Seasonal Report

$5.00

WACHTEL TREE SCIENCE INC.

"Keeping Trees Healthy and Beautiful Since 1935"

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90 Years and Counting

By Ron Gumz, ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, MN-0324B



Research has proven that cavity filling, though once considered beneficial, is no longer a recommended practice.

In 2025, Wachtel Tree Science celebrates a significant milestone: our 90th anniversary! Since 1935, we have been dedicated to keeping trees healthy and beautiful, a mission inspired by our founder Larry Wachtel's passion for scientific tree care.

Looking back, we are honored to have helped countless clients achieve their tree care goals. The knowledge that we continue to enhance our clients' lives by ensuring their trees are healthy and beautiful motivates us every day.

Over the years, we have embraced innovations in tree care, continually learning and growing alongside our industry. The walls of our office feature several black-and-white photos honoring the early days of Wachtel Tree Science. Some of these photos show past employees performing outdated treatments which are no longer practiced, such as cavity filling, reminding us how far our understanding of trees has evolved. Today, we embrace advanced treatment options to address specific insect and fungal issues, enabling us to maintain tree health using more eco-friendly methods.

Our dedicated staff is committed to meeting your needs. By continuously improving our skills and knowledge, we are better equipped to provide the exceptional tree care you expect. Adhering to the highest safety standards in all our operations ensures the protection of both our team and your property.

Looking ahead, you can continue to expect the high quality and standards of care you have come to recognize from Wachtel Tree Science. We will monitor current and future issues affecting the trees in this area, helping you make informed decisions for your trees. **Thank you for allowing us to be your trusted partner and steward for your trees and your yard!**

WI-002

ISA CERTIFIED ARBORISTS ON STAFF

Ron Gumz MN-0324B*
Ben Reince WI-0610A
Anthony Arnoldi WI-0102B*
Mike Klein WI-0306A
Brent Kahn WI-0302A
Dan Barwinski WI-0716B*†§
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Kyle Babicky WI-0889B*§
Chris Frankulin WI-0984A†
RJ Busch WI-0985A
Jake Kubisiak IL-1392B*
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Tom Steele WI-1106A
Chelsea Chase WI-1264A
Jon Budish WI-1248A
Alec Schuppel WI-1281A
Tyler Crass WI-1409A
Ryan McCambridge WI-1347A
Rachel Nelson WI-1422A
Michael Peterson WI-1283A§
Andrew Fedor WI-0913A†
Jamie Mason WI-1494A
Ben Ori WI-1493A
Maria Reiss WI-1479A§
Matthew Siesco WI-0959A
Brooke Stemple RM-8302A§
Pavel Dimitrov WI-1529A
Audrey Earle WI-1567A
Nolan Gilbertson WI-0632A
Matt Anderson WI-1592A
Carson Lauer WI-1596A
Jake Caldwell WI-1645A
Andrew Linsmeyer WI-1647A
Avery Pollard WI-1657A
Allison Lemke WI-1632A
Micah Stege WI-1603A
Eric Siebert WI-0996A
Jenn Schanz WI-1671A

*Board Certified Master Arborist | †Certified TreeCare Safety Professional | ‡Municipal Specialist | +Registered Consulting Arborist | §Tree Risk Assessment Qualification



Jean Ferdinandsen Retires

By Amanda Mann

After 22 years with Wachtel Tree Science, Jean Ferdinandsen retired at the end of October 2024. We offer her a heartfelt thank you for her years of service and for the devotion and care she has shown her coworkers, her clients, their properties and trees. We wish her the best as she moves into her next stage. Her peers and coworkers are glad to see her enjoy her next adventure, though they will miss being a day-to-day part of her life.

Understanding the Impact of Drought on Your Trees

By Michael Peterson, ISA Certified Arborist WI-1283A, ISA TRAQ

As we navigate the shifting landscapes of our environment, it becomes increasingly vital to address the challenges our trees face. One more pressing concern is the impact of drought on our green companions.

Drought, characterized by prolonged periods of insufficient rainfall, poses a significant threat to the health and vitality of trees. The effects are many and can lead to devastating consequences if not managed proactively. Here's a closer look at how drought impacts trees.

Root System Stress: Trees rely on a robust root system to absorb water and essential nutrients from the soil. During drought, the lack of moisture severely stresses these roots, hampering their ability to function optimally. As a result, trees become more vulnerable to diseases, pest infestations, and structural instability.

