



The Trunkline

Kramer Tree Specialists, Inc.

701 Church Street West Chicago, IL 60185 (630) 293-5444



Spring 2004

SAFETY A HIGH PRIORITY AT KTS



Our safety program has two main areas of focus. The first and foremost is the safety of our employees. Whether you receive a recommendation for tree pruning, tree removal, root pruning, or any other service, the first concern of our Certified Arborists is how the work can be performed safely.

Todd Kramer, tied in with appropriate lines to ensure this job is safely executed.

We are acutely aware that tree work can be dangerous. We find

ourselves working at heights well in excess of sixty-five feet on a daily basis. Several dozen chain saws are used by our crews everyday. Add chippers, stump grinders, and recyclers to the mix, and any one can appreciate the considerable exposure to danger we face regularly.

All our crew members are provided with and must use all their P.P.E. (Personal Protective Equipment). This includes a hardhat, eye protection, ear protection, and appropriate work boots. Special jobs require additional P.P.E. People using chainsaws on the ground wear ballistic chaps. Anyone climbing or operating one of our aerial lifts sports the whole regalia of Fall Protection Equipment.

Our programs train our employees in the following areas:

- All aspects of safely climbing trees
- Operating chain saws and various hand tools
- Safe and proper operation of our machines (aerial lifts, chippers, stump grinders, etc.)
- Driving skills
- 30-40 more topics, some industry specific and others more general, such as proper lifting techniques and avoiding trips and falls

In 2003, the teams at Kramer Tree Specialists worked 100,780 hours and incurred only one Time Loss Injury (eight days long).

Our forty-six company vehicles were driven a million and a quarter miles without a single accident for which we were at fault (we were hit twice – thankfully, no injuries).

After the focus on worker safety, our second area of focus is on damage to property. (That's your property as well as ours.)

Now, in addition to the regular safety meetings, all the safety training, all the documentation, etc., we felt we wanted to do something extra to put a very



Two KTS team members, dressed in required P.P.E..

positive spin on our safety programs. We therefore established a Safety Bonus – a very meaningful safety bonus. In 2003, the employees at K.T.S. received a total of over \$56,000.00 as reward for their outstanding efforts.

Many costs are incurred with injury. The first, of course, is human suffering. While this can be serious (even tragic), it is not the only cost. Employee morale must also be considered, as well as the dollar cost. It is well known that as employee morale goes down, the chance for another injury goes up. Can you see the slippery slope? This is why we place the utmost emphasis on safety.

As many of you have witnessed when you see our crews at work, safety is no 'accident'; skill and care are given to every performance!

Joe Kramer
President

Complete Professional Tree Care

www.kramertree.com



More News Inside!!

Hey, Watch It! You Are In My Space!

Everyone – well, almost everyone – needs their own space on occasion. I say “almost everyone” because I was informed, while being apologetic about our somewhat crowded PHC department, that some people like close quarters! The person the apology was directed at was my assistant, Mary. She informed me she is a twin and happens to be very comfortable with closeness!

I suppose there is the possibility that “twin” trees exist. But I don’t imagine they enjoy the same closeness as people twins! Trees need resources such as sunlight, nutrients, water, and air to survive, and they need each of these in adequate amounts. Trees “protect” their resources by limiting the growth of other plants and trees within their growing space. The term for this protection is “allelopathy”, pronounced “al-lee-low-path-y”.

Allelopathy is a process in which a plant produces chemicals that influence the growth of another plant. Did the walnut tree pop into your mind? It is perhaps the most commonly known allelopathic tree in our part of the country.

