

In the Shade

Invasive Species in Houston *by Allan Turner, Houston Chronicle*

When it comes to saving the Houston area's vulnerable forests and prairies from the rapacious advance of Chinese tallow, Chinese privet and wax-leaf ligustrum — invasive species that have the power to subvert the region's natural sylvan order — a tree hugger's best friends are fire, poison and a sharp ax.

Already, hundreds of acres of grassland at Armand Bayou have been overrun by Chinese tallow, and sections of Memorial Park, home to the 155-acre Houston Arboretum, are choked with privet and ligustrum.

"If you look at Memorial Park, the replacement rate for oaks and pines is poor to fair," Gonzalez said.

"What's happening is that slowly, over a lifetime, it could transform into a forest of privet. Any time

an 80-year-old pine is felled by lightning, a race is going on for sunlight. Privet and ligustrum are extremely fast-growing. A single plant can produce 10,000 berries with an 85 percent germination rate."

"In terms of looking for small (oak or pine) saplings," added Siemann, "you can walk for half a mile and you won't see one. You're just fighting your way through privet. ...

There are tons and tons of Chinese privet, impenetrable thickets chest high or taller."

Chinese tallow, first brought to the United States by Benjamin Franklin for the anticipated value of its seed oil, once posed a threat to the Houston Arboretum. But a major mid-1990s effort to clear the forest of the tree

largely was successful. Classifying it as a "noxious plant," the state in January banned the tree's importation, sale and distribution except in special instances. And at the 2,500-acre Armand Bayou Nature Center, the tallow, whose brilliant crimson fall foliage made it appealing to home

landscapers, remains a scourge.

"Tallow out-competes native trees in drought, flood, in sun and shade," said Donahue. "It even accepts salinity. Once it gets started, the real tragedy is

when a grassland ecosystem gets changed to a completely different ecosystem — a forest with a single species of plant."



Personal Observations *by Pat Wentworth, Certified Arborist*

Over 30 plus years of working in and with trees, I have observed a wide variety of things that I know to work consistently for me. I will pass these observations along in this article and others to follow. My observations are just

that — observations. They are not "hard science" with 10 years of repeatable results on hundreds of trees with control trees, etc., but methods of work or observations I have used to successfully care for my client's trees.

The first topic I would like to tackle is one of pruning. No two companies seem to prune or approach pruning the same way. Even ISA and ANSI have different approaches to the one basic thing we do most

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Personal Observations *cont'd*

Continued from page 1

often to trees and for trees and one might say against trees. The one malady I see inflicted upon trees more often than not is poor pruning in the form of over pruning.

Too many people (at least in Central Texas) seem to be paid by how much they prune out of a tree

without killing it. I travel through Austin every day and see large stacks of green limbs piled up to 6 feet high at the curb. The trees will have been virtually stripped of 50% (and often far more) of their foliage. This wanton slaughtering of trees will continue as long as the buying public thinks it is proper. We need to step in and educate our clients as to why this is a poor practice.

Over the years, I have come to realize (correctly I think) that trees almost never have too many leaves. By pruning only what is dead, dying, or broken, our pruning results in trees looking natural, thick, and full. The only green tissue we remove is what is "objectionable" to the tree's owners – low limbs over drive,

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Personal Observations *cont'd*

Continued from page 3

sidewalks, roofs, etc. A solid canopy of healthy leaves (along with an intact root system) is all most trees need to remain healthy.

For several generations, our industry has labeled epicormic sprouts as either “water sprouts” or “suckers.” I would ask that you consider dropping these terms from your vocabulary. What are called “water sprouts” or “suckers” are in fact epicormic sprouts which arise from dormant buds under the bark for a variety of reasons. The most common is a response to light so I guess one could call them “sun sprouts.” Frequently, I call them “injury sprouts” as these arise very shortly after a poor pruning job or perhaps storm damage, which allows a sudden flood of additional light to penetrate the canopy. A change in the allocations or concentrations of growth hormones (such as what happens when a tree is topped or severally damaged in a storm) also brings on a flush of new epicormic sprouts.

“Sucker: one who sucks or draws away from another.” It is my observation that green leaves on a tree “suck” nothing. A tree instead has a net positive benefit from each green leaf it can maintain. At the end of the leaf’s growing cycle or usefulness, the tree very carefully removes any useful soluble material in the leaf before discarding it as an empty carbon shell. Epicormic sprouts then are not “suckers.”

“Water sprouts” are often defined as sprouts above a certain height in a tree to differentiate them from “suckers.” Seldom (if ever) are they caused by water, so the term “water sprouts” is something we should drop from our vernacular as well. “Water sprouts,” like “suckers,” are most often caused by the penetration of light to dormant buds below the bark.

