



Environmental Stewards Since 1957



WINTER NEWSLETTER

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Ken Mays

*President*

### REVIEW or Re-Do?

It seems every year when I sit to write this newsletter I could just take last years review, stick it in and go on. This year, I really thought we were going to get through the season in good shape. The spring was wet and cool, but, forgiving. Once we got to the summer months the rains continued to come on a regular basis and plant and lawns were “looking good”. Well, mid August came and off went the faucet. The regular showers we had been experiencing came to a screeching halt! Okay, so this happens all the time and by the last week of September things are getting back to normal. Well, no normal this year! It took another month (late October) before we got relief and turf had a chance to rebound. The heat and wilting humidity in August and September was off the charts. There were many days when it seemed unfair to ask our guys to go out for treatments. They were true sports and

went out and got the job done. We fell a little behind due to the severe conditions, but, they got it done. The heat, drought and humidity just destroyed a lot of turf. There was nothing that could be done. The extended fall drought also jeopardized the health of trees. Most vulnerable, Oak, (especially older oaks), that may or may not have been in stress, will be suffering more come this spring.

As editor-in-chief, I have been writing this newsletter for a long time. In fact, 2016 marked my 50<sup>th</sup> season here at Scientific Plant Service, Inc.! This is my last one! While the day to day operations are handled by our remarkable management team and field personnel, I’ve maintained the job of steering this boat in the right direction. Now don’t get me wrong, I’m not jumping ship, just handing this chore over to our other talent on staff. Don’t worry, you’ll still be hearing from me!

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### WINTER SHUFFLE

Enclosed within you will find your “Program Schedule” of services for the coming season. If you subscribe to our tree & shrub programs you may see some changes. Over the past decade our technology has been changing, driving us to develop new application techniques and approaches for pest and disease control. Along with these changes are the concerns protecting bee populations. Where suitable, we are making recommendations to do **basal drenches, root zone injections and trunk applications**. These services, with a single treatment, will provide season long effectiveness, eliminate the need for aerial spraying and reduce exposure to bee populations. If you see these changes and aren’t clear on their effect for your program, please, give our office a call to clarify their/our approach.

## PERSONNEL SHUFFLE



Well, it happened again. We needed to represent a new client area. Andy Sheehan who most recently handled the western and southern counties had a family emergency in July and was forced to move out state. Our quick fix (and best fix) was to promote from within rather than recruit and train a new person. Our senior tech, **GARY WISNIEWSKI**, fell right into the slot. Many of you became familiar with Gary while he was providing services on your property. Since Gary's credentials fit the bill it was an easy decision for maintaining customer service. Gary has been with Scientific



Gary



Nick

Plant Service for over ten years, has over thirty years experience in the industry, is a Maryland Licensed Tree Expert and Certified and Licensed for Pesticide Application with the MD. Dept. of Agriculture. Gary has been a natural fit since he is familiar with everything we do. All we had to do was give him a crash course on the computer. The switch up was made a little easier since we hired a new technician in June with similar credentials, **NICK ECONOMOS**, who stepped up and filled Gary's field position with confidence. Now that Nick has a full season under his belt getting to know our/your properties, he will be filling Gary's shoes with full authority. Nick and new hire **Corey Walker** (technician) attended the University of Maryland's pesticide applicator short course (5 days) this winter in preparation for a successful 2017 season. It's never easy filling these slots, however, we are constantly watching and looking for qualified, competent, trustworthy people so that we can continue to provide the finest service available to you and your landscape!

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## POLYON (fertilizer)..... Review

They say Americans have short memories, so, that means we should review our unique "POLYON" fertilizer lawncare program. Why unique? Because there is only one provider of POLYON there can't be a generic version produced and Scientific Plant Service, Inc., has the only lawncare program in Maryland that is based on POLYON exclusively. Why POLYON? Because it's nick name is "the smart" fertilizer. It only releases nutrients when the environment is favorable for grass plants to absorb them. We are able to computer design our fertilizer blends to determine how much nitrogen is released over specific time frames, allowing grass plants to utilize "all" of the nutrients we apply. Even if we guess wrong, the science takes over. The combination of proper soil temperature and moisture dictate nitrogen availability, therefore, if we apply fertilizer, then soon thereafter, enter into a drought, nutrients will not be released. The POLYON will just sit there and wait for the proper growing conditions for your turf, then **BAM!**, it starts the nutrient release process. That means no wasted nutrients, no runoff and no pollution to tributaries and the Chesapeake Bay! That also means



fewer unneeded trips. Unlike the typical "lawncare" program that struggles to make multiple treatments in the fall and fight leaf cover and pending freezes, our treatment goes down in August/September and feeds all fall and into next spring!

We are licensed and regulated by "Nutrient Management" laws in the state of Maryland. POLYON is registered as an "Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizer", a category that Scientific Plant Service, Inc., was instrumental in creating as well as the laws that regulate it's use. Because of it's controlled release characteristics, POLYON fertilizer applications can be applied at more than two and one half times that of conventional fertilizers! That means fewer trip charges. Wow, efficiency and effectiveness all in one program. For additional information about "POLYON" fertilizer go to: <https://www.harrells.com/polyon/turf.html>

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## DEER DAMAGE & CONTROL

We always thought controlling insects and disease was a tough job, then decided to try out our skills on the local deer herd! So, I guess "control" isn't the right term for our Deer Repellent program it's more like "Manage".

Deer Damaged continued .....

