

THE *ecological landscaper*

The Newsletter of the Ecological Landscaping Association

Vol. 15, No. 3

Fall 2008

"To choose what is best for the near future is easy. To choose what is best for the distant future is also easy. But to choose what is best for both near and distant futures is a hard task . . ."

—Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia*

FROM THE EDITOR

• Kat Good-Schiff

It's October in New England and the trees are doing what they do best, putting on their amazing fall display and then dropping all their nutrient-rich leaves. For many landscapers and property owners, it's time to pick up that fuel-efficient leaf blower—or better yet, a rake. The main topic of this issue of *The Ecological Landscaper* is high gas prices, since everyone is talking about them and everyone is experiencing them. While economic strain is an unwelcome visitor, there is always that flip side of innovation and increased efficiency brought about by necessity. Perhaps a closing of the price gap between the cost of earth-

friendly products and conventional ones will encourage more people to make ecological choices.

ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPING AND RISING FUEL COSTS

Ecological landscapers try as much as possible to conserve natural resources, including oil and gas. However, we still need to drive trucks or cars, and we rely on suppliers and clients who are also affected by the current energy crunch. How are rising gas prices affecting ecological landscapers? ELA interviewed a few of our members to find out.

We spoke with Monique Allen of The Garden Continuum, Inc.; Trevor Smith of Land Escapes; and Camilla Worden of Camilla Worden Garden Design, LLC.

How is the current energy crunch affecting your business?

Monique Allen: Higher gas prices make travel more costly.

Trevor Smith: I have to build added

fuel costs into all my prices and charge for all travel time. My current gas bill is \$140-200 per week.

Camilla Worden: So far, I have lost only marginal customers.

What cost-saving and/or fuel-saving measures have you taken to lessen the impact of high fuel costs on your business?

M. Allen: Choosing work closer to our office and turning down work too far away. Designing routes to reduce time and mileage.

T. Smith: I have been grouping multiple jobs into one trip as well as grouping jobs by their proximity to one another. I also keep up my overall vehicle maintenance.

C. Worden: I use trucks less often and route them more efficiently.

Do you think that high fuel prices and the resulting high fertilizer prices will encourage more of your clients to consider ecological or organic options?

contents

- 1 High Gas Prices: Interviews with ELA members
- 2 Organic Fertilizer and Rising Fuel Costs
- 3 Members Making a Difference
- 4 Asian Longhorned Beetle
- 6 Pathogen Alert: Chrysanthemum White Rust
- 6 Sustainable Landscaping for Dummies
- 7 Gleanings, Events, Unclassifieds

FUEL continued on pg. 2

The Ecological Landscaper is published by the Ecological Landscaping Association (ELA). Subscriptions are a benefit of membership in ELA. For information about ELA, contact:



ELA
1257 Worcester Rd., #262
Framingham, MA 01701
(617) 436-5838
www.ecolandscaping.org

Write to us! We welcome comments, letters, articles, topic ideas, and opinions. Send to Newsletter Editor at the address above.

Also send all other ELA business, including address changes, to the address listed above.

The ELA board meets throughout the year in various locations in eastern Massachusetts. All members are welcome. Contact us for specific dates and locations.

ELA Board of Directors

President: Dennis Collins

Vice President: Kathy Sargent-O'Neill

Treasurer: Chris O'Brien

Secretary: Andrea Knowles

Board Members

M.L. Altobelli

William Jewell

Robert Levite

Trevor Smith

Sue Storer

Maureen Sundberg

Sandy Vorce

Bruce Wenning

Executive Administrator: Penny Lewis

Each author appearing herein retains original copyright. Right to reproduce or disseminate all material herein is otherwise reserved by ELA. Please contact the Editor for permission to reprint.

Mention of products is not intended to constitute endorsement. Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of ELA's directors, staff, or members.

©Ecological Landscaping 2008

— FUEL continued from pg. 1

M. Allen: Not yet. I think people don't connect the two well enough. It takes more than high prices to change a philosophy or belief, never mind trying to change a habit.

T. Smith: No.

C. Worden: Not really; this decision is based more on health and environmental concerns.

What are some things you have already been doing in order to reduce your use of petroleum and petroleum-based products?

M. Allen: Honestly, not enough. I wish we could stop using plastic all together. We do encourage the use of non-disposable items as much as possible. We encourage our clients to think long term about water and about soils so that they are less likely to knee-jerk into synthetic gardening practices. We recycle just about everything we can, but it never seems like enough.

T. Smith: I use less equipment and do more physically. When possible, I use battery-powered tools.

C. Worden: We try to purchase plants and soil closer to the job site, if possible, but other than that, not much.

Is there anything else you'd like to add on this topic?

M. Allen: I would love to find more ways to stop the constant overuse of gas-powered equipment. Does anyone remember how to use a broom? I think encouraging the use of things like low voltage lighting in landscapes as a substitute for line voltage is useful. We need to band together to educate people about how to save and conserve our natural resources by working with natural processes.

ORGANIC FERTILIZER AND RISING FUEL COSTS

Since conventional fertilizers are petroleum-based, their prices have risen along with the price of gas. Has this turned consumers to more ecological products?

ELA interviewed Mike Roberts of Ocean Organics and Paul Sachs of North Country Organics to find out.

Since high fuel costs have driven up the cost of conventional fertilizers, have you seen people turning to organic fertilizers as a more cost-effective measure?

Mike Roberts: Yes, to some degree. My customers have all mentioned that they are aware of the cost increases with conventional fertilizers. However, the fact that they have mentioned the increases has not in all cases made them change. I think they are waiting to see if prices of conventional fertilizers drop again.

