



THE CONNECTICUT ARBORIST

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Connecticut Tree Protective Association, Inc.

Fall 2020

CTPA in the Time of COVID

Much like every other organization, CTPA has been deeply impacted by the effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19. As an organization whose mission centers around outreach, education and meetings, it has been difficult for CTPA to function in the way it has traditionally. Of course, none of this is news – CTPA is the same as thousands of organizations that are attempting to fulfill their goals while also complying with the pandemic guidelines. It has not been easy but CTPA has done its best to provide the same services that members have come to expect, despite the challenges.

In this newsletter, we will review some of the basic offerings of CTPA and how they have been affected

by the pandemic. Feedback from the membership, particularly as to how we could be more helpful, is welcome. With this virus, it is difficult to predict the future. Meanwhile, we are making plans based on the present reality while hoping that we can return to something like the old normal, real soon.

Keeping Members Updated

When COVID-19 first emerged, the Governor directed Connecticut's response through the issuing of Executive Orders. CTPA sought to keep its members informed as to what these Executive Orders meant to tree care in the state. Board Member Kevin Wyatt became plugged into the news coming out of the State Capitol in Hartford, as well as to information being

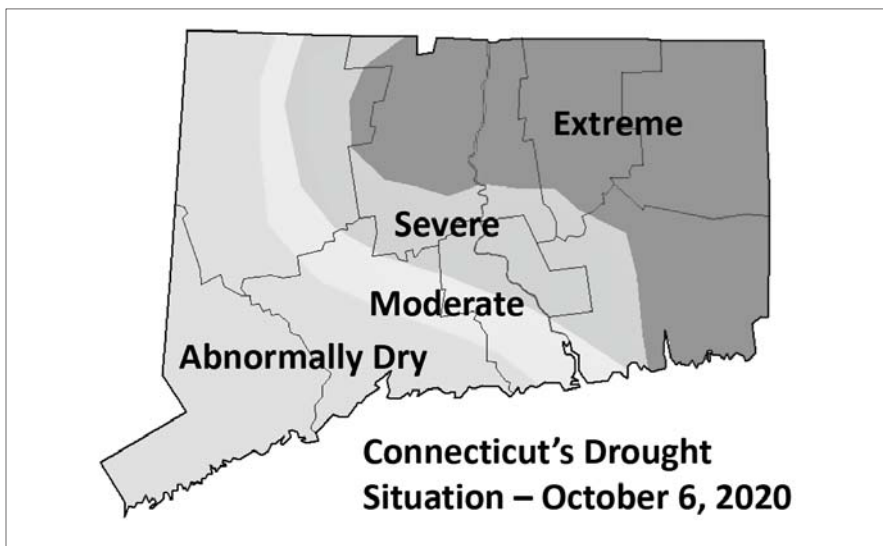
passed along by the Connecticut Environmental Council, an industry support association to which CTPA belongs. In turn, CTPA began posting summaries of the relevant portions of this information on the CTPA website.

The first of these on-line posts was published on March 21. In it, Governor Lamont discussed the "circuit breaker on social interaction". At that point, it was not yet clear whether tree care was included in the category of essential businesses. That was soon settled, with tree care being considered essential. Over the course of the next 4 months, some 5 additional summaries were posted. These summaries dug into such topics as what it means for tree care to be in the essential business category. The articles provided links to such excellent resources as those posted on TCIA's web site. They also included a discussion of the role of cloth masks in reducing virus spread in the workplace. Kevin and the CTPA board continue to monitor the pronouncements from the Governor's office. CTPA will keep passing along information as long as it remains helpful for the Association to do so.

The Climbing Competition

The first CTPA event to fall victim to COVID was the 2020 Connecticut Tree Climbing Competition. This

continued on page 5



In a year of problems, add one more. The above map is from the US Drought Monitor, showing how dry Connecticut was in early October. <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

We Advance the Care of Connecticut's Trees

Connecticut Tree Climbing Competition Update

Many scheduled events in Connecticut in 2020 were cancelled due to the COVID-19 virus. The Connecticut Tree Climbing Competition was no exception. The competition was to be held at Boothe Memorial Park in Stratford on May 9th. This beautiful place with mature trees is on a sloping terrain which borders wetlands and the Housatonic River. The grounds also has some historic buildings to visit.

