



# Let's Talk Trees

## Northwest Plant Health Care, Inc.

### *What's New*

As I write this quarterly note, it seems we have cleared the Monsoon season, namely the Northwest spring of 2008. My sprinkler system has been off for almost a month. When these days pass, I'm sure things will start to heat up, or at least I hope! In fact, by the time you read this, I'm sure it will be 90 degrees. Either way, we have decided to dedicate this issue of the newsletter to water usage.

Many areas of the western U.S. are very concerned about water conservation. Although the Inland Northwest has not experienced the water restrictions placed on communities in other areas of the country, we are all concerned. Many groups are pursuing the wise use of water, both in quantity and quality. In this issue, we'll discuss some ways water affects your landscape.

The Spokane/Coeur d'Alene area sits atop what is termed a "sole source aquifer." In other words we are all getting our water from essentially the same location and that location is right underneath us. It is not surprising then that folks are concerned about not only water usage but also water quality. It is important that we all act conservatively and responsibly when using water and disposing toxic substances. NPHC will continue to be at the forefront of conscientious environmental practices.

As for fun in the water, you may catch Ben Kappen out in his fishing boat, Thorin having a massive water fight in his new backyard, Jenny floating with her kiddos, Ben Larsen taking a dip after work, Becky with her grandson in the sprinkler, Kate at an open water swim, or Joe kayaking with the boys. Wishing you all great times this summer!

In care of trees,

President

## Summer 2008

### *Mark Your Calendars!*

#### **Associated Garden Clubs of Spokane—23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Yard and Garden Tour**

August 3, 10am-4pm, \$10  
Call 509-624-2329

#### **Art in the Garden at Northland Rosarium with The Spokane Rose Society**

August 23, 1:00-5:00  
Programs, local artists, and display gardens  
Call 509-448-4968 or visit [www.northlandrosarium.com](http://www.northlandrosarium.com)

#### **Friends of Manito Fall Plant Sale**

September 6, 10:00-4:00  
456-8038, or email: [tfm@thefriendsofmanito.org](mailto:tfm@thefriendsofmanito.org)

### *To Do Now*

- Adjust sprinkler systems and timers. Plants typically need more water in August than in April, so timers need to be changed throughout the season.
- Check drip irrigation system and components. Drip systems conserve water and reduce weed growth, but emitters should be checked for proper function, size, and type.
- Plant drought tolerant and native species.

### *A Cool Crowd*

There are a number of local nurseries that carry native and drought tolerant plants—they are worth exploring for water conservation!

**Desert Jewels Nursery** in Spokane  
Saturdays 9-5 or by appointment  
509-893-3771

**Plants of the Wild** in Tekoa  
Monday - Friday , 8-4:30  
509-284-2848

**Tower Perennial Gardens** in Spokane  
Monday-Saturday, 9-5 and Sunday, 11-5  
509-448-6778

# Planning Ahead for Potential Construction Damage

By this time each year, many home improvement and landscaping projects are well underway or set to begin in the coming weeks. If you have trees or shrubs in your landscape, they might be potential victims of what is broadly termed "construction damage".



This term encompasses a host of potential problems that can impact the health of woody plants in the landscape. Such issues include varying degrees of damage to the roots, trunk, limbs and or leaves, both directly and indirectly. Some obvious examples: trunk wounds and/or limbs that have been broken or otherwise damaged by large equipment or inexperienced pruners.

Less obvious and often more devastating injuries are incurred by root systems. These may be as drastic as entire portions of established root zones that are severed through trenching, or that may be entirely excavated and or covered up with

new hardscape or a building footprint.

Some other equally subtle conditions that may cause injury are when soil is compacted, diminishing root function, and when trucks and equipment are driven over roots. Negative effects also can occur when materials are staged over existing tree roots or against trunks.

Trees and shrubs that have been well watered may experience prolonged and severe drought when irrigation lines are broken or turned off. Many times these injuries may take months or years to manifest and can lead to weakened plants that are susceptible

to other problems. In light of these inevitable issues, there are things we can do to prevent, as well as help trees and shrubs recover from such injuries. Before construction begins, we can help to establish critical areas of root zone to be protected, as well as maximum thresholds for damage that can be sustained. We can identify and often treat for potential risks associated with insects and diseases that act as secondary stressors.

When warranted, we can tailor specific strategies to rehabilitate plants that have or will sustain these types of injuries. In all cases, the most successful course of action is to first act preventatively and, failing that, act quickly in response to construction impact.

~Ben Kappen

Trees especially sensitive to root damage:

- Oaks
- Honey Locust
- Redbud
- Serviceberry
- All conifers

## Texas Two-Step Cole Slaw

~Great for Potlucks

4 cups shredded green cabbage  
2 cups shredded red cabbage  
1/4 cup diced red onion  
3 T. chopped fresh cilantro  
1 11-oz. can Mexican corn, drained  
(the kind w. red and green peppers)  
1 c. shredded Cheddar or Mexican cheese  
Tiny jar pimentos, undrained  
2 jalapeno chiles seeded and diced—optional  
Fresh cilantro sprigs for garnish  
Dressing:  
12-oz. jar ranch dressing  
2 T. fresh lime juice  
2 tsp. cumin

Blend dressing with wire whip and pour over the combined slaw ingredients. Refrigerate overnight, sealed. Garnish with cilantro. Makes 8-10 small servings

This is a summer family favorite from Kate's mom, Nancy Meanix.

