Seasonal Report

$5.00

WACHTEL TREE SCIENCE INC.

"Keeping Trees Healthy and Beautiful Since 1935"

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Situational Awareness

by Tony Arnoldi, Board Certified Master Arborist WI-0102B

Situational awareness is a term often used in the military or security forces. It describes the need to be aware of hidden or potential dangers when entering a location, to know all possible entrances and exits that an enemy may come from, and to plan for exit contingencies.

This mindset can be very useful when appraising our landscapes too, especially after the long year that was 2023! You may recall that March had two separate storms that deposited record amounts of heavy, wet snow. This happened area-wide but was greatly enhanced by lake-effect snow in communities closer to Lake Michigan. These two rounds of heavy, wet snow caused a lot of tree damage at the time. Many different species were affected but it was especially hard on trees with large horizonal limbs. Trees, such as older specimens of honeylocust and Austrian pine, were hit the hardest. Many weeks, and even months, of extra work repairing this damage or removing trees that were ruined dominated our spring.

As spring lengthened into summer, the predictable storm season began. As wave after wave of thunderstorms hit, trees were damaged again and again. What was different than any typical year, is that more very large limbs came down or were broken over and caught by other limbs in the canopy, or fell striking dwellings or other structures. After reviewing the trees, the limbs affected had large horizontal cracks, larger and longer than what would have been expected after measuring the strength of the storm. Subsequent storms repeated this trend.

Over the course of the summer, I would look up during my diagnostic visits and notice many pre-existing cracks in large horizontal limbs. A lot of these were several years old, as evidenced by the callous or "healing wood" that had formed along the edges of the split. But now, the crack extended well beyond where old healing had taken place. The split branch had remained stable for some years where the crack had not lengthened. But now the cracking had resumed because of the great weight of the snows, and now extended a little further with each storm until eventual failure occurred.

Now, in winter, with the leaves off the trees, a large amount of the weight is off the tree, plus the reduced surface area does not catch the wind to the same extent. Subsequently, the reports of storm damage have greatly diminished (but not stopped) and things are looking stable again.



Here is where situational awareness comes into play. These cracked limbs are much easier to spot while the leaves are off and the whole branch structure is laid bare. Even non-arborists (such as some homeowners) have spotted trouble up in the tree canopies.

If the tree has not been pruned in a while, it may be a very good time to have an arborist climb through the crown, pruning to improve health and structure (often called *crown cleaning*), and in so doing, hidden cracks are exposed (many times the crack in a branch is only visible when some weight is applied, and the crack spreads open).

Situational awareness of the dangers above is important. Call your experienced Wachtel Tree Science Certified Arborist to help you gain this intelligence.

WI-002

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Structural Pruning

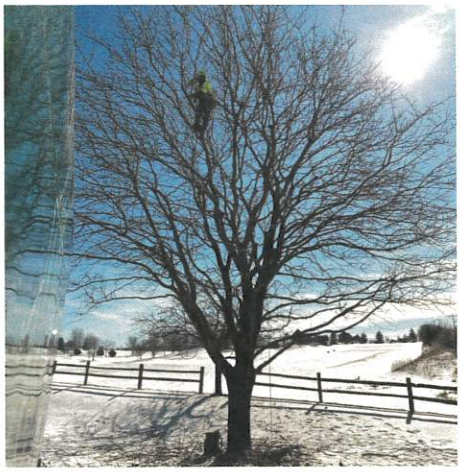
by RJ Busch, ISA Certified Arborist WI-0985A

Whether you're training a young tree or managing a mature tree, structural pruning is a crucial practice that can help in sustaining the heath and aesthetics of your tree. This technique involves carefully removing certain branches to optimize the overall structure and growth of the tree. While it may seem counterintuitive to remove branches from a tree, structural pruning offers numerous benefits that far outweigh any initial concerns.

By selectively removing certain branches, pruning encourages the development of a strong, well-balanced tree structure. This is especially critical within the tree's first fifteen years of life as it helps trees to grow in a way that is naturally sustainable, and resistant to damage from strong winds or heavy snow loads. Pruned trees are less likely to develop weak branches or co-dominant stems, which can easily split or break under stress; therefore, protecting both the tree and its surroundings during severe weather.

Trees with densely packed branches may prevent sunlight from reaching the inner parts of the canopy. Sunlight penetration promotes photosynthesis, which is crucial for the tree's growth and overall health.

The pruning cycle should begin three years after planting and should be done at regular intervals. The Certified Arborists at Wachtel Tree Science will ensure that they fully understand the growth habit of a tree before beginning the pruning process in order to avoid overthinking and over pruning. We strive to remove no more than 25% of the of the foliage of a young tree, with a typical pruning being between 10-20%. By removing branches that are dead, diseased, or structurally unsound, the risk of branch failure is significantly decreased. This is especially important in urban areas where falling branches can cause property damage or injury to people. Regular structural pruning helps promote that the tree remains safe and reduces the need for emergency tree removal in the future.



