

Arbor Notes

Spring/Summer 2011



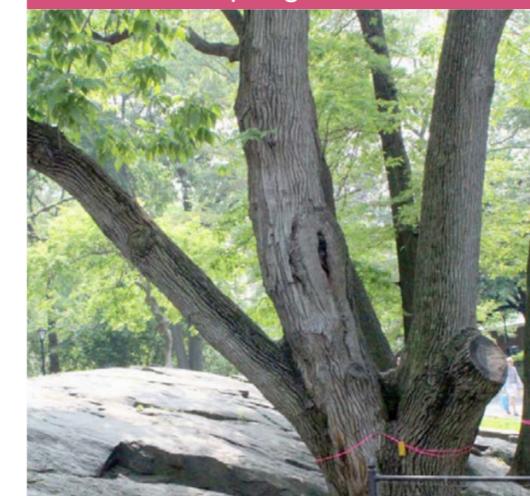
Almstead Around Town

Organic Lawn Care for the Village of Scarsdale
We are excited to have taken on caring for the Village of Scarsdale's public lawns using our Pure Organic lawn care program this year, which is free of synthetic herbicides, fungicides, and fertilizers. Many towns are starting to embrace organic landscape care, as are individual homeowners, and we can say from experience that when it is executed correctly, the results are fantastic.

Million Trees NYC Plantings
The reforestation of the College of Mount Saint Vincent in the Bronx continued this Spring, thanks to the donation of 101 trees by the Million Trees NYC project. Almstead plotted and planted each of the trees as a followup to the work we started last Fall. The campus was very much in need of the new trees as many were lost in the storms that swept through the area in 2010, including a devastating tornado in July.

Emerald Ash Borer Awareness Week
The last week of May this year was sanctioned by the NY Department of Environmental Protection as Emerald Ash Borer Awareness Week. Along with volunteers throughout the state, Almstead arborists joined the effort to tag Ash trees in order to increase awareness of the harmful invasive pest that has already been found as close to the NYC metro area as Ulster County, NY.

Emerald Ash Borers (EAB) feed on the growing cambium layer of Ash trunks as larvae and also bore large holes in the sapwood to make space for their transformation into beetles. Both of these behaviors are incredibly detrimental to the trees. Fortunately, there are effective controls available for the pest. For information on identifying EAB and taking preventative measures to save your own Ash trees, we recommend visiting emeraldashborer.info.



This Ash in Central Park, tagged by Almstead arborist Chris Busak during Emerald Ash Borer Awareness Week, predates the opening of the park in 1857.

Request a Consultation

- Please contact me to schedule a **complimentary on-site consultation** with a professionally certified Arborist.

I'm also interested in:

- Arbor Care** Customized pruning, mature tree preservation, tree and stump removal...
- Plant Health Care** Fertilization, disease and pest control, monitoring programs...
- Organic Care** Compost teas, organic pest controls, natural soil and root care...
- Consulting** Hazardous tree evaluation, mature tree preservation, construction protection...
- Lawn Care** Fertilization, weed control, seeding, core aeration, organic options...

Name _____
Phone _____
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Address _____
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Revitalization Through New Plantings

Felician College
The Felician College in Lodi, New Jersey has begun an extensive campus revitalization project this Spring that will continue into next year (see photos above). Among other improvements, the revitalization includes the planting of around 40 new trees, 500 shrubs, and 400 perennials. Upon receiving funding for the project, staff at the school reached out to their Almstead arborist, Ryan Duff. Enthusiastic from the beginning, Ryan has been highly involved in the project from making planting recommendations through to managing the installation process. He took special care in working to compile plant material for a Mary garden at the school, where each plant holds some religious symbolism in the Catholic tradition (the school is run by a monastic order).



Geese at Beechwood Estates check out a newly planted Sugar Maple

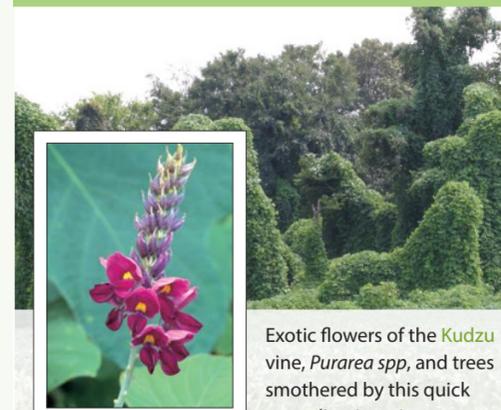
trees on campus utilizing an Air Spade to break up compacted soil and work on the root systems. This is a pivotal step in transitioning the campus from the current organic based care to the 100% organic landscape care program we're aiming for. Mature trees tend to require the most management, but improving their soil conditions and root systems

greatly strengthens their natural defenses against pests and diseases.