Quite frankly, our deer population is out of control! Our objective is to reduce the amount of browsing by the deer with strategically applied repellents and monitoring. Monthly applications generally are sufficient to ward off the predators, however, during periods of rapid growth and persistent rain, re-treatments may be needed. Properties that have large quantities of lush growing Hosta and flowering annuals and perennials, are better served with bi-weekly treatments during their peak periods. Our products have a two fold action, one it has an objectionable odor and two, a bitter taste. When the odor doesn't deter feeding, as they nibble they get that bitter taste causing them to go to the next plant. As they do their *tasting*, they will nibble rather than gulp, leaving you plants with minimal damage. Over time they become "trained" and avoid treated landscape, however, the population of the herd changes and the training process becomes an ongoing endeavor. The way we have it set up is for you to **subscribe to monthly treatments** (12 in all), monitor (along with you) your property for deer activity. If they start damaging plants due to spring growth, flowering or rain, call our office and we will schedule a no charge maintenance treatment prior to your next scheduled treatment. Re-treats usually are scheduled within 24-48 hours of your call. Sorry, re-treats are only available for our "Full Program" accounts! When we see that activity on your property is unusually high due to the herd size or prime plant material, we will recommend bi-weekly treatments be made! Keep in mind the activity of the deer passing through your property. They may be carrying the pestilent Deer Tick. Perimeter sprays in the spring and fall can be added to your program to help guard against ticks. We do understand, these sprays can get costly, however, so is the price to replace mature plants.



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## MULCH - ROOTS ... Girdling your trees/plants:

Webster lists synonyms for girdle as: *cinch, sash, wasteband, deaden*. He's spot on for what happens with trees with "girdling roots". They are roots that have become miss directed and grow sideways or circular from the trunk. As they grow, their increased size puts pressure on the trunk and roots growing perpendicular to the tree. They adversely effect tree/plant growth by acting like a tourniquet restricting sap flow in the area where it's growing. So, that's a natural occurrence with a single root on just about any tree. However, we can be causing their "unnatural" occurrence through improper maintenance practices, *mulchoholics!* We have become obsessed with mulch. Everything is getting mulched every year. Stop it! Accumulation of mulch around the base of trees and plants encourages the plant to push out unnatural shallow roots. This superficial root system of fibrous roots often get confused and grow around the base of the tree/plant and cause girdling. The other major concern is the shallow fibrous roots over-ride the deep rooted roots and draw moisture and food from the organic mulch layer. This is fine until drought sets in! Now those "shallow" roots have nothing to absorb and the tree goes into dormancy and shock. Repeated seasons of this syndrome will shorten the life of your tree/plant. Finally, another severe effect of over mulching is that the moist buildup of mulch is causing dampness on bark that is designed to be above grade and dry. This constant wet will cause rot at the base of the tree. The rot in turn cuts off sap flow up the tree causing death. So, in effect the rot encircling the base girdles the tree. We can't prevent a hay wired root from hurting a tree, but, we can keep a watch out and remove them when noticed.



Surface girdling roots



Shallow roots from mulch



Strangling affect

*Girdling Roots continued .....*

We CAN prevent undesirable root growth and mulching practices. Some girdling roots can be root problems, call our office so we can, get out, do an inspection and advise a course of action.



trunk rot from mulch by adhering to good removed to save the tree. If you think you have

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## BLUE SPRUCE DILEMMA!

It seems every year something takes us by surprise and 2016 was no different. In 2015 we began observing failing conditions in established "blue spruce". Last season we continued to see this problem throughout our travels and concern has set in. Here's what we're seeing. Primarily blue spruce 20' - 30' tall (approx. 15-20 yrs old) showing signs of stress and needle drop. The lower limbs start displaying symptoms first then spreading throughout the tree. It has been identified to us by the University of Maryland labs as a "needle cast". The one we are most familiar with is "Swiss Needle Cast". We are attacking this problem as we would the Swiss cast,. That is, 3-5 applications of a fungicide (*Daconil*) throughout the season, starting with the new growth period. Persistence is important here, repetitive sprays, repetitive years. Since this is something new in our area, we will need some history and trials to get a handle on it. So far we have heard very little from other industry sources. Along with the spray routine, since the stress is quite obvious, regular fertilization is highly recommended. If you have spruce or fir trees take a hard look at them. If you're not sure, give our office a call or email, and we'll take a look and let you know what we think!



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## GREAT TURF & TIMING!

There's a time for everything, even your lawn. Starting with spring, in order to prevent crabgrass later on in the year it needs to be done in the early spring. It can be cleaned up later on, but, spring is the preferred time. For the most part, if weeds are not there and active, we can't spray to kill or prevent. The best time is when they are **actively** growing. That time, usually May-June and late August until frost. If we treat too early in the spring, not all weeds are active and we will need to

*Great Turf continued ....*

come back. Not Good! The least amount of herbicides we apply to your turf the healthier it will be. That's why we wait until May and avoid blanket applications. If you have irrigation you'll want to avoid disease with fungicide treatments. The best time is when you don't **NEED** fungicides. *Prevention - Prevention!* Don't wait and see, just do it! Seeding and renovation can be done all season, for best results, do it in the fall. Even if it's late fall, it will over-winter and thrive next spring. Fertilizer, not so critical. Since we use POLYON, it can be done all year long, except after Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, the state prefers no nitrogen after that point to protect the bay from nitrogen runoff. (They didn't know about POLYON, there isn't any, DAAH) Now it's time to **THINK SPRING!**

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*As I was finalizing this paper, it was inauguration day, and I had 2-3 thoughts for our front page. I just scrapped them for the current. We just had a peaceful transition of leadership for all the world to witness. Like it or not, the best civics lesson was presented by Lee Greenwood, just be:*

**PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN!**



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