

Fall 2003



## ***Need a Speaker?***

Give us a call. We have several interesting topics. We'd be happy to speak for any size group you have.

## ***Dates to Remember:***

September 1

*Labor Day*

September 23

*Autumn Begins*

October 26

*Daylight Savings Ends*

October 31

*Halloween*

## ***Mosquito Madness***

*Ruel Jones*

Have you heard about the **West Nile Virus**? Read up! It's interesting . . .

### **Who's Most at Risk**

- People over age 50
- Anyone with a weakened immune system

### **Symptoms**

Incubation period (time from infection to onset of symptoms) is usually 3 to 15 days.

- Fever
- Headache and body aches
- Skin rash & swollen lymph nodes

More severe infections:

- Disorientation/Stupor
- Tremors & convulsions
- Muscle weakness or paralysis
- Coma

### **Prevention Tips**

- Get rid of buckets, unused plastic pools, flowerpots, or other water-holding items
- Clean out rain gutters and clear flat roofs of standing water
- Eliminate puddles around your air conditioner or septic tank
- Check tarps on boats or pools to make sure they aren't holding water
- Use insect repellents—ones containing DEET and permethrin are most effective, according to *Consumer Reports*. DEET does not kill bugs, but the vapors discourage them from landing or climbing on you. These products are considered safe for adults and children age 2 months and older. ■



***Do You Have a Mosquito Problem?  
Did You Know that We Can Treat Your Lawn, Shrubs &  
Dense Brushy Areas to Reduce Populations?  
Call for More Details!***

Throughout the years, I've seen some really strange stuff in my profession. You can't be in any part of tree work without experiencing something that's out of the ordinary. Part of the reason for this is that we work hand in hand with nature and part of it is because tree guys are. . .well. . . they're different. Of course, I prefer to think of myself and my colleagues as esoteric. That being said, I thought I might share with you some of the things that have been experienced by myself and my fellow "tree guys."

I've encountered squirrels, owls, possums, raccoons and just about any other creature possible within your trees. Can you guess which was the most aggressive animal of all? A snake? A possum? Nope! It was a blue jay. There was a nest of jay hatchlings in a Sugar maple that I was pruning and she absolutely disagreed with my presence in the tree. She was under the impression that I was there for her young as a predator. Though I tried my best to explain to her that I was only there to prune the tree and not eat her young, she was insistent on my rapid departure from the tree. She repeatedly dove at my face. She pecked me in the forehead; she landed on my hard hat. The last straw was when she successfully plucked my sunglasses from my face with her talons. Do blue jays even have talons? Aren't those for Eagles and Hawks? Well, I assure you...at the moment my glasses left my face...THAT

BLUE JAY HAD TALONS!!! I resolved the issue by placing her nest in my rope bag and lowering it down on my rope to the ground crew. The crew placed the nest in



a nearby crabapple tree, and much to my delight, the mother Jay lost interest in me and tended to her young.

Yet another funny thing I've seen within a tree happened on one of our client's properties on Hillsboro Road. I was climbing a 70 ft. Red Oak. I had finally reached my tie in point after the arduous ascent and noticed I had a guest. There, eyeball to eyeball with me at about 60 ft., was a tiny tree frog. He was no bigger than the size of a nickel. I'm breathing heavy. My heart is pounding. Sweat is pouring off of me like I'm a water feature at the Opryland Hotel Atrium. I finally get to the top and there's this little frog looking at me as to say "Man...what took you so long...I got up here half an hour ago!"

Perhaps the craziest thing I've ever heard of in the business in this part of the country happened to my good friend George Phetteplace. He was pruning a Tulip

poplar behind one of our client's homes in the Belle Rive area of Brentwood when he heard something crashing through the woods behind him. Thinking that this time it just might be Sasquatch, George turned and looked down in time to catch a Long Horned Texas steer coming out of the woods line and running beneath his tree. After frantically pulling up his climbing rope (to avoid the possibility of it becoming entangled with one of the steer's horns and yanking him out of

the tree), George rubbed his eyes and thought to himself, "That's got to be the weirdest thing I've ever seen." No sooner did that thought leave his head when once again he heard more crashing through the woods. He turned around again to find two cowboys dressed in full chaps, cowboy hats and bandannas, twirling lasso loops over their heads and chasing after the steer. After once again yanking his rope out of the way, George asked the cowboys what was going on. It turned out that someone in the Leiper's Fork area had ordered the cattle. While in transit, the cattle trailer doors had opened and the valuable livestock were making a break for it.

