



Arbor Notes

Fall/Winter 2011

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Image: Almstead manages 20 acres of sports fields using organics for the Scarsdale School District (See story below).

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- ❑ Please contact me to schedule a **complimentary Seasonal Inspection** with a professionally certified Arborist.
- I'm also interested in:**
 - ❑ **Arbor Care** Customized pruning, mature tree preservation, tree and stump removal...
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Organic Lawn Care for Scarsdale Playing Fields

Almstead was at Crossway Fields in Scarsdale, NY the last week of September, performing seeding and organic care applications on the 20 acres of lawn there. The benefits of such an organic program are multifold, from decreased exposure to chemicals for young athletes to fewer runoff pollutants and a more sustainable soil ecosystem for the turf fields that will require less maintenance as time goes by.

While the Village of Scarsdale implemented its organic lawn care program proactively in 2009, a new law known as the Child Safe Playing Fields Act recently went into effect requiring all schools and day care centers in New York to stop the use of many pesticides and herbicides on playgrounds and sports fields. Effective May 2011 for schools and November 2010 for child care facilities, the act aims to protect children from harmful pesticides and has been widely applauded by parents, environmental groups and human health activists. Similar law exists in Connecticut and New Jersey as well.

Suzanne Busby, Superintendent of the Scarsdale Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation says, "We have people in our community using these fields all the time, and we felt an obligation to

pursue an organic approach. As the person entrusted to make sure our fields are safe for residents, I felt it was the best action to take."

Without the use of pesticides, lawns that rely only on traditional fertilizers (which are being phased out as well) are at great risk of being overrun by weeds, grubs and disease. Starting with extensive soil testing, an effective organic lawn care program systematically focuses on improving soil conditions. While the process is exact, the general goal is to increase the flow of water, air, nutrients, and beneficial microbiology in the soil so that turf has a strong, natural base and can withstand stresses on its own.

The Scarsdale fields are looking good on their organic diet, and above-ground visitors aren't the only ones that think so. Vice President Michael Almstead has been managing the fields and says, "When I pull up grass here I find tons of earthworms, whereas on a solely chemically treated lawn you really don't find them. Not only are the earthworms helping to aerate soil and increase root growth, but they are also near the top of the soil food-chain and their presence is a great indicator that the rest of the soil ecosystem is functioning well."

Almstead Around Town

Riverside Park Dutch Elm Innoculations
As part of our fourth season of care in a long term management project, we recently inoculated 38 trees to protect them from Dutch Elm Disease (DED) for the Riverside Park Fund. As a reaction to the DED pathogen, Elms produce gums to slow the spread of the disease through their vascular systems. Unfortunately, the fungus continues to spread uninhibitedly, and the same gums that were meant to be used defensively are overproduced and clog the flow of water and nutrients throughout the tree.

Since the beetles that carry DED spores could land anywhere on a tree, especially the outer twigs, it is important to circulate the control throughout the entire vascular system. To do that, we select multiple injection points in the root system of each tree and circulate the control using a pump. Over 99% effective, the treatment lasts 2-3 years, based on size.

Post Storm Clean Up for the Paine to Pain Race
An Almstead crew, directed by Arborist Jeff Delaune, volunteered their time to prune storm damaged branches throughout the 13-mile cross country trail used for the Paine to Pain Half Marathon that took place this October 2nd. After Hurricane Irene passed through Westchester County, areas of the trail were in pretty bad condition and not suitable for runners. After a full day's work by the crew, the trail was race ready – and Almstead's own Russell Cruz proved it, coming in 9th overall in a group of 450 runners and 1st in his age group!

Many municipalities in our service area are faced with storm damage like this, and we're glad to have been able to help. The abundance of public outdoor space in the suburbs of New York is one of the best aspects of the lifestyle here and central to how we come together as communities.

Images of our volunteer crew clearing the path for the Paine to Pain Half Marathon and Almstead Tree Climber Russell Cruz reaching the finish line first in his age group.



Emerald Ash Borer in the Field - Bob Bociek, Arborist in Fairfield County Connecticut



Almstead Arborist Bob Bociek peeling back the bark of an Ash to uncover Emerald Ash Borer larvae. The only sign of stress on this tree was a single minor epicormic shoot (also called a water sprout or sucker), but it was riddled with larvae just below the bark.

Despite the rain and mosquitoes, a group of 30 tree professionals gathered on September 23rd to witness the damage caused by another imported pest, the emerald ash borer. Organized by members of the Connecticut Tree Protective Association and hosted by the New York Department of Conservation, the team of commercial arborists, tree wardens, DEC officers and members of the United States Department of Agriculture came to identify host trees in the field and learn the distinguishing signs of the insect's presence. I (Bob Bociek) was part of the group along with fellow arborist, Tim Katenkamp from our Hawthorne, NY office.

