



Pruning Dilemma, Part TWO

Currently, the State of Texas does not require any licensing for tree contractors. There are many contractors such as electricians, plumbers, irrigators and pest control contractors (to name just a few) that need to pass exams, maintain continuing education units plus keep other important commercial contractor requisites such as current liability insurance and sales tax payments. This begs the question: "Why not for tree contractors"? This needs to change!

Until there is change, it is a voluntary practice in the tree industry. Those tree contractors that maintain education are certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and we are known as arborists. The arborists who are current with their credentials can be found on the ISA consumer website: www.treesaregood.com.

Unfortunately, the present day reality in the tree care industry is slow in its caring and earning the education. The majority of tree care services have little, or none, of the professional requisites noted above. Consequently, the Texas Forest Service sets out recommendations on concerning issues such as oak wilt.

With the tree contractors not following education and a significant amount of ranchers and homeowners often unfamiliar with the oak wilt, there are potential problems. Adding improper tools plus minimal manpower to prune oaks safely and correctly, those problems are compounded especially during the spring/summer months. The Texas Forest Service recommends a complete prohibition of pruning of oaks during spring for both the tree contractor and the arborist. Yet, spring is the best season for pruning trees, shrubs, etc.

The message delivered by the Texas Forest Service's spring "pruning ban" recommendation

is seriously flawed with this total prohibition in my professional opinion. The impression is that "no tree contractor or arborist" is capable of safely pruning oak trees during the best season for pruning.

Ironically, the Texas Forest Service maintains a website (www.texasoakwilt.org) where you, the consumer, can locate Texas Oak Wilt Certified arborists (the designation will change in a few years to Texas Oak Wilt Qualified). You can also find a listing of the most highly-qualified vendors, their locations and contact information.

It is my firm conviction that these highly-qualified individuals as well as many other arborists are fully capable of pruning oaks safely during the spring and summer months. Including this caveat to the pruning ban practices recommended by the TFS serves the tree, consumer, and the credentialed commercial arborist(s) best.

The following questions can be helpful to you, the consumer, as a means to further verify a particular arborist's oak wilt pruning practices. (1) How much paint is stocked on your trucks?

(2) Do you replenish your stock of paint to ensure more than one day's worth? (3) Does every climber carry paint when in an oak tree pruning? (4) Do you have a paint pole taller than your tallest pole saw? (5) Does sawdust from chainsaw cuts get wiped off the cut oak branch before paint application? (6) Do you paint all cuts before moving on to the next tree? (7) Does the ground man understand that his most important job function regarding oak tree pruning is painting the cuts made?

Questions or comments that this article or previous articles have generated, may be directed to me at:

kevin@arborcareandconsulting.com

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ATT/SBC Telephone	
New Service	1-800-288-2020
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Time Warner Cable.....	512-485-5555

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Emerald Ash Borer found in Texas

Emerald ash borer, often referred to as EAB, is an exotic pest from Asia. This beetle is a serious threat to ash trees. Emerald ash borer was accidentally introduced into the United States and was found in Michigan in 2002.

Four beetles were found in a trap located in NE Texas (Harrison County) in late April 2016. There are currently no confirmed cases of ash trees that are infested. The beetles will continue to be monitored throughout the state.

Larvae bore into trees under the bark and cut off the water and nutrient conducting vessels. Larvae are creamy white, legless with a flattened body. Larvae are 1- 1 ½ inches in length when fully developed.

As an adult, the beetle is elongated and cylindrical with the pronotum (a part of the thorax) extended back as a lobe towards the abdomen. Most notably, these beetles are bright, metallic green with reddish hues. Adults are about 1/2 inch in size. If the wings are removed or lifted, the upper side of the abdomen is bright coppery-red which can help differentiate this beetle from closely related species in Texas.

