



IN THIS ISSUE

Your lawn as a Golf Course

Community Connections

NEW.. Paul Thomas

Box Wood Blight

New Grassy Problems

House Keeping Notes

Emerald Ash Borer

It seems no matter what we do spring always catches us with our guard down. Spring of 2015 became one of those when Stephen Griner, our sales representative for nine years, gave two weeks notice and was gone in March! Until an appropriate replacement was hired and trained, I (Ken Mays) put on my “old” sales hat and stood in. While it was a burden maintaining my normal duties and filling in as Sales Rep, I found it rewarding. After many years I was able to get back out and interact with our clients. We really work for a lot of nice folks and I appreciate you more then ever. Unfortunately, after 50 years in this racket that pace is tough to maintain. When **Paul Thomas** (you’ll meet on the next page) came on board it was a welcomed relief and frankly, I tend to think you’ll get much better service from Paul. Anyway

This past spring/season was tough on landscapes. Back-to-back brutal winters really took its’ toll on many plants. The winter of 2014 was very cold and yielded an extended snow cover. 2015 brought some of the coldest temperatures on record which extended for months at a time with sporadic snow cover. These back-to-back severe winters provided the death nail for many shrubs. Damage was widespread on: azalea, rhododendron, laurel, magnolia, cryptomeria, holly and boxwood. The extreme extended cold effected the woody parts of plants as well as their roots. Two years of this stress brought many plants to the breaking point. What can be done to avoid this? I’m not really sure, you’re fighting mother nature! The best thing is keep your plants nutrition up, maintain them insect and disease free and where possible apply extra layers of mulch in the fall then remove in early spring. Seeing the loss of these plants is the hardest part of our job, there’s nothing we can do!

This winter is providing a much earned reprieve. Last December was a record cold month and this past was a record warm one. Golf courses enjoyed an extended season beyond Christmas day. We hope not to see the widespread destruction this spring, however, one thing is for sure, there are a few insect and disease problems that have been relentless the past year or two. Scale insect populations on holly are on the move; **volutella** leaf disease is sure to be on pachysandra this spring; the Emerald Ash Borer is officially imbedded in our community; occurrences of “**boxwood blight**” on English box is becoming more common; **Japanese stilt grass** will continue to spread throughout the entire area; and **deer** will continue to devour landscapes! These are all concerns we need to watch for. Some of them are discussed within, however, as always, should you have questions concerning these or other landscape problems give our office a call so that Andy or Paul can discuss them with you or schedule an inspection of your property.

***"I want my lawn
to look like a golf course!"***



We hear it all the time. In order to accomplish that goal, your lawn needs to be treated "like" a golf course. Disease control is the key. Superintendents monitor and treat their turf every two weeks April through September. Even with that regimen, they sometimes don't get it right! For those of you who desire that perfect lawn, we have an approach not quite as intense as that on the links, but, it's proved very successful over the years.

TURF SELECTION: Most residential lawns in our area are ***Turf Type Tall Fescue***. This variety of seed (***TTTF***) is a refined version of the original ***K(Kentucky)31***. These varieties are genetically bred to be disease and drought resistant. Finer lawns (and golf courses) may have ***Kentucky Bluegrass***, a variety that prefers to be mowed at half the height of ***TTTF***, however, is very susceptible to disease and drought stress. We recommend your seed selection be ***TTTF***, it withstands drought stress and gets fewer diseases.



WATER MANAGEMENT: Typically we enjoy abundant rainfall throughout spring until the 4th of July. At that point the heat is turned on and rainfall totals dwindle. The perfect prescription for turf disease and stress. But you say, I have irrigation! Yes, however, very few residential systems are installed to perform uniformly and adequately as a golf course. Without proper calibration and monitoring many irrigated lawns become an incubator for disease! If you don't have irrigation, we highly recommend you NOT try to sustain your lawn via sprinklers. Water improperly administered can do more harm than good. ***TTTF*** will generally go into a semi-dormant state and then revive when Mother Nature starts natural irrigation in late summer.

PREVENTION: Once disease attacks your grass it becomes much more difficult and expensive to correct the infestation. Maintaining your lawn disease free means you must be pro-active and make preventive fungicide applications prior to that prime time. We have found that 3-5 preventive treatments starting in late April every 25-30 days will maintain a residential lawn disease free. When dealing with diseases, nothing is 100% bullet proof and some strange infestation can sneak in and require addressing. That's what our experts are for, to respond when you feel something doesn't look quite right, identify the problem and make recommendations.

GIVING BACK THROUGH CHARITIES

TheArc
of Baltimore



*Sixty years of
daily achievements*

Over the years Scientific Plant Service has made a commitment to giving back to our community. The ARC Baltimore is a long time beneficiary of SPS. We have been affiliated in some way or another for over forty years. We know that, every penny they receive goes to assisting individuals with disabilities. This year we allied with another 501c3 that has been dear to me for decades, The Humane Society of Carroll County, Inc. A long time advocate of spay and neuter programs (being a founding member of SNAP, Spay Neuter All Pets) all of our donations fund their exclusive spay & neuter programs. Please, support YOUR favorite charity, it makes a difference!



