



# Arbor Notes

Spring/Summer 2013



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Image: A view of Manhattan beyond Governors Island.

## Almstead Around Town - Celebrating Arbor Day

As Earth Day and Arbor Day arrived, Almstead arborists participated in a number of events. In New Jersey, Ryan Duff encouraged arborists-to-be by reviewing the many exciting careers available in arboriculture at a school Career Day, while Alan McCullough led tree ID scavenger hunts with children at an area private school. Ryan also planted trees at two local colleges, and the whole office teamed up to participate in the Ridgewood Earth Day Fair.

Tim Katenkamp, Branch Manager of our Hawthorne NY office, participated in New Castle Clean-up Day, where our crews pruned trees in downtown Chappaqua. Pat McVey shared his tree expertise with an elementary school class, giving each student a tree seedling to plant at home. Jon Olsz helped with persimmon tree planting in Onatru Park in Lewisboro, as well as planting fruit trees with students at a local school.

In Norwalk, Connecticut, Michael Almstead donated a red maple to Jefferson Elementary, which was planted by students in a ceremony with the Mayor. With some help from the students, Gary Norman planted a dogwood and a mulberry at a private school. Brian Carolan planted an Arbor Day tree at a nature center with a bit of assistance from their preschoolers, and Ed Golinowski planted a tree at a New Canaan church alongside their staff.

In our New Rochelle office, Ken Almstead and Mike Perez held a tree climbing event at a local Arboretum where kids were pulled up to a high branch of a beautiful maple tree in a safety saddle. Dan Dalton planted a red maple at a local school, with a little help from an enthusiastic class. Almstead also donated 200 Norway spruce saplings to the "Magical Treeture Nursery" in Eastchester. Arborist Michael Marks helps local Girl Scouts plant the saplings every year.



View a photo album of all the Arbor Day celebrations we took part in at facebook.com/almsteadtree.

## Request a Consultation

- 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...
  - Plant Health Care** Fertilization, disease and pest control, monitoring programs...
  - Organic Care** Compost teas, organic pest controls, natural soil and root care...
  - Consulting** Tree risk assessment, mature tree preservation, construction protection...
  - Lawn Care** Fertilization, weed control, seeding, core aeration, organic options...

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## Take the Ferry to Governors Island

Nestled between Brooklyn and the southern tip of Manhattan, Governors Island doesn't feel like part of a metropolis. It is the last large piece of land in New York City not connected to the mainland by roads. What began as a military outpost has now become an exciting public space, a "Playground for the Arts."



Almstead has treated many of the elms on Governors Island for Dutch elm disease.

The strategic location of Governors Island made it an important point of defense for both the British and the Americans for over 200 years. In the early 20th century, landfill from the Lexington Avenue subway more than doubled the size of the island to 172 acres. In the 1960's, it became a Coast Guard base complete with houses and schools for 3,500 residents. In the 1990's the island, excluding 20 acres which became a National Monument, was sold for a nominal amount to New York City, with restrictions prohibiting permanent housing or casinos.

Today the island is characterized by wide sweeps of lawn and stately trees. It hosts a public high

school and an artists' studio program. From May to September, the calendar is filled with public events that hundreds of thousands of people enjoy, set in the beautiful parkland of the island.

Almstead's role at Governors Island is in tree evaluation, inoculating the elms against Dutch elm disease, and pruning. It's wonderful to be involved in maintaining this beautiful refuge in the heart of NYC. Today a Master Plan for Governors Island is being implemented that will continue to enhance the beauty and accessibility of this island.

You can go to Governors Island for a picnic or attend a cultural or recreational event. You can reach the Island by ferry from Manhattan or Brooklyn. Bring your bike, but not your pet. There are events happening every weekend through September. You can enjoy installation art, learn the history of maritime disasters in New York harbor, or see a vintage baseball game.

For more information on Governors Island go to [www.govisland.com](http://www.govisland.com).

## The Building Blocks of a Beautiful Lawn



We've come a long way from the days when a lawn was maintained by grazing sheep. The lush green lawns that we've come to expect require regular attention in order to sustain their beauty and health. What are your lawn expectations? Does your grass need to withstand touch football, catch with the dog, or just some Adirondack chairs? Do you prefer to put up with some weeds in order to go completely organic? Most important, do you want to take care of your lawn health yourself or let Almstead do the work?



### So, what are the building blocks of a beautiful lawn

**Start with the right grass for your sun and soil.** Having a soil sample analyzed will tell you how grass-friendly your yard is: the soil structure of each lawn is unique. How much sun does it get? How much compaction from trampling does it see? Even grass seed blended for shade requires about 4 hours of dappled sunlight per day. If you have less than that, you won't have a strong, healthy lawn. Fortunately, it's sometimes possible to lightly prune overhanging trees to open enough of the canopy to allow light to filter through. In deep shade, planting groundcover or mulch may be good alternatives.