Foliage Decline: One of the most visible signs of drought stress is foliage wilting, discoloring, or premature shedding. Trees respond to water scarcity by conserving moisture, often sacrificing leaves or reducing their size to minimize water loss through transpiration.

Stunted Growth: Drought inhibits a tree's capacity for growth. It hampers the production of new leaves, shoots, and overall expansion, leading to stunted or distorted growth patterns.

Increased Susceptibility to Pests and Diseases: When under drought stress, trees become more susceptible to attacks from pests and diseases. Weakened by the lack of water, trees struggle to defend themselves against invasive insects and pathogens.



Healthy maple leaves



Red oak leaf scorch exacerbated by drought

As guardians of our urban forests, we have a role in mitigating the impact of drought on trees. Implementing these measures can aid in preserving their health:

1. **Mulching:** Apply a layer of organic mulch around the base of your trees to retain soil moisture and regulate temperature. Make sure that mulch does not smother the trunk itself; rings should lay back several inches from a tree's trunk.
2. **Proper Irrigation:** Water trees deeply and frequently, ensuring moisture reaches the root zone. Drip irrigation or soaker hoses can be efficient methods to maintain adequate hydration.
3. **Regular Inspection:** Engage a Wachtel Tree Science ISA Certified Arborist for routine inspections to detect early signs of drought stress or any underlying issues that may compromise tree health.

As we confront the challenges of climate change, it's imperative to protect and nurture our trees. Together, by taking proactive measures and fostering a deeper understanding of their needs, we can ensure the resilience and longevity of these invaluable assets in our residential landscapes.

Spongy Moth Update

By Chelsea Chase, ISA Certified Arborist WI-1264A

Wisconsin's warmest winter on record in 2023-2024 raised concerns about spongy moth outbreaks. Warmer winters help these pests survive, however, the wet spring in 2024 boosted two naturally occurring controls: *Nucleopolyhedrosis* virus (NPV) and *Entomophaga maimaiga* (EM) fungus.

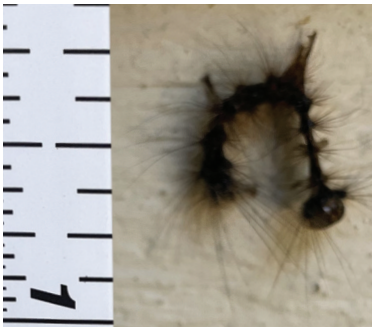
NPV is naturally found in spongy moth populations and spreads more easily when caterpillar numbers are high. When caterpillars are infected with NPV, they usually die and are left hanging in an upside-down "V" shape. NPV infection also reduces egg mass sizes created by adults that survive. Egg masses typically range in size from a nickel to a quarter; smaller masses, closer to a dime in size, indicate NPV.

EM fungus, introduced to Wisconsin in the late 1990s to control spongy moths, lives in leaf litter. Its spores attach to caterpillars, invade their bodies, and impact them within a week. Caterpillars that die from the fungus typically hang straight down in a vertical position.



Left: EM fungus-affected caterpillar

Below: NPV virus-affected caterpillar



Although spongy moth numbers dropped overall in 2024, some areas in Southeast Wisconsin still have high populations. The upcoming spring's weather will be crucial; a mild winter or dry spring could cause another surge in caterpillar feeding on oaks and other preferred trees. **To protect your valuable trees, continue treatments until moth numbers stay low for several years.**

Trees that have endured multiple years of spongy moth damage are likely stressed and should be monitored for signs of secondary pests or diseases. After coming out of an outbreak, trees will still need continued care to recover and rebuild energy reserves. Soil treatments to improve defenses and build root systems, regular watering—even for mature trees—and proper mulching are key strategies to support your trees' health. Keep a close watch; if something doesn't seem right, contact your ISA Certified Arborist at Wachtel Tree Science for advice.

Early and Often Wins the Race

By Kyle Babicky, ISA Board Certified Master Arborist WI-0889B

Homeowners often want to know, **"What is a low-maintenance, fast-growing shade tree for my yard?"** An arborist would respond with a few ideas, but there would be hesitation regarding the "low-maintenance" part of the initial question.

The hesitation is that with any fast-growing tree, there is still required maintenance that is often underestimated: **proper structural pruning!**

Fast-growing trees are genetically programmed to win the race for sunlight. They are the Hare of '*The Tortoise and the Hare*' fable. Some examples of fast-growing trees are: 'Autumn Blaze' Freeman maple, elms, London planetree, and young oaks.