“Water sprouts” are often seen in new subdivisions though not because of the addition of water, but because all of the brush and competing vegetation had been removed around the trees exposing them to full sunshine for the first time in their lives.

Each sprout adds to the overall organism we call a tree. Each interior sprout helps to add to the circumferential growth of the branch to which it’s attached. When these are routinely stripped from the tree, the growth of the diameter of the branch slows while adding length (and weight) to the tip. The result is long skinny branches with the weight (and the sail) at the branch tip. In my observations, these trees are usually the first to break during storms.

When pruning a tree, the arborist should understand the normal growth pattern of that particular species. Around Austin at least, the hackers appear to want to make every tree look like an emaciated, native live oak. (Native live oaks [*Quercus fusiformis*] are the only trees I know of in Central Texas with a consistent, naturally open

interior.)

Poorly pruned trees seem to be subject to more disease, insect infestations, and are also more likely to break during storms. This goes against “common wisdom” set out by ISA’s pruning standard and others that state “the interior of the tree should be opened up to allow for better air and light penetration.” To me this seems contrary (if not worthless) to good tree work. When one opens up “the interior of a tree to air and light,” the tree responds by putting out more foliage within the interior. So you cut out perfectly good limbs to allow for more to grow back?

Think before you strip out the interior of a tree or remove perfectly good green tissue from a tree. In future submissions, I will offer my observations as to why trees fall apart and break due to poor pruning practices I’ve observed. Some of you will be surprised I’m sure.

This newsletter is an open forum to share your thoughts as well. Don’t be afraid to submit an article to the editor. Please participate – the urban forest will be better for it.



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Utility Arborist Update *by James Koenig*

Ken Tadlock, General Manager, ABC Professional Tree Services, Inc graciously provided some slides / photos of Hurricane Frances work they performed. "Last year's season affected many utilities and tree contractors that provided support. June 1st will start Hurricane season 2005. Who will be affected this year? I know we sent 500 employees,

August 12th and they did not return until the middle of October because of Hurricanes Charley, then Frances, then Ivan, and then Jeanne in Florida."

Bruce Moore, TXU Electric Delivery reports that "We have been busy getting the foliage spray season started, it looks like we will have

another 10,000 + spray acres on transmission this year. We have shifted to a low volume approach with Superior Forestry Service doing the majority of the application. SFS uses 10 to 12 man crews with backpacks and apply basal, foliage and hack & squirt mixes as dictated by brush conditions. The crews walk the entire ROW making individual plant treatments which has greatly reduced skips. This type of application has also reduced complaints from landowners on damage from vehicles and on grasses mixed with the brush. The LV approach has reduced our total cost per treated acre and improved the overall brush control. I think one of the main reasons of the improved control is due to the reduced damage on grass and herbaceous cover as seen with a high volume or broadcast application. By leaving the cover the reseeding from trees off the ROW is reduced – this is especially true in the pine areas of East Texas."

CPS ENERGY™ is the new name for City Public Service San Antonio. Unit 1 of the South Texas Project (STP) nuclear power plant, located near Bay City, was the top-producing nuclear plant in the US in 2004. STP's twin reactors produce 2,500 MW of electricity -- enough to power more than one million homes and businesses in South Central Texas. We have also acquired an additional 100 megawatts (MW) of wind-generated electricity from the new Cottonwood Creek Wind Farm under construction near Sweetwater, Texas, west of Abilene. CPS Energy will receive 100 percent of the farm's electric output from 67 wind turbines, enough to power approximately 30,000 homes. CPS Energy currently buys all of the output of the Desert Sky Wind Farm near Iraan in west Texas, capable of generating 160 MW, enough to power approximately 50,000 homes. The combined output of the Desert Sky and Cottonwood Creek wind farms brings CPS Energy's wind energy capability to 260 MW, making CPS Energy the largest publicly-owned purchaser of wind energy in Texas. This totals 6.3 percent of CPS Energy's peak electrical demand.

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Keep Trees, Drivers Safe *by Melanie Migura, City of Ft. Worth*

According to the National Arbor Day Foundation, automobiles are one of the top 10 causes of tree damage and destruction. In fact, large vehicles damage 3 street trees on average each week in the City of Fort Worth. That's 156 damaged trees a year. Now, consider that these trees only take into account the ones that are actually reported. As a tree care professional, are you doing your part to keep trees and drivers safe?