Humane Society
of Carroll County

PAUL THOMAS our new front man!



This spring found us in a difficult position with the resignation of Stephen Griner. We knew the task of filling this position with someone who fits the rigid criteria we set for someone representing Scientific Plant Service, would be a difficult one. After a number of interviews, we feel we came across the perfect individual to fill our vacancy in Paul Thomas.

Paul's forty-three years in our industry was achieved managing the campus of **Towson University**. During his tenure he worked his way from the bottom to top at Towson, becoming responsible for the landscape plantings design and maintenance, as well turf management. Prior to a departmental reorganization his responsibilities include caring for all of the athletic facilities too! Over his entire tenure SPS maintained a working relationship with Paul as a "go to" company when a chore came along that couldn't be handled in house. When the opportunity to join our team developed, Paul decided to "retire" from his career at Towson University and broaden his career representing SPS, a company who he felt lived up to a high standard.

The area Paul will be serving will be the same that Stephen covered, Baltimore and Harford Counties. If you haven't met Paul yet, I'm sure when you do you'll be impressed with his knowledge of plants and dedication to all landscapes.

Paul is a family man, married for 22 years to his wife Donna and has been a resident of Parkville for thirty-five years. A true family man, Paul has eight siblings along with three daughters, one son and four grandchildren.

Early on, Paul achieved a background in equestrian riding, training and showing, until the landscape thing took over. Paul is a Certified Professional Horticulturist (1987), a Certified Pesticide Applicator, member of Associated Landscape Contractors of America and received extensive training via Longwood Garden's educational programs.

Welcome aboard, Paul!

BOXWOOD BLIGHT

Since colonial times the Boxwood has been a staple in our landscape. They come in numerous varieties and shapes. There is the Japanese, Korean, American and the stately English. Most famous locally for it's topiary shapes at Ladew Gardens, the English Boxwood, appears to be doomed!

Last winter's newsletter touched briefly on their latest problem, BOXWOOD BLIGHT (*syn. C. pseudonaviculatum*). As if they didn't get enough problems: cankering, volutella, miners, plysliid, mites and decline, now we need to add a new one to the list. This blight was first identified in the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1990's and later in 2002 in New Zealand. By 2008 it was being identified throughout Europe, so, it's really not the

new kid on the block, just new to us. First (officially) found in the nursery environment in Virginia and Connecticut, it now is believed to have spread into the residential landscape environment throughout the Eastern Seaboard. Boxwood blight has been reported to occur on all *Buxus* species, however, the English appear to be highly susceptible. The fungi can also be hosted on plant species within the genera *Pachysandra* and *Sarcococca*.



Proper identification is crucial! When first observed in the late spring, it's symptoms may be easily confused with winter kill or boxwood decline.



Unlike these problems, the foliage turns straw colored and then actually drop off the plant. Most often these symptoms are found on the lower portions and sides of the plant. Before the leaf goes brown, black spotting can be found in the leaves and stems. This identification requires a professional eye and then confirmation via a sample sent for culture identification at the pathology lab at the University of Maryland.

Most important, if you have English box in your landscape, DO NOT introduce any new English Boxwood, no matter where you purchase them! The two confirmed cases we have found in Baltimore County came from a reputable nursery and a home improvement store. The primary concern with this fungus is that it is very mobile and landscapes can become easily contaminated by human or animal traffic and careless maintenance practices. When Boxwood Blight is positively identified on a property it is strongly recommended that all like varieties be removed ASAP. Removal should include encapsulating the plant in a trash bag then digging to remove. All of the leaf litter from the plants must be removed as well. Do not compost, dispose via landfill.



We are just seeing the beginning of this deadly problem. As always, if you're not sure of your plants health call us so we can put a professional eye on them.



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NEW TURF INVADERS

We live in a time of change, forcing us to adapt to new and unknown environments. Your cell phone needs to be replaced every two years to keep up with technology, Microsoft is constantly upgrading our computer systems to keep them safe and efficient and Detroit keeps making transportation better through safety advances and "gadgets". How many cars do you see on the road more than five years old? What we do to keep a lawn pristine and free of undesirable weeds and grasses changes too!

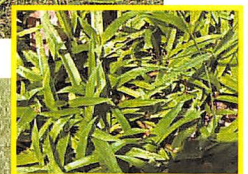
In the spring we apply a "pre-emergent" herbicide that controls unwanted weeds and grasses, better known as **Crabgrass Pre-venter**. Those products continue to do a great job eliminating goosegrass and crabgrass, however, there are new invaders requiring special attention to eradicate. Over the past five years we have seen several new invaders; Japanese Stilt grass, Knotgrass and Green Kyllinga Grass.

