

Arbor Visor

2002 In Review



A Publication of Mountain High Tree Service, Inc.

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A Year of Records and Reminders -

The coming of autumn with a little precipitation has been a welcome relief from our record hot and dry spring and summer.

I was reminded once again, in this year of drought, that Colorado Springs didn't always have an urban forest and was once just a high plains prairie with scattered cottonwoods along the creeks. Our tree canopy and how we care for it is important for our community.

Surprisingly too, I am reminded how resilient our landscapes are. We have all learned that they can survive with less water than we are use to providing, yet they need the water we do provide.

Our trees and landscapes are stressed and what we do for them this winter into spring will be critical in sustaining them.

We are currently doing many of our fall yard checks to look at your landscape needs. If you would like a yard check, an estimate for winter pruning, fire mitigation or winter watering, please call or email us. There is no charge or obligation for these services.

Your business is appreciated and your referrals are invaluable. Our commitment to you is to provide long term quality care for your trees and shrubs.

Al Wegner

What Drought Means to Our Trees

Everywhere leaves on deciduous trees and shrubs are curling, scorching, yellowing, and shedding; all ahead of the normal leaf fall. Even the pines and spruce have a more noticeable fall yellow-orange needle cast, dropping some of the extra foliage they can't support. They are adapting to drought, a period without rainfall that causes depletion of soil moisture and thus reduction in plant growth.

Water is key for plant metabolism and growth, to inflate plant cells, deliver nutrients, photosynthesize, and regulate plant temperature. Without it trees can wilt and die or they are stressed and prone to secondary insects and diseases that do kill them. Giving them enough water to sustain them and protecting them from these insects and diseases is and will be important.

2002 has been a record drought year in Colorado. The normal precipitation in Colorado Springs by mid-October is over 14 inches. The Colorado Springs airport, to date, has received a little more than 6 inches. The lowest amount ever recorded was 6.07 inches during the Dust Bowl years in 1939.



Leaves scorched by drought.

What Drought Means to Our Trees continued

This year Colorado Springs' typical dry winter stretched into spring when water is essential for pushing flowers and leaves. Summer also passed by with very little moisture and good deep penetrating rains. Most of our landscapes need over 20 inches of moisture per year to thrive. With no natural precipitation and watering restrictions limiting our irrigation, landscapes suffered.

Younger trees and old mature ones are most in need of supplemental watering. Younger trees have not established a root system and older trees don't have the carbohydrate reserves to adapt to lower moisture. Most noticeable has been the many large mature spruce and maple trees

How to water your trees and shrubs

Remember your trees and shrubs need water too. They don't all naturally grow here. Even the natives are struggling. The water applied to our lawns has not been enough.

Colorado Springs Utilities recognizes this too, allowing us to water our trees and shrubs twice a month in October, November and April and once a month December through March on any day.

1. Water established trees and shrubs deeply every 4 weeks depending on natural precipitation.

2. Allow water to slowly penetrate into the soil to a depth of at least 12" in the entire area underneath the tree canopy and beyond for evergreens. Even applying water right at the trunk has benefit if more of the root zone cannot be watered.

3. To avoid runoff, using a soaker hose, a soil needle that attaches to your hose or building a large soil well around the tree and filling it with water are all effective methods to deeply water trees.

4. A general rule of thumb is to apply about 10 gallons of water per inch of tree diameter. Shrubs need about 5 gallons monthly. With a hose it takes about 5 minutes for 10 gallons. (example: A 20 inch tree needs 200 gallons taking 1 hour and 40 minutes)

5. Winter watering is important too. Trees in a dormant condition also lose water. Make a note on your calendar each month and water when there is no snow cover and temperatures are above 40 degrees.

6. Lastly apply wood chip mulch 3 to 4 inch deep in the area under a trees canopy to conserve moisture.

For more information check out www.csu.org or www.watersaver.com

in town dying because of shallower root systems, a lack of moisture and then being attacked by a spruce Ips beetle.