We've even spotted Dinosaurs, as evident in this picture, while pruning trees at Cheekwood Botanical Gardens. By the way, if you'd like to see them as well, they will be on exhibit at Cheekwood through October 26, 2003. Load up the kids and go check them out!■

**In the race for quality, there is no finish line.**

**-Anonymous**

Even our most faithful turf management customers have problems with their lawns during this time of year. You may recognize some of the following most asked questions during July and August:

### What are all those little brown dead looking circles all over my lawn?

There is a fungus among us—Brown Patch—and it's the reason for those little brown dead looking circles all over your lawn. This fungus thrives in steamy, moist environments that are brought about in our area by afternoon thunder-showers or supplemental watering late in the day. This late afternoon rainfall/watering causes the fungus to spread like wildfire. Brown Patch can be treated both preventatively and curatively, but it is expensive and requires three applications of fungicide.

### Why is my lawn brown and dead looking?

The answer to this question is our harsh summer climate. Middle Tennessee is directly in the center of the area referred to as the transition zone. The transition zone refers to the northern most growing limits for warm season grasses, such as Bermuda and Zoysia, versus the southern most growing limits for cool season grasses, such as Tall Fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass. Most homeowners are objectionable to Bermuda grass and Zoysia because they turn brown in the

early winter. Most homeowners choose Tall Fescue which is a cool season grass. By definition a "cool season grass" is a turfgrass species adapted to favorable growth during cooler weather (60°-75°). Cool season grasses may become dormant or injured during hot weather. In the dormant state, Tall Fescue looks brown and dead. The grass goes into survival mode where the plant sacrifices shoot growth above ground and focuses all of its energy to maintain life in the root system below ground. Some of the grass will recover in the fall when the heat subsides, however a portion of the lawn will die each summer.

### So what's the magic solution?

Unfortunately, there is no 'magic solution.' However, you can lessen the problems by following these simple steps:

- 1) **Replenish**—(September/October) Overseed yearly to replace grass that died during the harsh summer months. Use the best possible Tall Fescue Seed Blend you can find—Not all Fescue is created equal!
- 2) **Fertilize**—Timing is critical! Too much nitrogen late in the season can make brown patch fungus worse.
- 3) **Water**—Regularly! Lawns need an average of 1" per week to survive. Mornings are best.
- 4) **Spray**—To eliminate weeds

competing with your grass for nutrients and water, and to control diseases like Brown Patch.

Remember, Tall Fescue is the most popular choice because it will give you good results for three (Fall, Winter & Spring) of the four seasons. It will always struggle during our Summer months. This is simply the nature of our Middle Tennessee climate here in the transition zone.

Bottom line is if you are looking for a nice Fescue lawn, it is not an easy process with a one-time expense. It will require consistent care year after year and most importantly fall overseeding (September and October are ideal months for overseeding) to replenish the grass lost during the summer months.■



***A journey  
of a  
thousand  
miles  
begins  
with a  
single  
step.***

***-Anonymous***





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“Celebrating 20 years of  
uncompromising  
Quality.”



## *Are Your Flowering Dogwoods Bored?*

*Kim Cross*

No, Dogwoods don't get tired of looking at other trees and shrubs in your landscape! I'm talking about dogwood 'borers,' *Synantbedon scitula*. These are the most destructive insect pests that attack flowering dogwood, *Cornus florida* in Tennessee. Wounded trees are the most vulnerable since the larva gain access through wounds or scars. The adult is a clearwing moth that looks like a wasp. An early symptom is sloughing of loose bark from areas that have been attacked. More advanced symptoms are crown dieback and adventitious shoot growth along the trunk and scaffold branches.

The adult moth is about 1/2" long and has a blue-black body with yellow bands and clear wings. It generally begins to emerge in late April to early May. The females lay eggs on or near wounds or in the crotches of scaffold branches. The



larva feed on the cambium and remain in their tunnels throughout their development. The larva overwinters in the feeding tunnel and begins feeding again for a short time in the spring before pupating. There is usually only one generation per year.

The following measures can be taken to manage this pest:

- 1) Prune out and destroy infected branches.
- 2) Avoid unnecessary wounding, i.e., string trimmer damage to the base of the tree.
- 3) Preventive spray applications of permethrin should be applied to the trunk, root collar and main branches during late April and mid-July.
- 4) Promote the vitality of the tree by maintaining soil fertility and applying water during dry periods.

Following this plant health care regime should give you many years of enjoyment from your flowering dogwoods. ■