Seasonal Report

$5.00

WACHTEL TREE SCIENCE INC.

"Keeping Trees Healthy and Beautiful Since 1935"

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The Elm Zigzag Sawfly

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

A new pest emerged in the Wisconsin landscape last summer. Elm zigzag sawfly was confirmed in several counties across the state, according to a UW Extension report. This insect was also found actively feeding on a hybrid elm variety in Kenosha County by a Wachtel Tree Science arborist during late August 2024. This article will help you be more aware of this insect, provide ways to identify insect damage on elm trees, and offer some possible treatments to minimize this pest's damage.



Zigzag pattern on leaf (left) caused by elm zigzag sawflies (right)

Elm zigzag sawfly is native to parts of east Asia where natural predators render it a minor insect pest. It was first discovered in Europe in 2003 and has since spread from England and France to parts of Russia and Kazakhstan. The adults can fly up to 50 miles and cocoons can be found on manmade objects, allowing them to spread more easily. In 2020 the insect was found in Canada and the next year in Virginia. 2024 is the first reported presence in Wisconsin. Elm zigzag sawfly feeding damage is easily distinguished from other insect damage due to the distinct zigzag feeding pattern. The insect population consists of only females that reproduce asexually which can produce multiple generations per year.

Elm zigzag sawfly can cause defoliation of elm varieties and could become a problem in your landscape. The adults can lay up to 49 eggs at a time, which hatch in 4-8 days. They feed on leaves and mature quickly over a period of 10-18 days. This speed may allow damage to "sneak up" on a homeowner if the population becomes large enough. Depending on the prior condition of an elm, this might be a cosmetic nuisance or a potential impact on tree health. Treatment options are available. For smaller tree canopies, a sprayed contact treatment to an actively feeding population will give the most immediate results. Larger trees or trees located in difficult-to-spray locations may require soil-applied systemic products. The movement of these materials could delay the control of the population on your tree. Early detection and treatment are best to achieve desirable results.

Wachtel Tree Science arborists are aware of this new pest. We are on the lookout for the telltale feeding damage and can help address each client's particular tree needs as they are presented. Do not hesitate to contact our office if you suspect that this new pest may be active in your landscape.

WI-002

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Ben Reince WI-0610A
Anthony Arnoldi WI-0102B*§
Mike Klein WI-0306A
Brent Kahn WI-0302A
Dan Barwinski WI-0716B*†§
Keith Glaznap WI-0678A
Paul Scharfenberger WI-0841A
Nathan Schuettpelz WI-0887AM‡+§
Kyle Babicky WI-0889B*§
Chris Frankulin WI-0984A†
RJ Busch WI-0985A
Jake Kubisiak IL-1392B*
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Jamie Mason WI-1494A
Ben Ori WI-1493A
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Jerry Hipper WI-1677A
Jacob Piette WI-1690A

*Board Certified Master Arborist | †Certified TreeCare Safety Professional | +Urban Forest Professional | §Tree Risk Assessment Qualification



The Art of Pruning

By Alec Schuppel, ISA Certified Arborist WI-1281A

If you've hired Wachtel Tree Science to prune your tree(s) in the past, you've likely noticed how much more beautiful they look afterward. But is aesthetics the main reason we prune your trees? Not necessarily.

The primary objective of most pruning is to address existing or potential structural issues. Pruning helps mitigate risks caused by the natural accumulation of deadwood or structural defects. It also reduces foliar density by a specific percentage to increase airflow and light penetration into the crown's interior.

Is it pure coincidence that pruning for the overall health of your tree also results in a more beautiful tree? Again, not necessarily. Pruning requires a creative eye and a clear vision for branch selection, balance, and shaping—all while adhering to specific pruning standards. Executing a correct, targeted cut not only improves the tree's structure but also encourages a healthy response to the pruning wound.



Maple before pruning



After structural pruning completed

I feel proud to know that when I walk away from a well-pruned tree, it is healthier and more beautiful than when I started the process. And sometimes, as we finish, we notice that one last branch marring the vision we had. That urge to go back and fix it is something all tree care advocates and artists understand.

The Arboriculture industry itself is increasingly attractive to creative individuals who enjoy the artful practice of pruning. I believe I speak for many of our ISA Certified Arborists here at Wachtel Tree Science in saying that we all hold a creative eye and vision when pruning your trees. We aim to provide quality craftsmanship and attention to ensure your trees look beautiful while simultaneously improving the overall health, structure, and airflow for your trees.