"Your crew's knowledge saved our favorite tree. Thanks!"

~J.J., Spokane

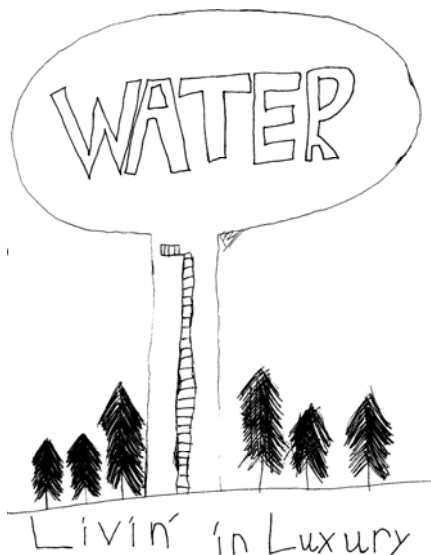
## "Ask the Tree Care Experts"

**Q:** I'm concerned about the upcoming heat spells of July and August, what are the best water wise things I can do in my landscape?

**A:** There are a number of things you can do to save water:

- The best thing you can do for your landscape is to lay down 2-3" of mulch around all your trees and shrubs and in your garden beds—just be sure to keep the mulch 2-3" away from the trunks. Mulching retains moisture and inhibits weed growth.
- Increase the height of your mower. As the temperatures rise, increase your mow height to 2 ½ or 3 inches. The longer grass blades provide some shade from the intense sun and will help to retain moisture at the same time.
- Plant trees and shrubs for shade.
- Consider using native and drought tolerant plants.
- Consider removing some of your lawn and replacing it with rock gardens, paths, and native plant zones.
- Know your watering needs and how your irrigation system is meeting those needs.

~Simone Ramel



~Forest Zubaly



**Who's Hot!**

**Becky Phillips...** joined NPHC in 2006 and has been going strong ever since! Becky is now the Foreman of the Plant Health Care crew and takes on additional responsibilities of scheduling and employee management. She brings to the position a strong background in horticulture. Becky is a Certified Arborist, Certified Pesticide Applicator, and a Master Gardener. In addition, she holds degrees in Landscape and Turf Management, Greenhouse and Nursery Management, and Floral Design.

Becky shared about her position and the industry and said, "There's no question, I like working with plants. I also appreciate the respect the industry gives to people who are knowledgeable in their field. And in a world where a good work ethic is often hard to find, I really enjoy working for a company that sincerely values ethics."

In her spare time, Becky likes to go camping, play music, garden, and most of all, spend time with her family. She has seven children and is raising her grandson, Isaiah, who is two.

**What's Not!**

### Inefficient Irrigation Systems...

As the demand for water conservation becomes more of a reality every day, the key issue becomes making the most of every drop while maintaining the health of your landscape.

One of the most common inefficiencies is "overspray." This can be prevented by checking the spray at the start of the season and once in mid-season. Also check the nozzle size to be sure you've got the right size for the amount of water pressure and spray distance. It's an easy fix.

Unfortunately, some systems are installed with little regard to sunny versus shady areas of your property. When possible, different degrees of sun exposure should NOT be in the same watering zone.

Inefficiencies will not only cost you water (and money), but can lead to dry spots, over saturation, or a combination of both. Both situations lead to moss, fungi, root damage, erosion, and a host of insects and diseases that we all would like to avoid.

In order to get the most out of water usage for your landscape, consider whether you need a professional evaluation to determine if you could do more with less.

~Preston Joy

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***As Temperatures Rise, Water Practices Change***

Plant health is dependent on sunlight, air temperature, and water. Throughout the growing season, as sunlight increases and the temperatures rise, the water needs of plants increase as well. Plants use water to keep themselves cool through a process called transpiration. Water is taken in by the roots, travels through the plant (in trees, directly beneath the bark in the cambium layer), and moves out to the leaves where it is released back into the air.

During hot sunny weather, plants require more water for efficient transpiration. If more water is not available, the plant becomes stressed and begins to show symptoms which could include stunted tissue, poor vigor, and dieback.

The amount of water a plant needs for efficient transpiration is determined by the type of plant, its size, and the soil that is surrounding its roots. Woody ornamentals require more water than herbaceous plants, mature plants

usually require more than immature, and those planted in sandy soil require more than those in clay. It can get very complicated when trying to determine the water requirements of a diverse landscape. For this reason, watering recommendations for landscapes will be more specific than they would be for field crops or orchards.

In order to provide plants with adequate water, irrigation systems need to be adjusted as temperatures change. Increasing the amount of water delivered can be done by watering longer and more often. In general, with temperatures between 70° and 85°, watering for 15-20 minutes for 3-4 times a week is usually



sufficient for landscape plants in our area. When temperatures reach 90° and higher, the watering schedule should be adjusted to run every day for 20-30 minutes. Plants should be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that a stressed plant is noticed quickly and steps are taken to remedy the problem.

One way of determining if your plants are getting adequate water is to carefully dig 6 or more inches down in the soil near the root zone. This should be done just before the irrigation system starts the next cycle. If the soil at this depth is dry, water should be increased. If it is moist, water is probably adequate, and if the soil is soggy, the water should be decreased.

~Becky Phillips