The 2021 competition is scheduled to be at this same park. We encourage all climbers to practice, stay in shape and STAY SAFE. We also encourage volunteers and climbers to read the rule book as we hope that the 2021 competition will happen as planned.

As time goes on more information about the event will be sent out. We look forward to seeing all of your smiling faces next spring. The new date is May 8, 2021, with May 7th as the setup date.

If you wish for additional information, please contact a member of the Connecticut Tree Climbing Competition: Bud Neal (nealtreeservice@gmail.com), Charlie Iselin (charlieiselin@comcast.net) or Emmett Shutts (emmett.shutts@gmail.com).

Remember - be safe, be kind and be good.

- Bud Neal

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*We advance the care of
Connecticut's trees.*

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Arboriculture 101 Update

As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, the fall session of Arboriculture 101 was cancelled. However, CTPA is committed with continuing with this much depended-upon educational offering. We will be holding classes on-line after the start of the new year.

Several of the Arboriculture 101 instructors have already gained experience with presenting their classes virtually, as going on-line was necessary in order to finish up the Spring 2020 session. While everyone missed the in-person and face-to-face contact, the make-up classes were deemed a success. Rather than keep prospective students waiting who are so clearly motivated towards moving forward in their careers, CTPA will hold the Spring 2021 classes as ZOOM sessions. Every effort will be made to maximize the amount of personal interaction - from a distance - that has proven to be so helpful for students. Contact with professionals who have built good careers working with trees is an important part of these classes.

Flyers regarding the upcoming session will be sent out shortly. People who have already indicated their interest in the canceled Fall class will be given priority in registration. Details will be included in that announcement relating to registration, cost and how the course will be conducted.

CTPA sincerely hopes that this is the only time that it will have to hold Arboriculture 101 in this fashion. At the same time, it is an opportunity to learn something new, regarding better ways to teach and new ways to make the most of the electronic media. In that regards, wish the instructors and the students well!

A View From the Field

by Kevin W. Wyatt

Vice President of Arboricultural Services, Emerald Tree and Shrub Care

As we all know, 2020 has been a year of unprecedented disruptions and challenges to all of us living and working in Connecticut. It began with a warm and almost snow free winter season. Many trees experienced stress by breaking dormancy early.

Then, at the beginning of an unusually cold and wet spring, the coronavirus hit, shutting schools, businesses and places of worship. People were asked to largely shelter in place and minimize trips outside of the home. Runs on sanitizers and toilet paper had people stripping the shelves of supermarkets and department stores. New regulations on wearing of masks and social distancing went into effect. Many businesses were asked to close down if social distancing was not possible or if the likelihood of disease transmission was high.

Fortunately for the arborists of Connecticut and our clients, tree care was considered to be an essential business. Much of our work is designed to improve the safety of our client's properties and control environmentally damaging pests such as emerald ash borer, hemlock woolly adelgid and Dutch elm disease.

So, with new safety protocols assembled to protect workers and clients and with strict regulations set in place, we were able to go back to work almost without interruption.

Summertime came with a flurry of work for many of us when our clients found out they were having staycations. Summer camps for the kids were shuttered, vacation destinations were off limits and leisure travel was either cancelled or highly restricted due to the increased spread of the coronavirus throughout the United States. Clients often were working from home. All of this led to homeowners taking a closer look at their properties and seeing work that needed to be done.

Then on August 4th, Tropical Storm Isaias made its way up the East Coast and slammed into New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. The storm wreaked destruction with 70 mile per hour winds, tornadoes and salt damage before continuing on into upper New England.

In only a matter of hours, Isaias devastated our trees, homes, power grids and communities, to a degree rivaling that of 2012's Superstorm Sandy and the October snowstorm of 2011.