We gathered in the Kingston, NY regional DEC office for an hour-long presentation full of photos, charts and data tracking the invasion. Informative, yes, but the group was anxious to get out into the field and see things firsthand. Years of reading and discussing the problem left us feeling assured that spotting the pest would be routine for trained tree care professionals, but we were in for an eye opening day.



We uncovered Emerald Ash Borer larvae that were carving away at the vascular system of the trunk. Eventually, the pests undergo their transformation into the relatively harmless brilliant green insects that give them their name.

Some History for Those Unfamiliar with the Problem...
The emerald ash borer (EAB) is an invasive pest native to China and thought to be brought here in packing products like pallets, or other imported untreated wood items where the borer's eggs and tiny larvae can go unnoticed. Initially discovered in Detroit, Michigan, the pest first spread north to Windsor, Canada and has since moved to parts of the Midwest and towards the eastern seaboard. In August of this year, the pest was found in Westpoint, NY, which means it's quite close to hitting our end of the woods if isn't here already. EAB has made these leaps and bounds across the continent mostly by hitching rides on transported firewood and nursery stock.

The adult is a small, shiny, emerald-green insect with a moderate appetite for the foliage of our native Ash trees. It's the larval stage that causes the damage, though, feeding its way through the [\[continued inside\]](#)

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- Emerald Ash Borer in the Field
- Inspecting Trees for Hazard Potential
- Visiting Tarrywile in Danbury, CT
- And more...

A Letter from the CEO



How about this weather we've been having, huh? If there was ever a year to keep this casual conversation starter in your rotation, 2011 has been it. It was the second hottest summer on record, the rainiest August (thanks, in part, to the *hurricane*), and we had 3 of New York's 10 largest recorded snowstorms. While a lot of us can slip inside during the worst of the weather (minus the commute) and wait for a nice day, plants are out there all day everyday no matter what, and it hasn't been easy.

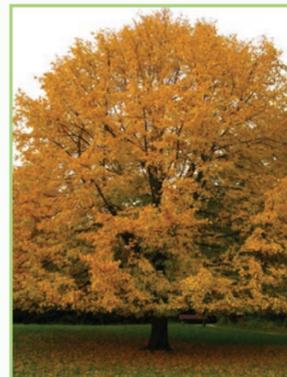
A lot of diseases and insects that are detrimental to trees, shrubs and turf thrive in wet, warm conditions – and that's exactly what we had for much of the summer. Starting early in the season, we saw increased instances of diseases like Sycamore Anthracnose and insect infestations of Scale, Lacebug and more. There were also many ornamentals, like Japanese Maples, that were stressed from going through 2010's hot summer followed by a harsh winter, and simply didn't return from dormancy in the spring.

It's this type of environmental stress that we need to be particularly aware of going into the next growing season. Fighting off pests and pathogens, and healing over wounds from snapped limbs, have taken away from trees' time during the growing season to produce and store energy that they need to survive the winter and to push out new growth in the spring. Nutrient-rich soil care treatments, careful monitoring for insects and diseases, and taking control of cultural conditions like improper irrigation and soil compaction issues will each play a part in keeping landscaping healthy in the year to come. A seasonal property inspection is a good opportunity to discuss a strategy with your arborist.

Sincerely,

Ken Almstead, CEO
International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist NY0335

Have You Considered...?



If you're looking to replace a mature tree lost in the hurricane, Lindens are a great large feature tree in the landscape. Here we're featuring the native American Linden, but other species, like the Silver Linden and Littleleaf Linden are good choices as well.

Latin Name: *Tilia americana* **Common Name(s):** American Linden, Basswood, Lime Tree

Tree Type: Native to our local forests, this is a large tree with a somewhat rounded shape in maturity.

Sun and Water Requirements: Basswoods prefer full sun or partial shade and grow in many different soils, although they do best in moist, fertile soil.

Expected Growth: These trees typically grow to 60-80' tall, with a spread of 1/2 to 2/3 the height. The growth rate is medium, growing up to 30' in a 20 year period.

Foliage: Toothed leaves are asymmetrical where they meet the stem and are large, measuring 4-8" long.

Flower and Fruit: Clusters of creamy yellow flowers (and later, small nut-like fruits) are suspended from the center of thin, 3-4" long bracts (specialized leaves). See the center image above.

Landscape Value: The American Linden is a smart choice for filling a large space. It's hardy in our climate and doesn't tend to face many disease or insect problems, which means it usually requires relatively little maintenance (mostly pruning). If you're working with a smaller space, like a one-tree yard, then a smaller Linden, like the Silver or Littleleaf mentioned above, make more sense.

Emerald Ash Borer Project [continued from front]

tree's vascular system until it shuts down entirely and the tree dies. The pest attacks only Ashes, preferring Black, Green and White, in that order. While there is an inoculation for EAB, once it's present there is no effective control available short of removing the tree to reduce the chances of letting the pest spread to surrounding specimens.