In infested trees, canopy die back is often seen in the top one third of the canopy and then moves down until the tree is bare. Epicormic shoots (leafy shoots coming off the trunk of the tree) may also be seen. Vertical fissures may appear on the bark and galleries may be able to be seen through openings. If bark is peeled off, serpentine galleries packed with frass (excrement) may be seen. Adult beetles produce a d-shaped exit hole (1/8 inch diameter). Woodpeckers may cause damage to trees infested with EAB. Look for flaking bark and uneven holes caused by the woodpeckers feeding on larvae and pupae.

If EAB activity is confirmed for ash trees within an area, it is recommended that a systemic insecticide treatment is given to ash trees of high value. If more than 50% of an infested ash tree crown remains, then treatment with a systemic insecticide may slow the attack. If less than 50% of an infested ash tree crown remains, the tree should be removed.

For great information on emerald ash borer within Texas see the following site: <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/eab/>

This information is to have you watch for this beetle on ash trees in your area. Only 4 beetles have been found currently and only in NE Texas. No trees have yet been confirmed to be infested.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at:

www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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*Based on 2014 residential home sales through Austin Board of REALTORS.

NatureWatch ANT ANTICS

by Lynne & Jim Weber

The most infamous ant species in Texas is the imported red fire ant, but did you know that there are many native or adapted ant species in our area that compete with them? While any ant species can be considered a nuisance when locally abundant, with a little study of their characteristics and habits, these beneficial species may even help us humans in the war against imported fire ants.

Like all insects, ants have six jointed legs, three main body parts (head, thorax, and abdomen), a pair of antennae, and a hard exoskeleton that provides a protective casing around the body. The head contains jointed antennae and powerful mandibles or jaws, the thorax is where the legs attach, and the abdomen houses important internal organs including those of the respiratory, reproductive, and excretory systems.

Of the many species of native or adapted ants in Texas, some of the most interesting are the Big-headed Ant (*Pheidole* spp.), the Longhorn Crazy Ant (*Paratrechina longicornis*), and the Little Black Ant (*Monomorium minimum*). Reddish-brown in color, Big-headed Ants come in two sizes – soldiers or major workers about ¼ inch in length, and minor workers about 1/8 of an inch in length. The major workers have big heads in proportion to the rest of their bodies. Because they usually nest in the soil either in open areas or under wood, rocks, landscape timbers, and patio pavers, they are often confused with imported fire ants. While they typically feed on dead or live insects, they also eat tiny seeds and honeydew produced by aphids and scale insects. Big-headed Ants are considered major predators of imported fire ant queens which can be present in large numbers following a fire ant swarm.

Adapted in Texas, Longhorn Crazy Ants are grayish-black ants 1/8 of an inch in length that are recognizable due to their extremely long legs and antennae. Colonies of these ants can often be found in soil under items such as logs, stones, and debris, and they generally feed on the larvae of fleas and flies. Longhorn Crazy Ants get part of their common name from their behavior, which includes the habit of erratically running about with no apparent sense of direction. However, immediately following an imported fire ant swarm, they have been observed carrying away the imported fire ant queens.

Only 1/16 of an inch in length and overall black in color, Little Black Ants can be found feeding on honeydew, but they more typically scavenge dead insects and other arthropods during the heat of the day. Once these foraging workers find a suitable meal, they release a pheromone to recruit other nest mates to help them cut up larger items or cart away smaller ones. When these ants run across other ant species that may compete for a food source, they resort to ‘gaster-flagging’, a behavior in which they raise and vibrate their gasters, or the enlarged part of their abdomens, to release a poisonous gland secretion that chases away their rivals. Like the other ants described here, these little ants can pack a real punch and often invade imported fire ant colonies and take right over!

Bigheaded Ant (soldier or major worker)



Longhorn Crazy Ant



Little Black Ant



Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. Check out our book, *Nature Watch Austin*, published by Texas A&M University Press, and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com if you enjoy reading these articles!

Neighborhood Compassion Watch!

On April 14, 2016, the Austin City Council passed a resolution designating Austin as a Compassionate City. There are now over 350 compassionate communities globally and the number is growing. Compassionate Austin is recognized as a leader!