**Repair damage in spring.** A light top dressing of compost gives a lawn the right nutrient diet for strong roots. This is the time to help the roots build the structure they need to better retain moisture through summer droughts. Early spring is also a good time to overseed areas that were damaged over the winter.

**Fertilize - appropriately!** Too many people, including some lawn care professionals, still believe more is better when it comes to fertilizer. Whether you choose an organic fertilizer or a synthetic one, it should be tailored to the specific needs of your lawn. Your lawn will benefit from the right fertilizer and lime, in the right amount, at the right time. Don't forget the contribution of mulching mowers: redistributing grass clippings and leaf shreds restores nitrogen to the soil and leads to less need for fertilizer. [continued inside]

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## A Letter from the CEO



As spring is shortly coming to a close and the summer heat approaches, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the past few months and comment on a few of the articles inside this edition.

First, I wanted to personally thank all of our team members across the board for putting in the long hours and extraordinary efforts servicing our clients through and after super storm Sandy over these past several months. In this same vein, thank you to all of you, our loyal clients, for being patient and working with us in the absence of power, phones and emails, which required us to depend on outside messaging services in some situations and work with overstretched resources. I know we were not perfect all of the time and couldn't service everyone that contacted us, but it was never a lack of effort or good intentions. We have had several storms over the past several years and it has allowed us to evaluate our internal systems and how we approach and organize for these extreme events. I hope that showed as we strive to improve this response as we evaluate the highs and lows of the event.

By now, most of the after-effects of the storm should be noticeable; whether it is dieback in tree canopies closer to the coast, evergreens that were not able to regenerate due to the desiccation of the buds, or turf that was washed out and will need renovation. Our arborists and lawn specialists are very "in tune" with these effects and available possible remedies. They are also as sources for consultation on appropriate replacement species, so please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns.

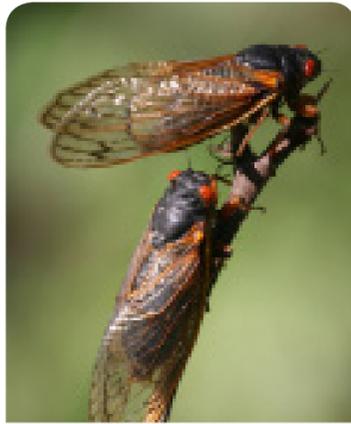
We have made significant improvements and investments in our Lawn Care Division, our newest service line. We are in the midst of our fifth season since expanding this division companywide from its inception almost 15 years ago in our NJ branch. Clients are really seeing the results of transitioning with us, and we have summarized a few of the basic building blocks we have utilized to build this premier service line in this edition.

Yes, the Cicadas are coming, if they are not already here by the time you receive this edition. There will be inevitable after-effects as described in the article. Pay special attention to your new and specimen plantings, there are some things we can do to prevent and remediate.

Lastly, next year (2014) will be our 50th year in business! We are very excited here and are beginning to plan many special events related to this special occasion so more news to come. On behalf of all of us at Almstead, we would like to thank all of our clients that have trusted us with the care of your green surroundings for these many years and to our founder Richard E. Almstead who still inspires us all, especially myself and my brother Michael, to give more than expected with honesty and integrity.

Sincerely,

## The 17 Year Periodic Cicada



17 year cicadas are 1" long (or more), red-eyed, and have translucent orange-veined wings.

The life cycle of the 17-year cicada is odd, even by insect standards. When the soil warms to 64°, wingless cicada nymphs emerge from holes in the ground near deciduous trees. The nymphs stay on the ground for a couple of days while their bodies harden, then crawl up the nearest tree and shed their skins, emerging as adult, winged cicadas. In less than 2 months, they mate, lay their eggs in slits they cut in the twigs of trees, and die. The eggs soon hatch and larvae fall down to the ground where they crawl into the soil, find a juicy root and wait out the 17 year cycle.

Cicadas are harmless to people, aside from the "ick" factor and the incessant noise of their mating calls. Trees aren't quite as lucky, since twigs are the sites where cicadas cut slits to lay their eggs. The insects can only pierce through thin bark, so mature trees are only impacted at their very tips. If cicadas are a problem in your neighborhood, you may notice flagging (dead leaves hanging from branches) at the edges of a mature tree canopy later in the season as a result of this egg laying process. It's best to prune this damage off, since dead wood is more susceptible to insects and pathogens that could spread further into the canopy.

Young trees and shrubs, which are much twiggy than mature trees, are more vulnerable to sustaining heavy damage. If they are small enough, these plants can be covered with netting to keep the cicadas from splitting open twigs to lay their eggs. Sometimes eliminating the cicadas, or using net covers, are the best way to preserve your trees. Talk to your arborist about your situation.