Pruning young trees improves their health and structure.

A well-pruned tree not only enhances its health and safety, but also adds to the overall beauty and value of the landscape. Every cut has the potential to change the growth of the tree.

Scan the QR code below with your phone to access a 30-second time-lapse video showing a Certified Arborist pruning an 'Autumn Blaze' maple. You'll see firsthand a young tree being structurally pruned for a better and stronger future!

Pruning is both an art and a science, this is why we always say, *"Keeping trees healthy and beautiful since 1935."* Any time is a good time to start structurally pruning your tree. The winter season is especially great for pruning. Let the Certified Arborists at Wachtel Tree Science give your trees the best structure in town!

Follow this QR code link to see structural pruning in action.

Safety is Our Middle Name

by Ben Ori, Safety Coordinator/ISA Certified Arborist WI-1493A and Andrew Fedor, Crane Operator/ISA Certified Arborist WI-0913A

The Wachtel Tree Science safety culture extends past our weekly required company safety meetings; it incorporates a "right tool, right job" mentality. We are always thinking about how we can use the right equipment and best practices to make the work we do as safe as possible for ourselves and our clients. With that view in mind, we have added our new knuckle boom truck, which was built specifically for the Wachtel Tree Science fleet. This truck is indispensable for lifting and moving heavy loads, ensuring a safe working environment for high-risk tree removals and storm damage scenarios. It has an attached hydraulic grapple saw and is operated remotely, which allows our arborists to remove tree limbs from up to 58 feet away and 70 feet high, all while protecting our employees from having to be in hazardous areas. The emerald ash borer has left untreated ash trees in our area dead, crispy, and unsafe for our climbers. The need for this type of technology has never been greater. While the right equipment is imperative, a machine can only be as safe as its operator. We utilize nationally certified crane operators to operate this unit. Our primary operator is Andrew who has over 14 years of industry experience, a passion for safety, and an extensive knowledge of site planning, load capacity, and rigging.



Grapple saw in action

Knuckle boom truck safety is a multi-faceted endeavor that demands unwavering commitment at every level of operation. By prioritizing operator training, conducting thorough inspections, maintaining open communication, and embracing a culture of continuous improvement, our workplace can significantly reduce the risk of accidents and increase efficiency at the same time. Combining technology and people creates an environment of safety!

Volunteers Find the Benefits of Giving Back

by Jake Kubisiak, Board Certified Master Arborist IL-1392B

Wachtel Tree Science annually gives back through a variety of volunteer work events. This is supported by company leadership to provide expected benefits for recipients with unexpected benefits for Wachtel Tree Science arborists. Here are some of the opportunities Wachtel Tree Science has had to help give back to our local communities:

1. The mission of Ronald McDonald House Charities, "To keep families together and promote the health and well-being of children," is easy to support. Each year since 2008, Wachtel Tree Science has provided a day of service to help maintain and enhance the trees and landscape at the Wauwatosa facility. While the house is very grateful and sees the benefits of these efforts, volunteers feel good knowing families have a maintained outdoor space to relax during a difficult time in their lives.
2. The Wisconsin Arborist Association's "Day of Service" is an annual event coordinated by the WAA board to volunteer professional tree care services. Wachtel arborists volunteer their time and talents to support this effort that promotes our profession and helps a worthy recipient.
3. Saluting Branches, an annual, one-day, nationwide event started in 2015, has this mission statement: "We honor American service men and women by organizing volunteer tree and landscape care for the property dedicated to our veterans." This event is a donation of time and talents of professional arborists across the country to provide arborist services at federal veteran's cemeteries. Wachtel Tree Science arborists support this event, supplying a group of volunteers (often veterans themselves!) with equipment and expertise. Standing in the federal cemetery during a break in the day's event gives a moment to reflect on the services these veterans provided to sustain our country, including many giving their lives. It's a small way to give back and respect their numerous sacrifices.



Volunteer planting at the Ronald McDonald House



The group posed for a photo after a rewarding day!

Spongy Moth Forecast

by Maria Panasuk, ISA Certified Arborist WI-1479A

For those of you who have not yet experienced the impacts of spongy moth activity...beware! For those of you who have, it should come as no surprise that the populations are forecasted to continue to rise and spread throughout Wisconsin.

According to the WI-DNR, the summer of 2023 saw a record amount of defoliation. In this area, the population was the highest in Walworth and Waukesha counties last year. The drought conditions we have experienced for the past three summers is both favorable to the populations of spongy moth and unfavorable to *Entomophaga maimaiga* and *Bacillus thuringiensis*, which are fungi and bacteria in our soil that help control the caterpillar populations. Wet spring weather may be able to boost the populations of those naturally-occurring soil fungi and bacteria.

Spongy moth (which until 2022 was termed gypsy moth) is capable of stripping a tree bare in just a few days during its destructive caterpillar stage. The caterpillars emerge from their eggs in May, but aren't typically noticed until the middle of June. At that time, the caterpillars are approximately 1-2 inches long and their feeding is more noticeable. They can be a real nuisance! Between the small leaf litter and the frass raining from the trees, this insect can make it hard to enjoy the start of summer.