After Isaias blew through, trees were down everywhere. Roads were closed for days and powerlines were on the ground throughout the state. In many areas, power was not restored quickly, with some areas going without power for up to 10 days. Tree care companies, municipal

public work departments and utility companies worked round the clock to clear the damage. This ensured the safety of our clients and helped initiate the repair of their properties. These first responder efforts are highly necessary and to be admired. However, for commercial arborists, this was a frustrating time. We tend to pay constant attention to weather forecasts so that we are prepared to meet the needs of our clients in as short of time as possible after the storm. That was not so easy with this storm.

The Aftermath: Oak Wilt?

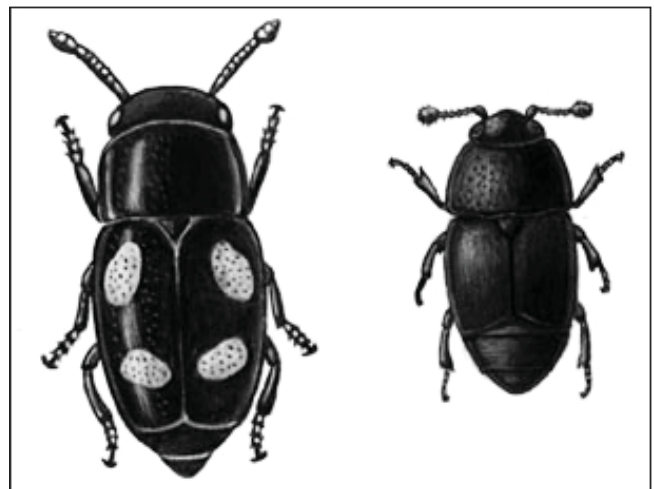
When standing there looking at such devastating damage, the uprooted and severely damaged trees that will require removal are for the most part obvious. We also see the snaps, hangers and cracked limbs in the tree canopy that will require restoration pruning, and we see where the installation of cabling and bracing systems or lightning protection might assist in damage prevention the next time we experience a storm like this.

What we cannot see as readily is the latent, long-term damage that a storm such as this may have brought upon us.

Oak wilt is a devastating disease that can kill red oaks in a matter of weeks and white oaks over a longer period of time, typically 2-3 years. It is coming closer and closer to home. First detected in Wisconsin in 1944, it did not appear in the northeast until 2008, near Albany, NY. As recently as 2016, oak wilt was confirmed in Brooklyn, NY and at four locations on Long Island. What about Connecticut?

There is a good possibility that Tropical Storm Isaias

continued on page 4



Nitulid beetles are a family of beetles commonly known as the sap or sapfeeding beetles. They are attracted to fruity smelling liquids such as those associated with oak wilt fungal mats.

A View From the Field (continued)

has brought oak wilt to Connecticut. The winds that blew across the Long Island Sound could easily have picked up nitidulid beetles from Long Island that were carrying oak wilt spores and deposited them here, among thousands of oak trees standing with open wounds from damaged branches or restoration pruning efforts.

In 2016, oak wilt was found and confirmed at Green-Wood Cemetery, in Brooklyn. We contained the disease by the removal of the infected tree and proper disposal of the wood. Green-Wood was fortunate because the layout of the cemetery caused this tree to be separated from those in other areas. The cemetery's roadways and walking paths isolated the roots of the infected red oak tree and prevented them from root grafting with other trees.

As a consequence of this find, at Green-Wood we now only performs maintenance pruning of oak trees during the winter months. Green-wood's arborists treat every wound with Lac Balsam to mask the wound's scent from the beetles.

Blocking the nitidulid beetles is important because of their role in the spread of oak wilt. The beetles carry spores of the fungus from spore mats on infected trees to wounds on healthy trees. This leads to the infection and the death of this new tree the beetles have now visited.

While this sort of overland transmission of the disease is more likely to occur in the first half of the growing season, it is not restricted to the early season. Significantly, it is not the only way in which oak wilt is spread. Once in an area, local spread of oak wilt primarily occurs when the fungus travels through the interconnected roots (root grafts) of infected and healthy trees.