With these trees, a lack of proper pruning inevitably leads to competing vertical growth, called co-dominant stems. A structurally strong tree ideally has *one* main vertical stem, with smaller lateral branches growing outward. Fast-growing trees develop co-dominant stems which lead to weakened branch structure. These weakened branch attachments can often peel apart in high winds or heavy snow.

Co-dominant stems can be managed on any tree if it is **properly pruned early and often.** How often depends on the growth rate. Growth rate is determined mostly by age, species, and environment. A young Autumn Blaze maple in healthy soil will benefit from pruning every 1-2 years. As it matures, that cycle can reduce to every 2-4 years, and eventually every 3-5 years. While that may sound like a lot, **routine pruning early in a tree's life saves time and money in the long run.** Reactive pruning after a tree has developed poor structure is more tedious and stressful on a tree when compared to gentle corrections every few years. Proactive, regular pruning also results in a stronger, healthier tree.



Freeman maple before pruning (left) and after pruning (right)

Dormant season, while the leaves are off, is a wonderful opportunity to examine the branching of your trees and check for any structural issues. If it has been **more than three years since your trees have been evaluated for pruning, call Wachtel Tree Science** to have your ISA Certified Arborist assess your trees for pruning recommendations.

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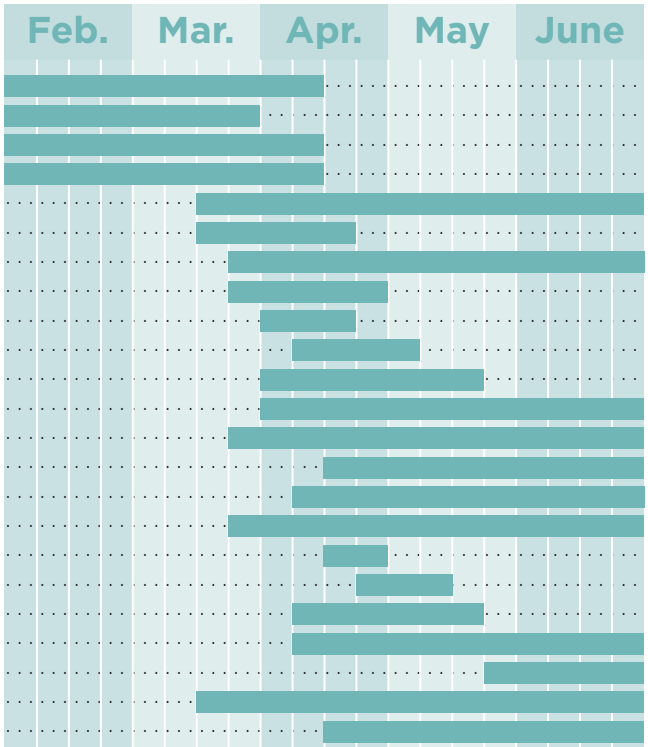
WACHTEL 1935 90 YEARS 2025 TREE SCIENCE

WACHTEL TREE SCIENCE INC.

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Plant Health Care Calendar | 262-538-1900

2025 Winter & Spring



- Check trees in winter for storm damage while leaves are off
- Best time to prune oaks and elms (dormant season only, resumes in fall)
- Corrective and renewal pruning of shrubs
- Return prescription letter to order 2025 treatment recommendations
- Soil systemics to control borers and leaf-feeding insects
- Dormant oil treatment to help control over-wintering pests
- Biological root stimulants, humates, etc.
- Remove trunk wrap and windscreens
- Zimmerman pine moth control on pines
- Arborvitae leaf miner control (spring window)
- Cool season spider mite control (primarily spruces)
- Soil applied fungicides to deter Phytophthora and other root rots
- Treat chlorosis (foliar yellowing) with soil-injected micronutrients
- Compost tea applications to improve soil conditions and root uptake
- Spring tree and shrub fertilization and root bio-stimulants
- Root collar exams to check for collar rots and girdling roots
- Check for and control pine sawfly larvae.
- Soil systemics reduce spongy moth caterpillar feeding
- Look for viburnum leaf beetle damage and treat as necessary
- Applications for apple scab and hawthorn rust control
- Conifer needlecast and tip blight spray control.
- Maintain 2" to 4" mulch depth to promote healthy soil for root growth
- Plant trees and shrubs.

Call now to have your trees pruned before spring arrives!