Let's start the "Neighborhood Compassion Watch"! Compassion exists in 3 key dimensions: caring for others, self, and the Earth. Discover and share your stories of "3D" compassion. Catch people in the act! Engage youth in a treasure hunt for compassion and help them tell about what they find. Send your stories to Compassionate Austin at compassionateaustin@gmail.com. Be sure to identify your neighborhood when you submit your story! We may be able to publish them in this newsletter or on the Compassionate Austin website or Facebook page. Also, we are looking for stories that we can highlight in Citizen Communications at Austin City Council meetings.

Breaking News! The Global Compassion Summit is coming up July 13-14th. It is part of the 5th annual Summer of Peace — the largest online peace event on the planet! Dr. Lesa Walker, Founder of the Compassionate Austin Movement, is one of the speakers on

July 14. She will provide information about the Compassionate Austin movement and the importance of the daily practice of "3D" compassion! The Global Compassion Summit is a FREE online event. Google it to learn more and register. Sign up TODAY!! Here is the link: <https://shiftnetwork.isrefer.com/go/sop16LW/lwalker/>.

This year's theme for the Summit is Mindfulness and Compassion in Daily Life. Speakers are global leaders and experts in the field, sharing stories of how compassion and mindfulness are contributing to a more conscious, peaceful and sustainable world. You'll hear from teachers bringing mindfulness to at-risk youth, attorneys using mindfulness and compassion to shift our legal system, physicians putting "care" back into health care, and activists who are using compassion to anchor their communities together.

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Texting and Cell Phone Use during Driving

By the National Highway Safety Administration (edited for space)

In 2014, 3,179 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver. One of the most alarming and widespread forms of distracted driving is cell phone usage. According to a study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTI), sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds, the equivalent of driving blind at 55-mph for the length of an entire football field. And a 2014 special article in the New England Journal of Medicine found that the risk of a crash or near-crash among novice drivers increased with the performance of many secondary tasks, including texting and dialing cell phones.

Text messaging is of heightened concern because it combines three types of distraction – visual, manual and cognitive. In other words, texting involves taking your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, and your mind off the task of driving.

NHTSA's message is simple – “One Text or Call Could Wreck it All.” Legislation is being passed across the nation to

discourage distracted driving. We hope drivers get the message loud and clear.

So the next time you are pressed for time, and it seems like multitasking in the car is the best decision, remember those 3,179 lives that were taken because someone decided they could do two things at once. A text or call is not worth your life, or anyone else's.



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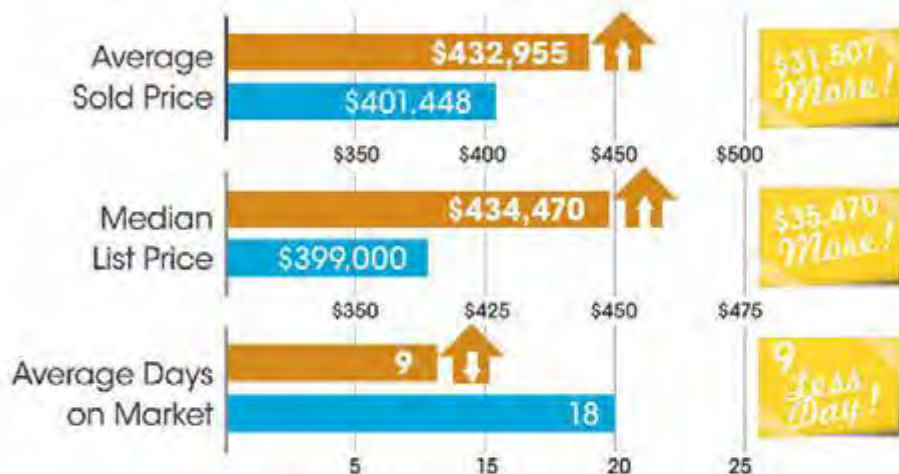
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