Many of the effects of this drought year will be delayed with slower growth next year and even some permanent damage. What you do this fall, winter and next year in caring for and protecting your trees will be important.

Let Mountain High Water your

Trees – We at Mountain High feel that winter moisture will be critical for trees this year. For those mature old spruce, silver maples and other key trees in your landscape or if for some reason you can't water your trees this winter, consider having us take care of the watering.

We use a soil probe attached to our tank truck and can effectively get water deeply into the soil where the roots are located.

Call us if you would like to set up a watering program or just schedule one watering.



Drought and Insects and Diseases

It will be important in the coming months to protect your trees against the secondary insects and diseases that are more prevalent when landscapes are stressed by drought. Bark beetles, borers and canker diseases are expected to continue at high levels in 2003.



Bark beetles and borers attack stressed trees as with this mature spruce hit by Ips beetle, often starting at the top and quickly killing the tree.

Ips engraver beetles, ash borers, ash bark beetles, elm bark beetles and poplar borer are a few of the insects we will be highly recommending preventative spray applications to our customers. Most of these applications occur in the spring, some as early as late February, so watch for these recommendations on your proposals coming out in January. Besides winter water, these protective sprays will be critical especially if you have mature spruce, ash, aspen, or American elms.

Sanitation **pruning** or removing dead and diseased branching from your trees can also be beneficial in minimizing insect and disease activity. This will be especially important in American elms, spruce and aspen.



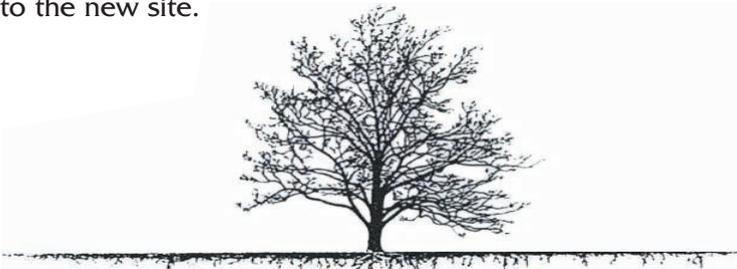
Deep root watering and dead wood pruning is especially important for key mature trees in our landscapes, such as this century old maple at Lowell School that Mountain High has adopted and cares for.

Fall Planting: Is it the best time?

Trees are more efficient users of water than grass and as they grow and shade our yards they reduce the amount of water our lawns require. In most years, fall is a great time to plant, but this year with cooler temperatures and our better understanding of winter watering it may be the ideal time to replace trees we've lost or install landscapes we are redesigning. Soil temperatures in the fall remain warm enough for root growth well into November and once soils warm up again in March, root growth, taking advantage of springtime moisture, can get a "jump start" on when most of us think about our springtime planting.

This year is also a good time to get educated on more drought-tolerant or drought-adaptive trees and how to properly plant them. Colorado Springs Utilities at www.csu.org has an excellent xeriscape page with many recommended trees and shrubs.

If you are redesigning your landscape and removing lawn, please remember your existing trees and shrubs will need supplemental watering as they adapt to the new site.



Where tree roots grow

Drought, Wildland Fire and Colorado Springs

Many of our customers live on hillsides, mesas, and in naturally forested areas. You have probably noticed the open sparse canopies of many of the native oaks, sumac and mountain mahogany. Also, there has been an abundant amount of needle drop from the pines in the forest, all adaptations to drought. These same trees and shrubs have an extremely low moisture content, making them ripe to burn.



The Hayman fire this summer brought wildland fire close to home and the awareness that fire is part of the forest.

"If a wildfire comes through your neighborhood, could your house survive?" There are three things that determine a wildfire's intensity: topography, weather, and vegetation. Of these, you can only affect vegetation. Creating defensible zones where ground fuels, shrubs and trees are not connected is important.

Mountain High had the opportunity this year to work with the Colorado Springs Fire Department on some challenging and unique projects, learning even more about wildfire and defensible space. One was an environmental assessment and wildfire mitigation plan at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and second was an educational video on defensible space pruning of scrub oak.