Allelochemicals can be transmitted from one plant to another by processes of volatilization, leaching, or exudation. Volatilization occurs when a tree releases a chemical in the form of a gas through small openings in their leaves. *Artemisia absinthium* (wormwood) volatilizes a chemical from its leaves that prevents germination and inhibits seedling growth in wheat. At the same time however, it stimulates seedling growth of white

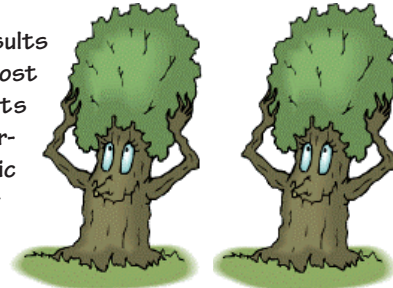
An interesting note about wormwood... the leaves are used for flavoring and are harmless. The concentrated form of wormwood is a powerfully addictive and poisonous stimulant that produces euphoric effects similar to those of alcohol infused with absinthe, which is a concoction of a number of natural extracts. Absinthe as an alcoholic drink became quite popular in France and was banned there in 1915, as it ultimately results in severe brain damage.

mustard. Pine trees leach acid into the soil as a result of decomposition of fallen needles. This acid in the soil keeps unwanted plants from growing near pine trees. Black walnut trees exude a chemical into the soil through their roots. This chemical, called “juglone”, has been shown in experiments to be a respiration inhibitor, which deprives sensitive plants of needed energy for metabolic activity.

Some allelopathic plants release chemicals that change the amount of chlorophyll a neighboring plant can retain while others release chemicals that slow or stop the photosynthesis process. Without photosynthesis or chlorophyll, a green plant cannot survive.

Species that produce allelochemicals that hinder growth of susceptible plants in the surrounding area include butternut, English walnut, pecan, shagbark & bitternut hickory, tree of heaven, sunflowers, wormwoods, and sagebrushes. Gardeners should carefully consider planting these species if other garden or landscape plants are to be grown within the root zones of these trees. Likewise, people whose existing landscapes already contain an allelopathic plant should be mindful of the susceptibility of plants that are being considered for addition.

Recent research results have shown that almost all types of plants present in forests participate in allelopathic interactions. It is my feeling that there are not many twins out there.



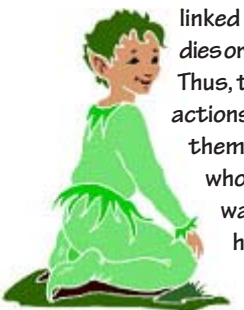
Lorelei Kepler,
Director, Plant Health Care Dept.
Certified Arborist #IL4236A

Treelore: The Tales of Trees

Trees have played a role in myths and legends in virtually every culture. Countless traditions relate stories that involve trees in one way or another. Many of these tales outline certain elements and qualities that are associated with particular trees, such as magical, medicinal, and spiritual powers that are attributed to them.

Greek mythology speaks of the existence of *dryads*, feminine nature spirits. These nymphs watch over woodlands. Each of these spirits is assigned to tend a certain tree. The dryads live close to the trees they watch over, and those that live within their assigned trees are called *hamadryads*. Dryads' lives are

linked with the lives of the trees. When a tree dies or suffers, it's dryad endures the same fate. Thus, the tree spirits punish any mortal whose actions lead to the injury of a tree, and the gods themselves seek vengeance against mortals who cause the death of a tree. Let this be a warning to anyone who might carelessly harm a tree: you ought to be careful of your actions, as mistreatment of trees will incite the anger of the gods!



Some of you may have noticed our new Customer Questionnaire...

We started using the new questionnaire in November of 2003. Unfortunately, I had forgotten that we promised to draw the sheets on a monthly basis for a dining gift card! Therefore, we made three separate drawings to make up for each missed month. Below are the winners of our drawings; the gift cards were mailed in February. I apologize for the oversight, and promise to do better in the future!

November: Mr. & Mrs. John Susin in Lombard
December: Ms. Florence Johnson in Bensenville
January: Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Power in Wheaton

I would like to thank you once again for taking the time to complete our questionnaire. We truly appreciate your praise and constructive criticism at all levels in our business, as it is our barometer in striving to be “Tree-Mendous”.

Jan Kramer

Mulch: A Tree's Best Friend

It's going to be spring soon (we hope), and we would be remiss in not reminding you of the benefits of mulch...