Spongy moth caterpillars can quickly defoliate trees (left); egg mass on a bench (inset)

Spongy moth is reported to feed on 500 species of plants. In our area, we see them feed the heaviest on oaks, but they'll also chew the leaves on maples, crabapples, beeches, and cherries. Stronger, healthier trees can withstand a year or two of defoliation with limited dieback or adverse effects. However, larger mature trees, especially oaks, are not responding well to defoliation. Treatment of these larger trees is recommended.

The best way to set your trees up for success this spring is to look for egg masses now! These orangey/tan globs are typically found in shady places: the undersides of branches, on the side of the house that gets less sun, or under awnings. You can help your trees by scraping off reachable egg masses into a bag or bin. Soak the egg masses in soapy water for 2-3 days before disposing of them. For those you can't reach, or if the population is overwhelming, contact your Wachtel Tree Science Certified Arborist. Treatment is going to vary based on the amount of egg masses seen, location of the trees, and tree species.

Don't wait until your tree is half eaten to seek treatment! Being proactive on treatment is the best, and often the only way to protect your trees.

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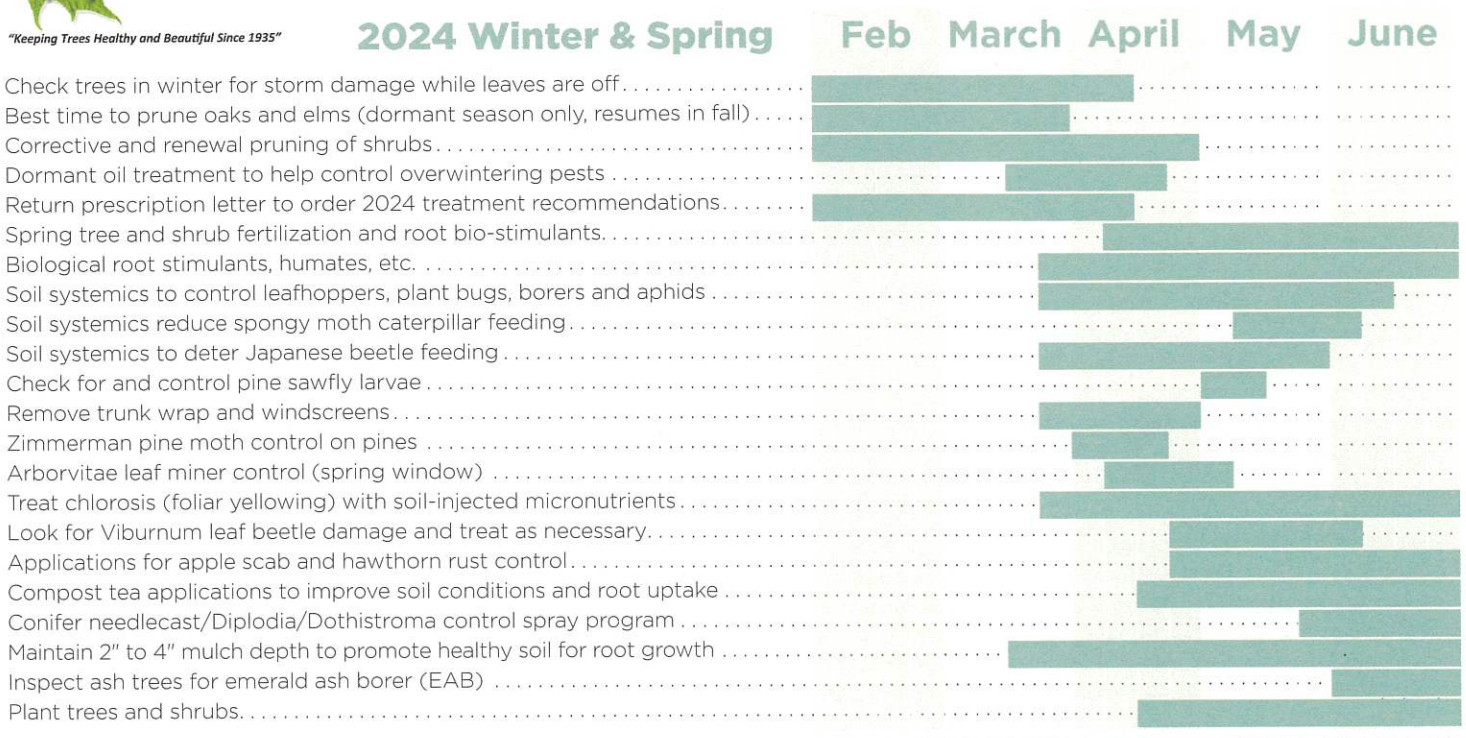
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Plant Health Care Calendar | 262-538-1900



Call now to have your trees pruned before spring arrives!