At Wachtel Tree Science, we strive to train our Arborists to not only provide quality work and expertise, but also to enhance your enjoyment of your healthy and beautiful trees.

Contact your ISA Certified Arborist at Wachtel Tree Science today to see how healthy and beautiful your trees can be!



Supplemental Nutrients for Newly Planted Trees

By RJ Busch, ISA Certified Arborist WI-0985A

Congratulations! You've planted a beautiful new tree on your property! You might be thinking, *"What steps can I take to make sure my new tree grows big and strong?"*

The most important thing you can do for your newly planted tree is watering! At Wachtel Tree Science, we recommend young trees receive at least one inch of water per week. If your area receives one or more inches of rain during the week, there is no need for additional watering, as this could lead to overwatering. A great way to measure this is by having a rain gauge near your tree that you check weekly.

Another way to set up your new tree for success is to have a **proper mulch circle** surrounding it. After the tree is in the ground, first top dress the area with 1-2" of compost and then finish it off with 2-3" of mulch. It is important to make sure that the root flare is not covered. We also recommend adding a deer fence around the trunk if you live in an area with moderate to heavy deer traffic.

After the tree has been in the ground for one full season and has an established root system, it's time to start thinking about what else can be done to keep the tree healthy. We recommend adding our yearly **fertilizer/root stimulant** mix to your tree. Our fertilizer is a balanced product that contains 65% slow-release nitrogen to provide a steady amount of nutrients for an entire year.

Fertilizing a young tree offers several benefits:

- **Enhanced Growth:** Fertilization, particularly with nitrogen, promotes faster growth and denser canopy, helping trees develop more robustly.
- **Improved Nutrient Uptake:** Nitrogen encourages the development of fine roots, enhancing the tree's ability to absorb water and nutrients.
- **Stress Resistance:** Healthy trees are more resilient to environmental stresses like heat and drought.
- **Better Winter Hardiness:** Fall fertilization helps trees prepare for winter by strengthening their root systems and improving disease resistance.

If you're thinking about planting a new tree, or if your new tree is already in the ground, contact your ISA Certified Arborist at Wachtel Tree Science to see what we can offer your trees to help keep them healthy and beautiful. Give us a call!



What You Need to Know Before Planting Your Favorite New Tree

By Michael Peterson, ISA Certified Arborist WI-1283A and Jamie Mason, ISA Certified Arborist WI-1494A

Planting a new tree can be exciting, but there are a few critical things to consider to ensure success.

Right Plant for the Right Place

- Is the area sunny, partially shaded, or fully shaded?
- Is the soil often wet? Is it wet only after heavy rain, or is it almost always dry? Does the site get steady rain? Is there standing water or dry conditions most of the time?

Light and moisture are the first factors to address. Next is something many gardeners talk about but few actually do: **test the soil before planting.**

Why Test the Soil?

Soil testing provides accurate information about several factors:

pH Level – The pH measures the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. In Wisconsin, many plants and trees don't thrive in soil with too high or too low pH levels due to nutrients becoming unavailable to the plant. This is often influenced by the parent material several feet down, which in Southeast Wisconsin is frequently limestone.

Soil Composition – The makeup of the soil includes sand, silt, and clay. Many beautiful trees and shrubs cannot tolerate clay soil because it holds a lot of water in the root zone, leading to root loss, root decay, and fungal issues.

Beyond these essential questions, the Certified Arborists at Wachtel Tree Science also look at individual nutrients and other factors such as salts. This helps us determine if the trees or shrubs you plan to plant will tolerate the nutrient levels present and if they will thrive under those conditions.



Soil sample

Will Your Plants Thrive?

Minor Modifications – Most plants will thrive with a little help, like adding compost and mulch.

Drastic Changes – Others might need more significant adjustments depending on a soil test, such as using an acidifier to change pink hydrangeas to blue.

Regular Maintenance – Certain species may require annual treatments, such as iron injections or specific foliar sprays, to prevent chlorosis under high pH conditions.

With an emphasis on science, we can help make a planting plan for the best results for your trees. Your Wachtel Tree Science ISA Certified Arborist can discuss the size and scope of your project, starting with a visit and deciding if a soil test is appropriate. Let us help you ensure your new tree thrives in its new home!