Beechwood Estates
Like many properties in our area, Beechwood Estates in Briarcliff Manor, NY lost beautiful feature trees to storm damage last year. This year, they are focusing on revitalization. Home to some very old and stately trees, Beechwood residents wanted the new trees to fit in — so we planted some fairly large new specimens.

From finding high quality large stock at the nursery to moving the trees and getting them into the ground, this project was definitely more of a challenge than most. The trees look great in their new home, though. Choosing to plant large trees like this is a great option if you are working with a well established landscape.

Dangerous Beauty: The Allure of Invasive Plant Species



Exotic flowers of the Kudzu vine, *Purarea* spp, and trees smothered by this quick spreading invasive.



Japanese Honeysuckle, *Lonicera japonica*, is particularly devastating when it spreads to wooded areas.

The invasive pests endangering our native ecosystems today tend to have been brought to North America unknowingly. The Maple-devastating Asian Longhorned Beetle, for instance, is thought to have arrived via wooden packing materials used on ships. Invasive plants, on the other hand, are introduced intentionally more often than not. Why? Because we like the way they look! At least, we liked the way they looked before they overran our roadsides and forests and nature preserves.

Once Upon a Time...
The basic story goes about the same way for most of these invasive plants. A new ornamental species is introduced for its beautiful flowers, foliage, growth habit, berries, or what have you. The plant grows incredibly well in its new habitat and looks great. Then the plant finds its way into an area that isn't actively managed horticulturally (roadsides, forests, etc.). Every plant has a mechanism for reproducing beyond its immediate area, most involving either wind or animal distribution of its seeds, so this step in the story is essentially inevitable.

Now, far away from the watchful eyes of its human benefactor, as well as any of the factors that may have kept it in check in its homeland, the invasive plant runs wild. It outcompetes native plants and begins to take up more and more space in the natural landscape. In the case of many vines, like the Japanese Honeysuckle and Kudzu pictured left, even mature trees are overtaken at rapid rates. Not only is this incredibly ugly, it's also bad for our ecosystems. The reduction in biodiversity is dramatic, and not just



Charming flowers and foliage of the invasive *Multiflora Rose*, *Rosa multiflora*



Colorful seedpods of the *Tree of Heaven*, *Ailanthus altissima*



Stand of invasive *Ailanthus* saplings

A Letter from the CEO



One of the great things about being an arborist here at Almstead is that we really get a chance to know the communities we work in. Care for the trees in a neighborhood for over 10 years, and you're bound to meet nearby neighbors and friends (often by way of introduction when there's a question about a tree)! Not surprisingly, these word-of-mouth referrals have been the foundation of our continued growth and success. Cliche as it may sound, a referral truly is the greatest compliment we could receive as a business. To the many of you who have recommended Almstead to your own friends and neighbors over the years, I cannot thank you enough.

Starting this Spring, we've put together a program that puts some of our gratitude into action. By visiting us at almstead.com/grow, you can now make referrals online. If someone you refer this way schedules a complimentary consultation with an arborist, we'll make a donation to the Arbor Day Foundation to plant a tree to restore our National Forests. If they go on to hire Almstead, we'll give them a discount, and we'll offer you the choice between a discount of your own and a donation to a nonprofit organization of your choice through Network for Good. This is a great site that coordinates hassle-free donations to local nonprofits, from food banks to arts organizations.

We're excited for this opportunity to give back to the vibrant communities we are lucky enough to live and work in, and we hope you'll help us in making the program a success. The next time you think of someone who may need our services, simply visit almstead.com/grow to earn these rewards for your friends, yourself, our communities, and the planet.

Sincerely,

Ken Almstead, CEO

International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist NY0335



Have You Considered...

While invasive trees are commonly planted in our area for their aesthetically pleasing qualities, here's a native tree to consider that's equally beautiful:

Latin Name: *Cercis canadensis*

Common Name(s): Redbud, Eastern Redbud, Judas Tree

Tree Type: Small deciduous tree with a short trunk and large branches dividing close to the ground

Sun and Water Requirements: Full sunlight to partial shade; tolerates a wide range of soil conditions but grows most commonly in moist, rich soil in partial shade

Expected Growth: 20-30' tall and 25-35' in diameter; *Cercis canadensis* has a rapid growth rate in youth, but medium rate after 10 years

Flowers: Very showy; small, purplish-pink pea-like flowers that bloom in late April to early May

Foliage: Alternate, simple, heart-shaped leaves

Fruit: Legumes changing from green to dark brown in October; often numerous and persistent

Landscape Value: With its quick growth turnaround and striking floral display in April, *Cercis canadensis* is commonly used as a specimen tree in small residences. For those with established landscapes already, keep in mind that it does very well in small groupings or groves.



Invasive Plants [continued from front]

for plant life. Bird and animal populations that live in these areas are put under stress as well.

Making Better Decisions

Thankfully, there are a lot of efforts out there to remove invasive plants and keep them from spreading. On the other end of the spectrum, some invasives are still readily available for purchase – like Autumn Olive (pictured right) and English Ivy. As a property owner, it's important to know more about your plants than whether or not you like the way they look.