The worst of these is **Japanese Stilt Grass**. Five years ago we hardly ever saw it, now it's at epidemic stage. Originally we only found it scattered in shady woodlands. Now those woodlands are displaying a wall-to-wall carpet of Japanese Stilt Grass by mid-summer. Even though it is called a "grass" it really replicates a weed, is an annual and propagates via seed. We now find it invading urban landscape beds and lawns. It is controllable! Well timed applications of post and/or pre-emergent herbicides are pretty effective, however, it requires special attention other than our "Crabgrass Pre-venter".



Japanese Stilt Grass

Knotgrass



Green Kyllinga



Knotgrass is not as widespread as the latter. It is in the “*paspalum*” family and looks a lot like Dallisgrass, is an annual grass that spreads via root rhizomes and propagates via seed. This unwanted grass will show up in the middle of your lawn and out grow regular grass three to one and usually isn’t seen until mid-summer! It is easily identifiable from Dallisgrass by its wavy / crinkled blades. Herbicide treatments will eventually control it, but, our choices are limited with persistence being the key.

The new kid on the block is “**Kyllinga**”. Up until the past twenty-four months, we only found Kyllinga in the golf course environment. Actually, its name is confusing as it is NOT a grass, but, is a “sedge”, making it much more difficult to control. Most of you are familiar with “Yellow Nutsedge” by now and Kyllinga takes on the same growth habits. The biggest contributor is moist/wet areas in your lawn. Avoid over-watering! When left to grow in beds it is easily identified as a sedge, but, when mowed regularly, it takes on the appearance of a very thick dark green bladed grass with a bit of a curl to it. We have several products available for control requiring repeat applications with annual check-ups.

SOME ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

CHARGE CARDS: Over the past 8 months everyone has had their bank credit card up-graded to the new “chip” security. That means, if you haven’t already done so, you need to contact Carolyn to up-date your card information in our files. Even though account numbers may be the same, expiration dates have changed!

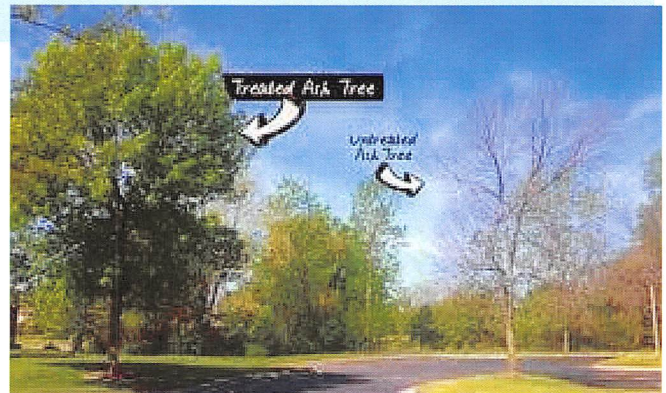
LISTEN UP: This winter we will be installing a new telephone and message system in our office. We will have many options available to us for handling your calls. We will probably be trying different approaches throughout the year to evaluate what you like best. So, please, bear with us as we experiment!

Here are your go to people: **CAROLYN**....accounts payable & accounts receivable; **LISA** job scheduling and technician communications; **PEGGY** processing of proposals, contracts and invoices.

EMERALD ASH (Tree) BORER

Last summer the Sun Papers published that “it’s official, the Emerald Ash Borer, EAB, is active in our area”. Over the past few years we have discussed this incoming problem and, hopefully, put all of our clients with Ash trees on guard. The time to act is now. The EAB is a fast moving silent killer. The ONLY way to protect against their fatal attack is with preventive action. Once the borer attacks the controls become much more difficult. When trees exhibit symptoms of 40%-50% infestation it’s highly unlikely that the tree’s health can be reversed. A determination of your Ash tree’s health requires a professional eye.

There are a few options available for control. The most cost effective treatment, “Merit” (*imidacloprid*) is best done preventively and doesn’t require invasive drilling into the trunk. Bayer recommends annual treatments in the April-May period.





Another option "Tree-age" (*emamectin benzoate*), is recommended to be used every two years. It's proved to be a good product, however, the treatment requires drilling into the tree, is very labor intensive and the basic cost of the product is much more than Merit.

After these products are applied they move up the tree and into the foliage to kill the adults when they start feeding in May. FYI Ash trees are wind pollinated, therefore, there is little to no risk to pollinators! As always, when fighting infestations, it is critical to optimize your trees' health with regular Deep Root Feeding.

Hopefully, this doesn't sound like a broken record, as we have been discussing the EAB for the past three to four years. We really just want you to pay attention to this insect, Ash trees are native to Maryland and many of their varieties have been used extensively for decades throughout our landscape. ***Please see the special insert enclosed.***



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