Since oak wilt might be here, Connecticut arborists should be alert to the disease. The difficulty is that oak wilt does not have a distinct signature, with symptoms that can be readily distinguished from those due to other causes. The main potential indicator of oak wilt are leaves on infected oak trees that start to turn an off-color light green before turning bronze or red-brown, that then wilt and drop while still partially green. This browning or bronzing of the leaves usually starts at the tips and margins of the leaves, moving inward, often with a delineation mark across the face of the leaves where the color changes. For spring-infected trees, these symptoms tend to appear in mid- to late-summer and are often made worse by water stress.

In red oaks especially, the bark of the tree may split the following year from the pressure of fungal mats that develop just behind the bark. There is an oozing of a sweet, wine-like smelling liquid that attracts the nitidulid beetles. Feeding on these fungal mats leads the beetles to

become covered in spores. These beetles then will spread the fungus as they move on to feed on healthy trees.

What can we do to protect our oak trees and prevent the spread of oak wilt?

The following recommendations are from the USDA Forest Service and the CT Agricultural Experiment Station:

1. If you suspect that oak wilt has infected a tree, take photos of the entire tree, its leaves, and, if you see cracks or suspect fungal mats, the bark. Send them to Dr. Bob Marra at CAES (Robert.Marra@ct.gov). He will let you know if you should bring samples to his lab in New Haven.
 2. Do not perform maintenance pruning of oak trees from April - October while the nitidulid beetles are active. (This is a great way to build up a volume of winter work!)
 3. If pruning is absolutely necessary, paint the wounds with a wound covering such as Lac Balsam. This will assist in masking the scent of fresh wounds that are attractive to the beetles. Keep in mind, the priority should be on covering the wound, rather than on using the exact right covering. Time is a factor as the beetles will begin to arrive very quickly after any wounding.
 4. Root prune oak trees that may be infected to prevent the spread through root grafts to adjacent trees.
 5. When removing a dead oak tree, be sure to remove the stump completely.
 6. Costly fungicidal treatments are on the market for control of oak wilt. These can only be applied to healthy, symptom-free trees and where the label allows.
- Dr. Bob Marra of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station gave an excellent presentation on oak wilt along with beech leaf disease as part of the CTPA Virtual Summer

continued on page 5



Storm damaged oaks are very attractive to beetles potentially carrying oak wilt.

A View From the Field (continued)

Meeting. This presentation can be viewed on-line. See the CTPA web site for details. In addition, informational resources regarding oak wilt are available on the CAES web site and through the USDA Forest Service.

The Spotted Lanternfly

Immediately after Tropical Storm Isaias passed through the NY Metropolitan Area, sightings of spotted lanternfly began coming in from New Jersey, Staten Island and Green-Wood Cemetery. Then, in September, reports came in that this destructive invasive insect is in Connecticut as well.

It is important that we, as arborists, are vigilant in our property inspections to look out for strange behaviors in our trees and to be watchful for insects that seem weird or out of place. And it is just as important to keep our clients informed about what new pest may be lurking just around the corner. It was a well-informed bird watcher at Green-Wood Cemetery who photographed the first spotted lanternfly found on Long Island. This was on September 3rd, just one month after Tropical Storm Isaias passed through.



A spotted lanternfly egg mass. Egg masses tend to be fairly indistinct and without clear features as to color or shape. They can be found on a variety of rough surfaces, from tree bark to stones and building foundations. Because of this, the egg masses are exceptionally difficult to spot. They can also be easily moved, especially if attached to something like firewood, a truck bumper or building materials. The vigilance of arborists will be helpful in reducing the spread of this insect. Photo courtesy of the Penn State Extension web page.

CTPA in the Time of COVID (continued)

was originally scheduled for May 9 at Boothe Park in Stratford. However, as March turned into April, it became apparent that holding the event under the current restrictions was not possible. CTCC Coordinator Bud Neal discussed this extensively with CTCC volunteers and also with the organizers of the New England Tree Climbing Competition. After a full consideration of the alternatives, Bud determined that the best course of action was to hold off on the CTCC for this year and to re-schedule it for next year.