Is your property home to 17 year cicadas? Due to building, paving and tree removal, areas that have been developed have often lost their 17 year cicada colonies. Properties in less disturbed areas, such as rural Connecticut and New Jersey, may be home to much larger populations. Coping with a cicada horde isn't fun. People have been known to wear earplugs against the noise and carry umbrellas against the rain of sap they produce that can sometimes drip from the trees. At least you can be sure it will take 17 years before you have to do it again.



Cicadas repeatedly cut slits in tender bark, in order to deposit their eggs.

### Ash Tree Identification

The emerald ash borer has reached our area. Preventative treatment is the most effective option for treatment. If you are unsure as to whether there are Ash trees on your property, ask an Almstead Arborist to compile an inventory of your trees and find out.



### Plant Health Care Contracts

The growing season is in full swing! 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.



### Preventative Tick Treatments

Lyme disease carrying deer ticks are a serious problem in our area. Almstead offers the professional expertise to identify likely tick hideouts, and uses both traditional and organic products to treat those spots and protect the perimeter of your property.

## Have You Considered...



**The Red Horsechestnut** (*Aesculus x carnea*) is a stunning specimen tree in spring, when it is covered in 8" long pink and red upright clusters of flowers, set against dark green, serrated leaves. A moderate-sized tree (30 - 45 ft.), the deep green color of its coarsely textured, compound leaves and the density of its foliage make it a focal point in the landscape throughout the summer. The tree bears nuts in the fall which drop to the ground. Most wildlife can eat them safely, but they are somewhat toxic to horses, fish and people. The tree is largely disease-resistant in general; it is also more resistant to leaf blotch than the common Horsechestnut.

**Sun and Water Requirements:** Red Horsechestnut trees prefer moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soil and will grow in a variety of situations from full sun to light shade.

Image - Rüdiger Wölk, Münster, Wikimedia Commons

## The Building Blocks of a Beautiful Lawn [continued from front]

**Treat weeds.** As we create a healthy root structure in a lawn, it becomes harder for weeds to establish themselves. Nevertheless, there will always be some aggressive weeds that will sneak in among the grass blades. Treat your lawn with a pre-emergent herbicide in the early spring to stop seeds from germinating. This is effective for annual weeds such as crabgrass. Broadleaf weeds, such as dandelions, plantain and ground ivy can be controlled with either traditional or new organic products. If the weeds are just occasional visitors, hand pulling is always a good option.

**Watch for pests and diseases.** A healthy lawn is much more resistant to pests and diseases than an unhealthy one. However, problems can still occur. Our lawn technicians watch for signs of any emerging problems. The most pervasive lawn pest is the larvae of Japanese beetles, which we know as grubs. A large grub population will gnaw away at the grass roots, causing expanding brown patches. We offer traditional grub-control treatment as well as an organic alternative called milky spore for Japanese beetle larvae.



**Get ready for winter and the next growing season.** After a summer of heat and wear, a lawn often requires some extra attention. Core aeration will de-thatch turf and loosen compacted soil. Overseeding and top dressing will set the stage for a beautiful lawn next spring, when we start the cycle all over again!

### 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 local Almstead tree and lawn specialist.

## Salt Damaged Evergreens

New York metro area residents have had to remove tens of thousands of trees that were uprooted or broken by the winds from Hurricane Sandy. Those winds also blew tons of salt water through the air in towns along the Long Island Sound. Many evergreen trees and shrubs are now in decline, or entirely dead, as a result of that drenching.

Evergreens depend on their leaves or needles for photosynthesis for multiple seasons. As opposed to their deciduous counterparts that create a full set of leaves each year, evergreens will only replace about a third of their foliage in a given year. If the majority, or the entirety, of an evergreen has been damaged by salt, it may not have the resources to sustain itself.

How can you tell if your evergreens have experienced salt damage? Take a look. If the plant or tree was green last fall and now has browning needles and dry tips, salt is a likely culprit. When salt coats the foliage of a plant, it draws moisture out, causing a burned effect.

Is there any way to restore a damaged evergreen? Maybe. If green needles are mixed in with the brown, the plant has a better chance of rebounding. If the plant is heavily dried out, including the buds, in some situations we can go back into the canopy and prune to where we find green, live cambium underneath the bark. This is labor intensive, but it encourages dormant buds closer to the trunk to produce growth. Not all evergreens can be manipulated successfully this way. For instance, hemlocks won't respond well to severe pruning.

A sudden salt drench from a hurricane is unanticipated. If, however, you live near the water (or near a heavily salted road), choosing salt-tolerant plants is wise. Some plants, such as black pine, blue spruce and Chinese juniper will tolerate a lot of salt without drying out. An arborist can help you choose the right plants for your conditions, so please consult us prior to investing in replacements.



Severely salt damaged white pine

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