

Tree Care Workers Needed

Vincent Cotrone
Extension Forester
Luzerne County

Today there is an increased awareness by homeowners and municipalities for the need of trained and knowledgeable tree care workers. The green industry has responded to this demand for trained professionals by creating certification programs. Presently there are thousands of arborists that are certified by the International Society of Arboriculture and horticulturalists certified by landscape and nursery associations. These numbers continue to grow each year.

An Arborists Short Course is designed to increase working tree knowledge, professional arborist skills, and prepare you for the ISA Certified Arborists exam, which should improve your marketability.

The Arborists Short Course is designed to address these relevant topics: diagnosis of

plant disease and insect pests; nutrition and fertilization; selection, installation, and establishment of trees and shrubs; soil and water interaction and management; plant identification; assessment, and risk management; pruning; construction impacts and management; and safety and climbing.

Along with the topics discussed, all participants will receive a copy of the ISA Arborists' Certification Study Guide (a \$95 value), Woody Ornamental Insect, Mite and Disease Management (a \$7 value), and other printed materials.

The Arborist Short Course covers five half-day classes with a registration fee of \$100 or \$50 for review only. For more information about this conference, contact Penn State Cooperative Extension at (570) 825-1701 or (570) 602-0600.

Wet Year Not Disasterous For Christmas Trees

Bob King, Ph.D.
Cornell Cooperative Extension

With a wet spring followed by a moderate summer and mild fall, the quality of local Christmas trees for 2003 is rated from good to excellent with good availability in all sizes and types.

For the Rochester region, Christmas tree sales got off to a slow start on the weekend of Nov. 29, mostly because of snowy weather. Sales are expected to pick up dramatically for this and next weekend, which are the peak weekends for Christmas tree sales.

For many consumers, Firs such as Balsam, Fraser, Concolor and Douglas are popular choices and have soft needles that hold their needles well and have excellent fragrance. Reportedly, the Concolor Fir, with its whitish needles, is less of an allergen, and might be a tree of choice for people that normally cannot tolerate live trees.

White, Blue, and Norway Spruces also make good Christmas trees. Although not as fragrant as a Fir tree, they have solid branches that can hold heavy ornaments. The Blue Spruce is popular and has a bluish color, but has sharp needles that can make decorating a distressing job, but is a great way to

keep pets and small children from playing with the tree.

Often overlooked, Pines such as Red, Scots, and Austrian Pine also have solid branches and good fragrance. These pines tend to be less dense, which is ideal for large ornaments. The White Pine tends to have very soft branches and bend with heavy decorations, but it has a very soft look and illuminates quite well.

Potted Christmas trees tend to be popular among younger households and are live trees that should be planted outside after the holidays. Much smaller than a cut tree, the soil ball containing the root system will make for a much heavier tree to handle. Ideally, the tree should not be sheared like a cut tree since this will cause dense growth.

Most potted trees are planted in January when the ground is frozen. So it is important to dig a hole when the ground is warmer. Ideally, the hole should be 2-3 times the diameter of the soil ball, and no deeper than the ball's height. Keep the dug soil in a garage or cellar to keep it from freezing. Before planting, the tree will need to be conditioned to the colder temperatures again, so store in a cool place for a few weeks then move outside.

Christmas tree pointers:

- Make sure the tree fits your home. Measure the ceiling height to make sure the tree along with a tree topper will fit.

- Select a tree with a straight trunk and is not split into two.

- Grasp a branch between your thumb and forefinger and pull. Fresh trees have very few needles that will fall off and the branches will be supple and spring back. Inspect the branches for any animal life, insect activity, or other undesirable objects.

- Pick up the tree. A heavy tree indicates abundant moisture and sap and is not dried out and when dropped on its trunk, few needles will fall out.

- Have the tree wrapped. Wrapping helps with tying the tree to the roof or trunk of a car or truck and will save on damage to walls and floors when moved into the house.

- At the tree lot or just before you bring the tree in the house, saw a one-inch slice off the trunk. This opens up the vessels in the trunk for water to flow and will encourage needle retention. Immediately put the trunk in water before the newly opened vessels can close. Provide plenty of water while in the stand to avoid drying it out.

- Keep the tree from heat sources. Do not use candles or open flames near the tree and avoid combustible decorations. Make sure your lights are in good working order and that your smoke extinguisher and fire extinguisher are in working order.

Compost Helps Control Fungus

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Incorporating compost into soils when lawns are seeded reduces the severity of leaf rust, a fungal disease that attacks perennial ryegrass.

Ohio State University plant pathologists found that the amount of leaf rust on perennial ryegrass was reduced by 50 percent when the turfgrass was seeded into soils with at least a one inch layer of composted sewage sludge. The study is the first of its kind to document the suppression of a foliar turf disease through the incorporation of compost into the soil.

Mike Boehm, one of the project researchers, said the nitrogen that the compost adds helps ward off the disease. "We know that some fungi, like leaf rust, like to

attack turf that is growing under nutrient-stressed conditions," said Boehm. "The perennial ryegrass grew so well with the additional nitrogen that the pathogens were not able to attack it."

Perennial ryegrass was chosen for the study since it is most susceptible to leaf rust and is a common turfgrass seeded in Ohio. Leaf rust, caused by a pathogen of the Puccinia species, is recognized by a yellowing of turf blades, followed by reddish or orange-colored streaks on the leaves. The disease is most active under continuous warm days with dry conditions. Fungicide applications are currently the most effective means of controlling the disease.

Boehm said it is unclear whether the reduction in leaf rust

was caused exclusively by the additional nitrogen or if there were other factors involved.

"The compost is packed with microorganisms that do have plant-enhancing characteristics," said Boehm. "The study didn't separate the microbiology of the compost from the nutrient impact of the induced-resistance is from organisms that changed the physiology of the plant to make it less susceptible or if the nitrogen was at work. My guess is it is a little of both."

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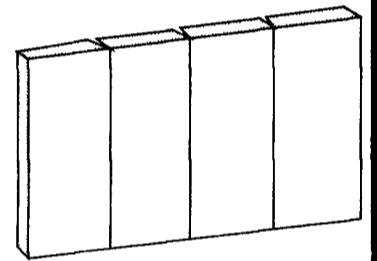
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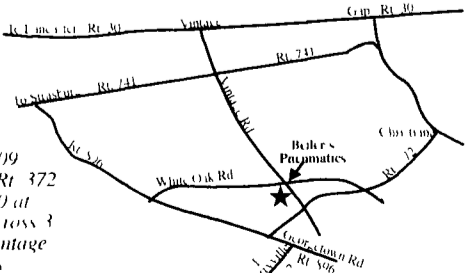
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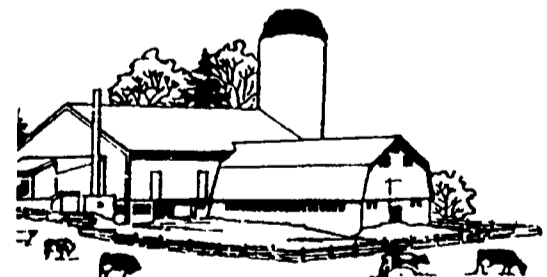
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