Arboriculture 101

The state-wide shutdown hit right in the middle of the Spring Session of Arboriculture 101, with 9 classes completed and 4 classes still to go. While the decision to cancel the 4 remaining classes was fairly straightforward, the choice as to what to do next was not as clear. Much like the students, the instructors in Arboriculture 101 wanted to see the course completed. However, there were good reasons to consider the options from a variety of viewpoints.

One factor to be considered was DEEP's schedule of examination dates for the written exam. Under the Governor's Orders, these exams were canceled for the time being. One of the main reasons for those taking the course is to pass the examination process, starting with the written exam. In that light, there was concern that moving too quickly to finish the course might not be

best for the students. Too long of a break between when the classes were held and the test is given might allow the classroom learning to fade. At the same time, a long break between the already completed, earlier classes and those yet to be given might also be counterproductive, with the continuity among classes being lost.

In the end, CTPA decided it would be best to simply forge ahead. The 4 final classes were concluded over the 4 weeks of June. This allowed CTPA's first foray into the use of Zoom. Attendance by students was very good and the discussions lively, with Emmett Shutts and Doug Williams proving to be as able on the computer screen as they are in front of the classroom.

The Summer Meeting

The CTPA Summer Meeting was held virtually this year, in 4 one-hour segments spaced a week apart, starting in August and ending in September. Sadly, this was all happened without any morning clam chowder or chili, and with no quick dips in the swimming pool in the afternoon.

The four workshops presented as part of the virtual Summer Meeting were:

1. "CAES Updates"- Katherine Dugas and Yonghao Li, PhD. - The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, New Haven
2. "Forces at an Anchor When Climbing
continued on page 7

A Look Back at the 2020 Annual Meeting



CTPA Board Member Kevin Wyatt introduces a presentation on Veteran Trees by Joe Charap of Green-Wood Cemetery. Joe's talk was part of a strong educational program.



The CTPA Trade Show can be a busy place, as the Mitchell brothers, Bill and Rich, can attest. Once again, the exhibit area was filled, with both booths and attendees.



CTPA President Allan Fenner presents the Arborist Citation Award to Leeane Marvin. Although not in attendance, Felicia Millet also received a Scholarship Award.



Allan presents the Arborist Citation Award to Chuck and Darryl Newman of Planters' Choice Nursery. Both contributed to success of CTPA's Centennial Tree Planting.



Former CTPA President and CT Agricultural Experiment Station Forester Jeff Ward catches up with recently retired Greenwich Tree Warden Bruce Spamman.



CTPA Scholarship Raffle Winner Joe Meadows shows off his new chainsaw, generously donated by Stihl. Proceeds from the raffle support CTPA's annual Arborist Scholarships.

CTPA in the Time of COVID (continued)

and Rigging." - Brian Kane, PhD. - University of Massachusetts – Amherst

3. "Soil Diagnostics and Management Programs." - Dr. Kelby Fite - Bartlett Tree Experts

4. "Beech Leaf Disease" - Robert E. Marra, PhD. - The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, New Haven

In planning these webinars, the Board of CTPA kept in mind that the Summer Meeting is important as a source of continuing education credits. Providing needed ceu's through these webinars became a primary goal. Of course, even that is not simple. CTPA had to design a system by which people could sign in before each virtual educational session, much like they need to sign in at in-person educational events. Instead of getting a slip after the talk was over, each attendee had to pass a short, 10 question quiz that would prove both their attendance and attention.

In a side note - the use of quizzes is actually a return to the old days, in so far as ceu's are concerned. Some 30 years ago, passing a quiz following a talk was required in order to obtain continuing education credits. This approach was dropped in those pen-and-paper days as too cumbersome. Computers make things much easier these days. It will be interesting to hear from people if they find that the quiz actually adds to the quality of the educational experience of these on-line workshops, by causing people to mentally review the material covered immediately after the talk.