Proper street clearance for trees is more than twice the height of a 6-foot tall person.

overhanging limbs are broken off by large trucks. Too often, drivers just don't realize these limbs are low until it's too late. Unfortunately, this is a common occurrence in spring and summer, when the weight of the foliage causes branches to hang lower.



Scraped or missing bark on the bottom of the branch is an early indicator of low clearance.

Broken or low limbs can reduce visibility, obstruct traffic and cause damage to vehicles. Just because a low limb survived today, it doesn't mean that the tree will be safe tomorrow. It only takes one hit for a tree to be damaged beyond repair. As a professional, train yourself to think ahead.

Consider the following scenarios:

- a new neighbor moves in with a moving van
- an inexperienced driver of a delivery truck, or other large vehicle becomes distracted



Failure to prune street trees for traffic clearance can result in broken or hanging limbs.

- a fire truck needs immediate access to a home
- a homeowner places a bulky item for trash pickup directly below a low limb, when a grapple truck will be used.

Any one of these situations makes it important to routinely check your clients' street trees for low limbs and prune them for proper clearance.

How Low is "Low?" Most cities have codes that establish the height for proper traffic clearance. These codes are designed to keep trees and drivers safe and guarantee access for emergency vehicles. In Fort Worth, for example, the City's Forestry Section prunes street trees for a 14-foot traffic clearance.

However, most people walk by trees on their property without really looking up at them. To remind residents to check their trees for proper clearance to avoid damage, Fort Worth has enacted a new campaign — *Look Up! Don't Lose a Limb!* As part of this low-limb campaign, Forestry staff are reminding residents to look up and check their trees for proper clearance. As a tree care professional, by taking a few seconds to check your clients' trees for early signs of truck damage and proper traffic clearance, you can prevent future damage or loss.

What are the Signs of Damage?

There are several easy ways to identify

tree damage that has been caused by traffic. Scraped or missing bark on the bottom of the branch can be one of the earliest signs of low traffic clearance. If time goes by and corrective action isn't taken, the damage can become worse. You may see:

- Broken or hanging limbs
- Large, exposed wounds on the trunk where a low limb broke off
- Cracked and/or split trees.

With your help, much of this devastating damage can be prevented. For more information, visit www.fortworthgov.org/pacs/fwpcsd/forestry. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Remind your clients...*Look Up! Don't Lose a Limb!*



Large, exposed wounds from broken branches are a common sign of damage caused by large trucks.



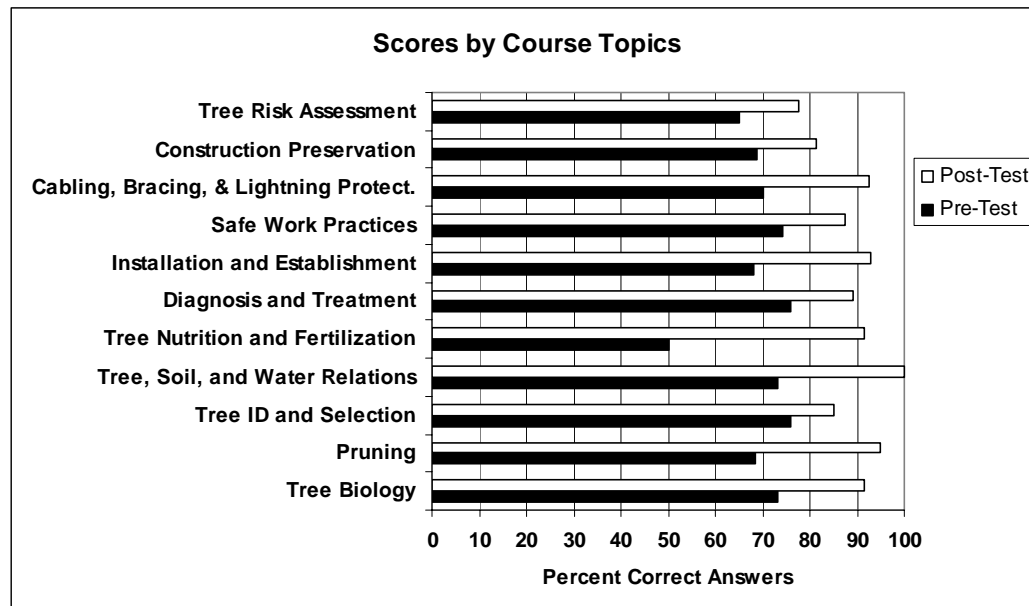
A large truck broke this limb, exposing the wood to infection.