Of course, not every imported species is problematic, but importing plants is always a risk. One of the newest and worst invasives to reach our shores, Mile-a-Minute Weed arrived accidentally as a weed growing in the same containers as otherwise harmless plants.

Making informed, responsible choices about adding to your landscape is a pivotal element in fighting the spread of invasive plants. As a consumer, you have the power to make a difference and stop the demand for new exotic plants that may end up running rampant. We're lucky to have plenty of beautiful native trees, shrubs, vines, flowers, and grasses to choose from here. Not only do these plants come with a non-invasive guarantee, they almost always require less horticultural interference than their exotic counterparts. It's win/win for sustainability and your wallet!



The attractive, but highly invasive Autumn Olive, *Elaeagnus umbellata*, is available for sale in many nurseries.

Schedule a Complimentary Consultation

One of the most valuable services we offer our clients here at Almstead 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! ↪

Lasdon Park, Arboretum & Veterans Memorial

Soak in the sun and bright hues of blossoms this summer at the Lasdon Park, Arboretum and Veterans Memorial.

This horticultural hub in Westchester County contains 234 acres of gardens, woodlands, open grass meadows and formal gardens. Stroll past the multitude of plant specimens acquired from all over the world, become inspired by the several memorials and museums honoring the servicemen and women of Westchester County or simply find your inner peace at the Chinese Friendship Pavilion, gifted by the People's Republic of China to the residents of Westchester.

On any given Sunday, you may find one of our very own arborists, Jon Olsz, volunteering his time to hand prune ornamental shrubs or even the pines, spruces, firs and cypress that make up the impressive conifer collection at the park. For those

who enjoy nature with a history lesson on the side, there is a Famous and Historic tree trail where you can read about a famous person or event to which the original parent tree was witness (these trees were grown from seeds of the original trees).

Whether you're looking to lose yourself through the winding trails, partake in ongoing botanical research (workshops are offered throughout the year) or simply bask in the sun's rays while surrounded by natural beauty, Lasdon is a great place to do so.



Hours of Operation: Open seven days a week, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; the Veterans Museum is only open on weekends
Address: 2610 Amawalk Road (Route 35), Katonah, NY 10536
Phone: (914) 864-7263
Admission: Free (County park pass not required)

Arborist Q&A - Growing Degree Days

Q. Last month, your Plant Health Care Tech was on our property and he mentioned monitoring plant problems using growing degree days. Can you explain what that means? — *Ted, Greenwich CT*



A. Degree days are most familiar to us in the Northeast relative to home heating in the Winter. Energy providers use the system to determine fuel delivery dates and demand curves. Growing degree days are used by arborists and horticulturalists to determine when a particular pest or disease may rear its head – and to be able to do something about it before it causes irreparable damage.

In our area, growing degree days (GDD's) begin to accumulate anytime the average temperature is above 50 degrees Fahrenheit (the general temperature at which plants begin to grow). One GDD accumulates for each degree over 50 for that day. For example, if the average temperature for March 2nd is 55 degrees, then 5 GDD's have accumulated. If the average falls below 50 for the day, the number is ignored and no GDD's accumulate. Each day's GDD total is added to a running total for the season, so by early July there are usually over 1,000 GDD's that have accumulated for the year.

What does it all mean out in the field? Researchers have determined the number of growing degree days required for a wide range of pests and can predict their emergence from dormancy and the beginnings of their life cycles. In a Plant Health Care program, the goal is targeting pests and the plants they prey on so treatments are timely and effective with as little impact on the environment as possible. If a pest is not active or about to become so, applications to control it have little result.

There are several places to find the current GDD tally for a specific area; we subscribe to a publication from Cornell University called, "Branching Out." This bi-weekly guide not only accumulates GDD's but provides an in-depth look into insect and disease issues and timing for their control.

— Gary Norman, Arborist in Fairfield County, CT

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Teach 'em While They're Young

Looking for longevity from your new landscaping? Structural pruning and root care for young trees will prevent a slew of problems later on down the road.



Freshly Brewed Compost Teas

Our organic compost tea brews enrich soil with beneficial microorganisms that produce nutrients plants need for more sustainable land care.



Lawn Care Programs

Almstead offers lawn care programs from all four of our locations. Choose from Pure Organic, Organic Based, and Traditional programs.

Image Credits:

Kudzu: John D. Byrd, Mississippi State University flower: Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society J Honeysuckle: Jill M. Swearingen, USDI National Park Service flower: John D. Byrd Multiflora Rose: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA flower: James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service Ailanthus: Chris Evans Autumn Olive: Chris Evans berries: James R. Allison, Georgia Department of Natural Resources Redbud: Tim Stancec leaf: Paul Wray, Iowa State University flower: Paul Wray. All images via bugwood.org.