These Summer Meeting webinars have all been given for free, to anyone who wished to attend. They have also been recorded and so are available for viewing at any time, provided the viewer registers (for free) on the CTPA web site. This registration is necessary for the ceu process and is also good information for the Association to have, as it considers the success of these on-line efforts.

Not surprisingly, attendance was down at these on-line workshops as compared to the usual, in-person gatherings. In a normal year, an individual or a company makes the choice to take a day off from work. Since these workshops happen in the middle of the day, not everyone is able to spend the time needed in front of a computer or smart phone screen.

CTPA Workshops

The Education Committee, under the leadership of Carter Peck and Claire Rutledge, had been actively planning a fall workshop for CTPA members when the virus hit. These plans are on hold indefinitely, until we have a better fix on where we are with regards to the virus.

The CTPA Office

The CTPA office has made some minor adjustments since COVID came to Connecticut. Executive Secretary Cathy Dvorsky moved the office computer to her home to avoid unnecessary trips to the office and had been working remotely since March, before recently returning to the office. The regular duties continue as before, however. Monthly Board Meetings take place by way of Zoom, while phone calls and emails are still answered. An additional assignment due to the virus has been grading all of those quizzes that have been coming in, in response to the Summer Meeting on-line webinars.

Cathy speaks for the entire CTPA Board when she notes that, despite the cancellations of 2020, she is looking forward to 2021 when we can hopefully see everyone in person! As the world around CTPA changes, the office, and the organization as a whole, has been diligent in accommodating these changes. We look forward to continuing the CTPA mission: We Advance the Care of Connecticut's Trees.



At the 2019 Summer Meeting, Richard Fassbender delivers a talk on drop zone safety. CTPA remains committed to its educational mission even as we make our accommodations for dealing with the coronavirus.



The dream team, as CTPA looks forward to getting back to such activities as the Tree Climbing Competition.

Updates

- **The Spotted Lanternfly:** On September 21st, the CT Agricultural Experiment Station sent out a press release announcing that the spotted lanternfly had been found in two Connecticut communities – Greenwich and West Haven. The find in Greenwich so far has been the more significant, with multiple live adults captured. In West Haven, only a single live adult was found. Subsequent inspections by CAES and USDAAPHIS have turned up other small, scattered populations in Fairfield County. APHIS and CAES will be asking arborists over the upcoming year to assist with the search for the spotted lanternfly. There is still a chance to catch the insect early in the infestation.
- The spotted lanternfly has proven that it can be both a highly annoying insect, ruining people's enjoyment of the outdoors, and one that is highly damaging to crops. The Penn State Extension web site is an excellent resource: <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly>.
- **Pear trellis rust:** During a recent webinar, Darryl Newman of Planters Choice Nursery mentioned pear trellis rust as a disease about which he is concerned. Pear trellis rust (*Gymnosporangium sabinae*) attacks pears of all sorts, including Callery pear, with junipers as the alternate host. Originally from Europe, in the late 1990's it crossed over into the United States from Canada. In 2012, it was first found in Connecticut. For more information, see the CAES Plant Disease Information Office (PDIO) website: <https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/PDIO/PDIO-Home/PDIO-Home>
- **Beech Leaf Disease:** After a summer of searching, beech leaf disease has now been confirmed in 7 of Connecticut's 8 counties. A partial list of the towns and locations in which it has been found includes Hamden, Guilford, New Haven, Easton, Roxbury, Madison, Clinton, Lyme, East Lyme, and as far inland as Kent (Macedonia Brook SP), East Hampton (Salmon River SF), and Plainfield (Pachaug SF). For more information, listen to the webinar recorded as part of the CTPA Summer Meeting series on the CTPA website. Also, access the Beech Leaf Disease fact sheet, available through the CAES PDIO website.

The recordings from the virtual Summer Meeting webinars are on the CTPA web site (CTPA.org). In the middle of the page, under "Find What You Need" there is a heading for "WEBINARS" and then a bullet for "Recorded Webinars". Click on that link to access the recordings. They are free and available to all.

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