secondary roots typically a result of trees being planted too deep or backfilled by soil or excess mulch, typically a root collar excavation (RCX) is performed at the same time which removes the soil from the root collar.
- 4) Improve soils and growing conditions by performing vertical mulching when turf or plantings are in conflict and need to remain. This process consists of backfilling holes (3” wide and 10” deep) typically spaced 3ft. apart under the trees canopy both relieves compaction and provides a nutrient rich supplement to benefit root growth and nutrient cycling.
- 5) Access a greater portion or the entire root zone to relieve



very compacted soils and provide additional organic supplements such as high-grade compost. It would then be covered with a proper layer of organic mulch to provide the best possible growing condition for the tree or trees.

6) Utilize this tool to expose structural roots and perform root pruning when tree roots are in conflict with new construction or hardscapes. Rather than have a backhoe or similar device rip and fray the root, air spading and pruning can reduce the chances of root damage as well as decline and death of the tree in the future.

Almstead arborists and technicians are experts in using this valuable tool for the activities and prescriptions above. For improved tree health and mature tree preservation consider rotating trees every few years where compaction is an issue and budgeting for items 4 and 5 above with your arborist.

Recent Certifications

At Almstead, we support and encourage our arborists and team members to continue excelling in their fields. This year, several have pursued additional certifications.

Leo Ibarra (PHC Technician, New Rochelle) and **Isaac Taylor** (arborist, Stamford) completed the requirements and passed the NOFA accreditation course in Organic Land Care. Other NOFA accredited professionals at Almstead include **Ken Almstead**, **Gary Norman**, **Tim Katenkamp**, **Russell Wagner**, and **Michael Almstead** and **Dan Dalton** who also teach a part of the accreditation course at NOFA.



Isaac Taylor, Dan Dalton & Leo Ibarra

Kevin Tode (arborist, North Haledon branch) recently obtained his ISA certification. Kevin has worked in our industry for over 13 years and is already a New Jersey State Certified Tree Expert.

Almstead CEO, **Ken Almstead**, is working toward becoming a Registered Consulting Arborist® (RCA) through the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA).



Prune Shrubs in Summer!

Early summer is one of the best times to prune most shrubs. We focus on reducing, thinning, shaping and rejuvenation hand pruning techniques to provide a controlled but natural form appropriate for the species and location. Almstead arborists are very knowledgeable about pruning cycles for various shrubs. Contact us for a program that is specific to your landscape.

Pruning Flowering Ornamentals

Flowering trees and shrubs require specially timed pruning to look their best in bloom. They may require pruning in Spring, Summer, or Fall. Ask your arborist about creating a schedule.



Tree Risk 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.

Almstead Arborist Ryan Duff

Ryan Duff joined Almstead as a Plant Health Care technician in 2003. Since then, he has worked his way up within the company excelling and becoming an expert in all aspects of tree, lawn, plant health, and organic care. In May 2016, he was appointed as the Branch Manager of our New Jersey office. He is responsible for managing and developing residential and commercial accounts in Bergen and Passaic counties as well as providing oversight and training of the branch's arborists, technicians and staff.



“Ryan has shown a consistent level of commitment to the team and our clients over the years,” said **Michael Almstead**, Vice President of Almstead. “He has excellent leadership abilities and has earned the respect of his peers. I am very happy to make this announcement and look forward to watching him succeed in his new role.”

Ryan earned his degree in Forest Resource Management from West Virginia University. He is an ISA Certified Arborist and a New Jersey State Certified Tree Expert. He has earned the Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) from the ISA, and received training in Organic Land Care Management from Rutgers University.

When he is not working, Ryan enjoys spending time with his wife, Laura, his children Moorea, Colin and Brenlyn, and his dog, Keely. He also enjoys hiking, skiing, riding his motorcycle, and introducing his kids to all things outdoors.

Watering Trees and Shrubs In Summer

Over-watering, as well as under-watering, can damage or even kill plants. Plants draw moisture and nutrients from the “root zone,” the soil surrounding the roots — which can be 2-4 times as wide as the plant's canopy. The end of a plant's canopy or branching is also known as the “drip line” because the tree or shrub drips rainwater there. This area and beyond has the most active water absorption and is where you or your irrigation should concentrate your supplement of natural rainfall.

If trees are placed within a lawn, ideally they would be watered separately from the turf and have a well-defined circle of mulch. Shrub and perennial beds as well have different requirements than lawns that typically require less water and should be on a separate zone or hand watered differently. This rarely seems to be the case in most landscapes.

Before watering, insert a “soil probe” or a thin, smooth rod into the ground. It will easily slide through the wet soil and become more difficult to push when it reaches dry soil. A good rule of thumb is to water when the soil probe will not penetrate the ground more than 3-4 inches. Mature trees and shrubs should only require a thorough watering once a week based upon rainfall while younger and newer plants often require twice a week during the growing season. If the soil is shallow, compacted or sandy, water more often but for less time. Clay soil holds water more tightly so you should water less often but for more time. The important rule of thumb is a little longer and less frequent in well-draining soils.

Signs of under-watering include dry soil, and wilted or curled, leaves. Over-watering may lead to constantly damp soil and the growth of algae and mushrooms, especially in compacted soils. The signs of over-watering can be similar to under-watering and include wilted and/or yellow leaves.

Our arborists can work with you and your irrigation specialists to formulate the best management practices for your landscape.



Trees to Consider...

River birch is a species of birch native to the Eastern United States. Its bark is distinctive — usually dark gray-brown to pinkish-brown and scaly, but in some individuals, smooth and creamy pinkish-white, exfoliating in curly papery sheets — making it a favored ornamental tree for landscape use.

Latin Name: *Betula nigra*

Common Name(s): Black birch, river birch, water birch.

Tree Type: It is considered both a shade tree and an ornamental tree.

Sun and Water Requirements: It does not tolerate shade and does best in moist soils.

Expected growth: 80-100 feet with a trunk 20 to 59 inches in diameter, often has multiple trunks.

Foliage: The leaves are simple and somewhat diamond-shaped. They are medium to dark green and are double-toothed. They turn yellow in the fall.

Flowers: It produces flowers in the spring and winter, and small brown or green cones in the summer.

Landscape Value: River birch is valued for its relatively rapid growth, tolerance of wetness and some drought, unique curling bark, spreading limbs and relative resistance to birch borer.

Almstead technicians **Juan Carlos Godoy** and **Luis Ruiz** and arborist **Jeff Delaune** (R) plant a River birch tree at Crawford Park in Rye Brook, N.Y.



Freshly Brewed Compost Teas

Our freshly brewed compost teas are made with the finest quality local leaf and twig compost available. Infuse your soil with the beneficial microorganisms that help soil produce the nutrients plants need naturally.