- Retains Soil Moisture
- Reduces Weeds and Controls Grass
- Increases Soil Fertility
- Protects Trunk from Mowing Equipment
- Improves Soil Structure

I would like to share a story with you regarding a letter we received last fall from a gentleman that was very confused about whether or not he should mulch his trees. He wrote that his neighbor was mulching all his trees and plants, and it looked very nice, but his landscaper told him never to use mulch as it will kill all of his trees due to the insects it attracts and the way it can induce rotting to the trunks of the trees! This man saw our ad in the newspaper touting the benefits of mulch, and thought this may be a good place to start to get information about mulching trees. He came to the right place, as I was more than willing to give him the facts about mulch! I also directed him to the Morton Arboretum website.

I must admit, I do get frustrated when uninformed landscapers advise about tree care, when all too often I see landscapers improperly mulching trees. My response to the gentleman's concerns were as follows:

The insects and worms that are attracted to soil conditions and make their homes in properly processed mulch are not harmful. The worms like the consistent soil temperatures and moisture, and the varied insects that can be found in properly applied mulch are just not a threat to plants. The microbiology that occurs is a very important process that helps increase soil fertility and structure. The theory regarding the detriment of recycled wood from diseased trees is not a concern when using our mulch due to the method in which KTS processes its wood debris. Branches, brush chips, and logs pass through a horizontal grinder at least twice. This process will eradicate any insect! When diseased tree brush is processed by a simple brush chipper, there may be cause for concern. (Note: this product is usually referred to as "brush chips", not "mulch", and many times it is given away free of cost. Brush chips are not a quality landscape product... remember, you get what you pay for!)

With regard to the concern of mulch causing decay of the trunk, this is an example of a result of improperly applied mulch. Causing rot to the base of the trunk will definitely cause a downward spiral in a tree's health. We continually advocate that mulch needs to be kept at least 4" away from the trunk of the tree, and should be applied no more than 3" to 4" in depth over the root zone. I consistently see proposals given by our Certified Arborists addressing improperly mulched trees – please heed their advice!

There is one more issue that comes up every year relating to the breakdown of mulch products, and that is the wood decaying fungi that assist in the breakdown process. These decay fungi are naturally occurring and varied. They can take the form of many different sized, shaped, and colored "mushrooms." They may also appear as if some "gunk" was spilled. Again, these fungi are not harmful and can be dispersed by raking the mulch.



In closing, I advise those of you with questions relating to annual or perennial landscaping plants to consult a landscaper. If you have questions regarding tree care, consult with a tree care professional.

Jan Kramer

Please remember that the depth of the mulch is very important. Apply mulch no more than 3-4" deep, and be sure to keep mulch at least 4" away from the tree trunk.

News From the PHC Department



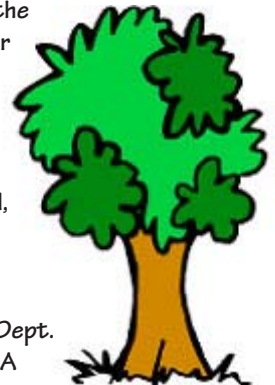
Have you gotten hooked on the CSI mania that is happening on TV? One might think I am suffering the craze, as I attended an "Advanced Autopsy and Dissection Lab" this past winter. But I am talking about autopsy and dissection of trees! The educational opportunity was very interesting, very educational, and led by the guru of tree dissection, Dr. Alex L. Shigo. I came back with a much better understanding of what healthy and declining trees look like at the cellular level, and a specialized microscope to help in the evaluation of your trees! The dissecting microscope is a very nice addition to our PHC Laboratory!



Other classes attended this year by Kramer Tree Specialists' staff of Certified Arborists include an Ash Seminar held at the Morton Arboretum, Advanced Summer Tree & Shrub Identification, Advanced Spray Safety, and several Municipal Foresters' Meetings on a variety of topics. The Ash Seminar was extremely well executed by the Arboretum. The speakers were "top-notch". Wayne Sinclair, plant pathologist at Cornell University and author of *Diseases of Trees and Shrubs*, lead the disease issues lab segment. Now, that may not mean much to you, but when I have a specimen under the microscope and I am diagnosing a disease problem, I will always verify what I am seeing in what I call the "Green Bible". You see, the book *Diseases of Trees and Shrubs* has a hard dark green cover. All the presenters were extremely knowledgeable, and graciously offered their knowledge and expertise to our unending questions.