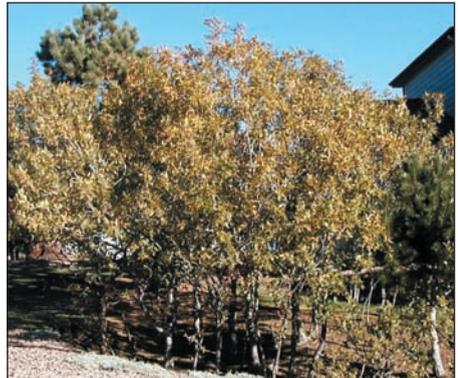
With our driest windiest seasons ahead, the risk of fire is still high. Winter is an opportune time to look at your landscape and work on things that can modify wildfire behavior if it comes through your neighborhood.

Creating Defensible Space

- ❖ Remove smaller trees and shrubs from beneath decks and eaves. Prune larger trees back, limbing them up 10 feet from the ground as well.
- ❖ Create a clear pathway 8 to 10 feet wide around your house for easy access.
- ❖ Keep grasses mowed and fine fuels such as pine needles and leaves raked around your home.
- ❖ Thin and separate groups of scrub oak taking advantage of natural separations.
- ❖ Remove suppressed understory trees and shrubs to eliminate the laddering effect into upper canopies.

Learn more under the Colorado Springs Fire Department's page at www.springsgov.com

Mountain High can help in evaluating and creating these defensible zones around your home.



Thinned scrub oak to the width of a rake and removing lower branching can keep fires on the ground and provides the shade to minimize suckering from the roots.

2003 Proposals

Look for your proposals in the mail in late January and early February.

We will strive to recommend the services your landscape needs.

Please let us know if you have any concerns or if there is something you want included for next year.

Mountain High has wood chip mulch available for your landscaping needs. Please call us for pricing information.

Wildlife in our Landscapes

With sparse native vegetation, the drought has brought wildlife into our yards and landscapes in abundance. Deer have been in search of lush browse and bears for fruit, berries and whatever else they can scavenge.

Pines and other evergreens, particularly juniper are especially vulnerable to winter browsing by deer, often causing significant damage to smaller trees. During the winter months it's important to protect these; some type of fencing being the best protection.

Also, in the winter and early spring it's important to protect the trunks of your trees from bucks rubbing their antlers. Irrigation pipe or chicken wire work well. Remember to remove them in the spring so that the tree is allowed to grow.

Mountain High will be experimenting with *Plantskydd*, an animal repellent, on some trees this winter. It has a vegetable oil binder, making it effective up to 6 months. If you are interested give us a call.



Small pines and junipers can be heavily browsed by deer in the winter so it's important to protect your trees.



Becky celebrating in Seattle the end of the 600-mile Tour des Trees with her son, Spencer, and daughter, Sydney.

A Tour de Trees THANK-YOU

With my mission to raise \$3,000 for the Tree Fund (Tree Research and Education Fund) accomplished, I feel very thankful for Mountain High's customers and our colleagues. Just a few short months after "9-11", so many of you opened your hearts and sent me on my way to Seattle to bicycle 600 miles.

For a week in July, I had the opportunity to ride with 70 fellow arborists through the Washington and Vancouver countryside and urban centers. The days were long and navigation often difficult, but surprisingly my body and spirits held up. The weather was cool and a little moist, a refreshing break from our drought in Colorado.

Not only did we ride, but almost every day we planted a tree or participated in a children's program in a community along the way. The Tour des Trees not only raises much needed funding, but it is a very important and visual part of the Tree Fund and its mission.

Thank-you for your support!

Becky Heyner

Becky also chaired the Notable Tree Calendar Committee for the Colorado Tree Coalition. They created a colorful and informative calendar for 2003 with photographs of champion and notable trees in Colorado, including two from Colorado Springs. After a year of drought it is a refreshing reminder about the value and importance of trees in our landscapes and in our lives. If you would like one, Mountain High can get you one at our cost of \$5 or check out the Colorado Tree Coalition web site at www.coloradotrees.org