Arboriculture 101 a Success *by Dr. Todd Watson, TAMU*

In January 2005, a new short course was held in College Station, TX. The 4-day course, called *Arboriculture 101*, was designed to help aspiring arborist to pass the Certified Arborist Exam. The goal of the course was to provide practitioners with an in-depth knowledge of how to properly care for urban trees. In addition to helping people pass the exam, Certified Arborists and Certified Landscape Professionals earned valuable CEUs. Approximately 60 people attended one or all of the classes.

All 12 domains on the Certified Arborist Exam were covered in 4 consecutive Saturdays. Emphasis was placed on the domains (e.g. tree biology) that test takers generally fail on the exam. A variety of instructional methods, including interactive learning, technology, and hands on application were used as effective tools to address the varied learning styles of the attendees. Exams, modeled after the ISA Certified Arborist Exam, were given each week to test the students' knowledge and to prepared them for the Certified Arborist Exam.

The results have been extremely positive. As of July 2005, all of the participants that have taken the Certified Arborist Exam have passed. This far exceeds the national failure rate of 33%. Most of the attendees passed all of the domains the first time through, which is much better than the 29% national average. Based on evaluation test scores from the beginning and the end of the short course, participants increased their overall knowledge of arboriculture by 78%, which added over 30 points to their test scores. Figure 1 shows the beginning and ending scores of the attendees for each topic covered in the short course.



At the end of each class, students were asked to provide written comments and scores about the quality of the course. The attendees found the course to be very valuable, regardless of whether or not they were taking the Certified Arborist Exam. Everyone said that they would recommend this course to others. Participants gave the class an overall rating of 94 on a 100-point scale. Students stated that the course was “very informative” and appreciated the “attention to real world issues”. Students responded that the “quality of teaching was excellent” and graded the instructor’s teaching style at 99. These and other comments are being used to improve future short courses.

Based on studies from other parts of the country, short courses, like *Arboriculture 101*, have proven to be effective training methods for those taking the Certified Arborist Exam and/or for increasing a person’s knowledge of arboriculture. Another *Arboriculture 101* Short Course is planned for the Dallas-Ft. Worth area in September 2005 to prepare students for the Certified Arborist Exam at the Texas Tree Conference. For details contact Dr. W. Todd Watson at dendrodoc@earthlink.net.

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Eulesse Preserve at McCormick Park

The City of Eulesse will soon open their final link to the north Eulesse trails masterplan with the much anticipated Preserve at McCormick Park. This 27 acre nature preserve will feature hike/bike trails, species trails, a historic tree grove, birdwatching area, pavilion, playground, two fishing ponds, a boardwalk and an open space wildflower area.

The land, donated by Terry Sandlin Homes, Inc., accounted for a large percentage of the city's local match towards the \$500,000 matching Outdoor Recreation Grant from Texas Parks & Wildlife. Slated to open in late fall or early winter of 2005, this unique park will link four other parks via trails that will span nearly 6 miles and take trail users from state highway 157 to state highway 360 as it meanders through the northern sector of the city.

What makes this project so unique is the attention to nature preservation and the replanting of the urban forest. Outside of the historic tree grove that will feature over 30 national, state and local historic trees, the city will plant another 300+ trees that have either been grown in their greenhouse, in one of their three in-ground tree farms or have been donated to the city. As an eighteen year Tree City USA city, Eulesse continues to make great strides in their commitment to tree planting and preservation as demonstrated through this unique park design.



Marketing Strategies Seminar in UWI

Four Texas Forest Service urban wildland interface (UWI) team members have figured out a way to work smarter by designing a seminar for vendors on how to customize their business services to appeal to the increasing population of UWI/community forest residents.

Justice Jones (Conroe), Lee McNeely (Jefferson), Frank Wofford (Nacogdoches), and Jan Fulkerson (Wimberley) developed *Marketing Strategies in the Urban Wildland Interface*, a six-hour seminar for arborists, landscapers and consulting foresters to help them understand the practices necessary to protect, maintain and enhance a UWI client's property, and then determine how they can market their services to this growing population.

"We realized that if we were to be successful in motivating homeowners

to take responsibility for their own protection, they needed to know what to do and then obtain the resources to get it done," said Jones, East Texas UWI coordinator. "That is why training opportunities such as this are essential to implementing successful efforts to decrease the risks associated with living in fire-prone ecosystems," he said.

TFS collaborated with the Texas Chapter of International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) to present the seminar in Conroe, San Marcos and Grand Prairie earlier this spring to about 30 arborists and landscapers. The seminar is approved for 4.5 CEUs from (ISA) and 6.0 CFEs from Society of American Foresters.

"We not only need to present the problems associated with living in the UWI, but also offer solutions and the means to implement those solutions," said Jones.

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