What will our trees be plagued with this year? I wish I knew the answer to that question! Initially I thought the "bugs" would be at a minimum due to the early cold weather and lack of snow cover. Now

I am not so sure because the vast range of bugs and their life cycles are widely varied and quite complicated. A little knowledge can be a dangerous, perhaps confusing thing! But, rest assured, time will tell!



Lorelei Kepler,
Director, Plant Health Care Dept.
Certified Arborist #IL 4236A

This year we have Double Ground Mulch at a cost of \$16.00 per yard. Delivery cost is based on a 10-miles radius of our shop in West Chicago, and is priced as follows:

1-5 Yards: \$40.00 6-25 Yards: \$50.00 Over 25 Yards: \$60.00

Also, you always have the option of picking up the mulch at our location.

WOODY SAYS... This year I came to the realization that Radar and Buddy are “getting up there” in age.



I suspected Radar was suffering discomfort in his front leg in November when my sister, Denise, and her husband, Jim, adopted a very sweet 1-year-old Pit Bull mix, Maggie. We decided it would be fun to have Maggie and Radar play together to see how they would do. She only weighed about 45 pounds at the time they brought her to play with Radar in our fenced yard. Since then, Maggie – like a lot of us – has put on a few pounds! Jim seemed a little nervous at the dogs’ initial meeting, and he stayed in the front yard. I knew from their first interaction they would be fine together, so I watched from the house. What I didn’t think about was Maggie’s age, which meant high energy and rough play. She played just like Radar did when he was a year old, but now he is 6. He sure tried to keep up with her, but he let her know a few times when she was playing too rough. But did she listen? No – she is a bossy little girl! After about ten minutes, he was crying “uncle”. Radar went to Jim, seeking comfort, and looking at him as if to say, “Make her stop!” Not giving up, Maggie ran over to Radar, pawing at his face giving him a scratched and bloody nose. She

wanted to let him know that playtime was not over – “Let’s go! Let’s go!” she gestured. I called Radar over to me and said, “The little girl beat you up, huh?” We went into the house and I wiped the blood from his nose. I told him “you need to stay away from those girls!” Believe it or not, he cried to go back outside. I told him “you’re a gluten for punishment, you can’t keep up with her, she is too young for you!” Jim felt so sorry for Radar. As he was getting Maggie into the car, he was giving her lessons on how to behave at someone else’s house; “you don’t beat up your host!” Of course, my sister and I had a good laugh over the whole situation.

The outcome for Radar playing with Maggie was a trip to the vet, since he was still limping after two days. The doctor took x-rays and determined that he had arthritis in his front left leg, and most likely pulled a muscle as well. We also took Buddy into the vet, as I was suspicious of his rear legs. He occasionally limped, and his walking gate appeared symptomatic of hip dysplasia. The diagnosis for our poor Buddy was the confirmation of the start of hip dysplasia and arthritis. Both “boys” are now on daily medications to help with the discomfort.

Radar and Buddy would like to remind you that our pets age more quickly than we do. The larger breeds tend to have joint discomfort and arthritis at a younger age than small breeds, therefore their exercise regime may need to be adjusted.

Sincerely,

Jan Kramer

A dog is one of the few remaining reasons why some people can be persuaded to go for a walk. O.A. Battista

Crabapple buds will be breaking open soon... Have you sent in your Apple Scab Registration yet?

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Featured Tree of the Season Downy Serviceberry

Amelanchier arborea

The Downy serviceberry will delight you in the spring with showy, star-shaped blooms that appear just before leaf emergence. The mid-sized tree with a narrow, rounded crown will also keep your interest in the fall as its dull green leaves turn to yellow and red. The light gray bark is initially smooth, and later develops into interesting narrowly furrowed ridges. The small, ¼” edible fruit may delight the birds as well as you!

Many different cultivars of serviceberry are available. Careful species selection is important for proper placement of the tree, and will help avoid the need for adjustments later! Good air circulation will help control



leaf fungus, and measures to help protect against small animal damage may be needed while the bark is in the smooth young stage.

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