Our Day in the Field

We set out for three sites: a section of state forest, a local hunt club and a private residence, all three with confirmed EAB sightings. As it turned out, finding evidence of the insect in areas with confirmed infestations was surprisingly difficult for us. The signs (bark splitting, epicormic shoots, woodpecker damage, canopy dieback, D-shaped holes in the trunk) were subtle and didn't follow the textbook patterns we were expecting. Not to mention, these insects are tiny – seeing a slide show depicting the pest the size of a small dog and finding it alive in the open forest are two entirely different experiences. By the end of the day, we had a feel for the hunt, but it cemented for us that this pest won't arrive in our trees with any fanfare.



Actual size

This insect is close by and here to stay. It will have a huge impact on our landscapes and more importantly, on our northern forests. Learn more at emeraldashborer.info and definitely contact an arborist if Ash trees make up part of your landscape. Preemptive treatments are currently the only method available to preserve these troubled trees.



Your Seasonal Inspection

One of the most valuable services we offer our clients is an expert visual ground inspection of their trees, shrubs and turf on an annual basis, and it's completely complimentary.

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

Places to Visit: Tarrywile in Danbury, CT

If you're a nature lover like we are, you'll surely agree that spending the day at a park with 722 acres of pristine open space, glistening bodies of waters and fields and meadows that give way to spectacular views is just a dream come true. Add a mansion to this list and you'll find yourself describing Tarrywile Mansion and Park in Danbury, Connecticut.

Once the site of an active dairy farm and fruit orchard, Tarrywile Park is now home to 21 miles of hiking trails, 2 ponds, a lake and several picnic areas. On any given day, you can find bird watchers perusing the trees, fishermen casting their lines, local high schools training for cross-country meets or park volunteers conducting guided hiking tours. For those looking to learn about Tarrywile, both present and past, at their own pace, brochures for self-guided tours of the structures or trees around the park are also readily available at the Mansion. Among the majestic collection on the property, you'll be able to



identify Weeping Cherries, Eastern Hemlocks and Japanese Red Maples.

The Tarrywile Mansion, adjacent to the park, was once the estate of prominent Danbury physician, Dr. William Conrad Wile in the late 1800s. A splendid twenty-three room shingle-style Victorian home, the Mansion is now a community center for the City of Danbury. Nearby the Mansion is the property's enchanting children's garden, with winding paths, beautiful plantings, a playhouse and even a Troll House off

to the side in the woods (pictured center). Young, old, or somewhere inbetween, this beautiful estate has something to offer everyone.

Address: 70 Southern Blvd Danbury, CT 06810

Telephone: (203) 744-3130

Hours of Operation: Park – Dusk to dawn, open year-round (weather permitting)

Mansion – by appointment only

Admission & Parking: Free

Inspecting Trees for Hazard Potential

In the days, and hours, leading up to Hurricane Irene, our offices received a slew of phone calls from worried homeowners about potentially hazardous trees on their properties. Many hadn't consulted with an arborist in years, if ever, but had a bad feeling about one or more of their trees. Others knew they had a problematic tree but had put off the necessary pruning, cabling or removal.

Having your trees inspected and cared for on a regular basis gives you great peace of mind when you hear news of a storm on its way, and for good reason. Maintenance really does make a difference. Here's some anecdotal evidence: Two large campuses we actively manage, Riverdale Country School and Horace Mann School in Riverdale, NY, were hit hard by Irene, but had exceptionally little tree damage. Out of hundreds of trees, we saw a downed limb on one campus and no damage on the other. Likewise, of the more than 350 appointments our arborists went on in the week following the storm, only a quarter were to see our clients on landscapes that we actively manage throughout the year.

With that said, we urge you take advantage of Almstead's Seasonal Inspection program. There is a lot that an arborist can tell from simply walking through and taking a look at a property. Warning signs of potential hazards include leans away from the sun, poor branch architecture, dead wood, cracks, bleeding sap, frass, trunk abnormalities, mushroom conks and more. The difference between having your trees checked now and waiting until the next storm could be drastic, if only for your peace of mind.



Antidesiccant Applications

Protect your evergreens from losing moisture through leaves or needles this winter with an organic antidesiccant application.



Winter Pruning

Pruning in winter is smart for a number of reasons: Branch architecture is easier to see, insects and diseases are dormant, and frozen ground makes it easier to move heavy equipment closer to trees.



Fall Planting Season

Fall is an ideal planting time for trees and shrubs. That's because plants focus their energy on root establishment now, rather than on top growth.

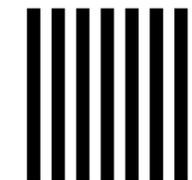
Image Credits

Linden bracts: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA. Linden leaves: Paul Wray, Iowa State University. Emerald Ash Borer: Howard Russell, Michigan State University. All 3 Images: Bugwood.org.

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