Winter Damage Bites Twice

by: Tony Arnoldi, Board Certified Master Arborist #0102B

This spring, winter damage manifested in an abundance of ways:

- Western arborvitaes, 'Green Giant' hybrid arborvitaes, some juniper varieties, Scots pines, limber pines, Austrian pines, and other needle evergreens showed brown patches or dead branches.
- Broadleaf evergreens such as boxwoods, hollies, vincas, *Euonymus* and *Pachysandra* groundcovers were damaged. *Pachysandra*, particularly, was often hit hard.
- Trees with pre-existing conditions such as *Diplodia* tip blight infections in pines, *Cytospora* branch cankers on spruces, magnolia scale damage on magnolias, Japanese tree lilacs with verticillium wilt infections, girdling (strangling) root conditions on maples and others often had portions of their crowns die.
- Half-hardy trees like Japanese maples, some redbud varieties, magnolias, some hydrangea varieties, peaches, ornamental pears, etc. were damaged as well.
- Some perennials were lost or came up weaker than usual.

Damage was not limited to small specimens—some larger trees, even natives like sugar and silver maples, showed branch/crown damage. The main culprit was the second "open winter" in a row, helped by a very dry fall and winter.

The "Open Winters" of 2023–24 and 2024-25.

Open winters have little to no snow cover. The ramifications of this were presented at the Wisconsin Arborist Association Annual Conference in February 2022. The lack of insulating snow cover allows faster and deeper frost penetration during polar vortexes and can damage or kill some tree roots. I always knew this was a problem for half-hardy trees like magnolias or Japanese maples, but learned that it can be very significant for native trees, too. Even they may not be able to adjust fast enough and can get damaged root tissues.

This spring was surprising in that the damage seen was much more than last spring, which also followed an open winter.

Making sure trees receive 1" of water per week is imperative to enable regrowth.

In fall, measures to help trees **replace or build** new feeder roots will compensate for this stress and damage. These measures include **fall fertilization with root biostimulants, root biostimulants with systemic fungicide, compost tea,** and **mycorrhizal root inoculation.**

Pruning out the damage will help aesthetics and restoration.

Call Wachtel Tree Science to help your trees recover and maintain their beauty.

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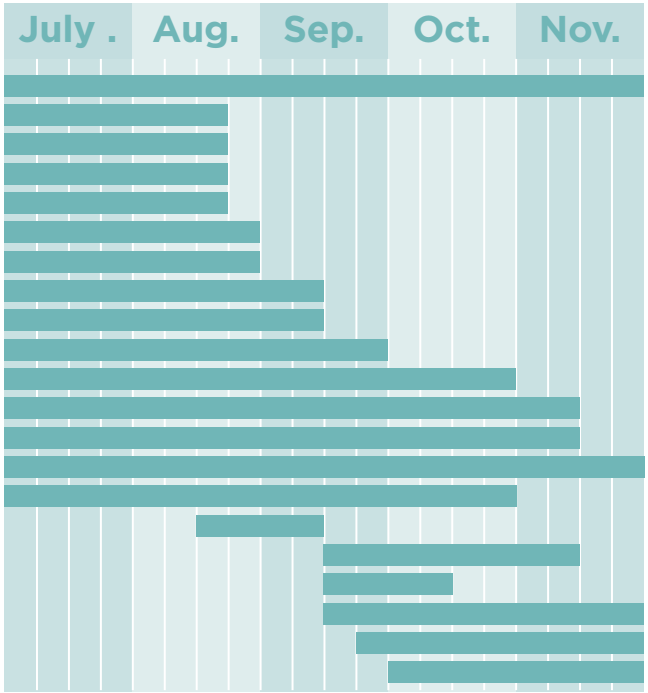
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Plant Health Care Calendar | 262-538-1900

2025 Summer & Fall



- Water birch, evergreens and young trees if <1" rain/week
- Bark beetle control on evergreens.
- Protect elms from Dutch elm disease using trunk injections
- Protect oaks from oak wilt using trunk injections
- Warm season spider mite control
- Japanese beetle control
- Prune evergreen shrubs
- Emerald ash borer (EAB) trunk injections.
- Magnolia scale treatments
- Check for and control scale insects.
- Treat chlorosis with soil injected iron
- Root zone enhancement to manage compacted soils
- Plant trees and shrubs.
- Soil testing to determine site characteristics
- Compost tea applications to improve soil conditions and root uptake
- Zimmerman pine moth control.
- Soil systemic insecticide for control of insect pests in 2026
- Cool season spider mite control.
- Biological root stimulants: mycorrhizae, humates, etc.
- Fall fertilization
- Prune oaks and elms (dormant season)

We Love Referrals!

Prepare for Winter...Schedule Pruning Now!

"Your locally owned and operated tree care company!"