Paul Sachs: Yes. The price of organic fertilizers has risen too and they're

— ORGANIC continued on pg. 3



Stay on the Leading Edge
of Ecological, Sustainable,
and Organic Landscaping Practices

Renew Your ELA Membership

Renewal Packages Coming Soon!

still more expensive than their chemical cousins, but some people who were once unwilling to pay thrice the price of chemicals are now willing to pay 20-40 percent more for organic fertilizer.

How have higher fuel costs affected your business in terms of production costs and sales?

M. Roberts: They have affected our production costs but probably not our sales. We are fairly diversified in our markets.

P. Sachs: It goes without saying that higher fuel costs have adversely affected our costs but not necessarily our sales. The price of fuel has affected all fertilizer businesses so the playing field is level.

What cost-saving or fuel-saving measures have you taken to lessen the impact of high fuel costs on your business?

M. Roberts: We contract growers in northern Maine to grow mustard. We have the oil pressed for our biofuel oil burner, and we purchase the mustard meal for use as a nitrogen source in our granulated fertilizers.

P. Sachs: We've tried to haul as much of our ingredients as possible by rail and we've found more local sources of some materials.

Is there anything else you'd like to add on this topic?

M. Roberts: One of the advantages of using our seaweed-based liquid foliar fertilizers is the inherent efficiency of using liquids as opposed to dry fertilizers. With liquid foliar feeding the nutrients are more readily available for the plant to uptake and utilize.

P. Sachs: Only that the skyrocketing price of fertilizer results from more effects than just fuel cost. Yes, energy is a contributing factor but so are global demand, a weak dollar, and insufficient production.

MEMBERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

M.L.'s Greenery in Motion

Article, photographs, and gardens by M.L. Altobelli

My main focus as an ecological landscaper is to create healthy soils that produce healthy plants and that require less management and pest control than other gardens of their type. I also work to create complexity and color dynamics in plant communities, even if some of those communities are annuals only, as an aid to ecosystem stability and pest control. I use a lot of hand tool techniques in garden management and that does save petroleum energy but not human energy!

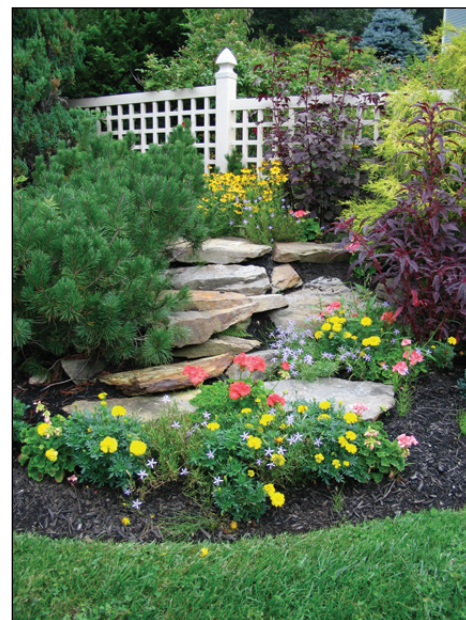
As with most managed landscapes, the lawn is the energy hog. Some clients have transitioned their lawns to ecological management, some have not. There's no getting around the fact that the appeal of an open and walkable green area is inherent in the human psyche. A mixed grass and broadleaf planting managed with a minimum of fertilizer, non-removal of clippings and some irrigation is usually enough to keep my clients happy. Extensive gardens and shrub borders do away with huge chunks of lawn.



In the side yard of a property in Rutland, MA, I planted beets and turnips beside the path, which will be harvested once the gardens are down for the season. Cucumbers are climbing the yellow wood in the corner.

Otherwise, this is a mixed perennial/annual planting with intense color and the added bonus of lots of butterflies in August.

The owner's top priority is intense color for as long as possible. I use a 10-minute syringe irrigation cycle on the most vulnerable areas of this property to keep the entire yard looking great. These areas are also under a management plan designed to strengthen them and eventually do away with the syringe cycle. The bulk of the irrigation is done in the early morning hours (12-6 a.m.) in alternating zones. Winter interest is managed with hardscape elements, designed lines, grasses, and well-managed tree architecture.



In the pool surround, "steps to nowhere" lead the eye through and out of the surround and up the slope to the house. The "path" is flanked with mugho pine and a gold Hinoki cypress. Color is provided by the Rudbeckia Prairie Sun at the top, which echoes the Heliosis just outside the fence, and creates the flow through the fence. Geraniums and marigolds at the bottom of the steps mellow it out.

Approaching the pool surround from the house, trumpet vine covers the arch. Yew, *Hypericum*, balloon flowers,



Happy Returns daylilies, weeping cherry and Hinoki cypress are also visible, as well as a spectacular 4-foot Japanese Maple.

In Lunenburg, MA, this gravel bank beside a driveway becomes beautiful with mulch and soil minerals added to support plantings. It requires only one mid-season weeding and a final clean down. The grasses stay for winter interest.



This slope area is moderately irrigated and very low maintenance, but it looks great for the entire year. There are *Hostas*, *Miscanthus*, Rose of Sharon, and purple smoke bush, as well as some *Azaleas* (not visible in the picture) that give great spring color and fall foliage. The *Azaleas* require extra compost and nutrients in their roots zones.

An intricately linked landscape in Princeton, MA, is made up of small, themed gardens based on the client's ideas. A very steep garden with wooden steps is the

wildlife garden. It features annual milkweed, *Rudbeckia*, torch plants, several kinds of *Hyssops*, *Cupheas*, *Pentas*, *Zinnias*, *Verbena bonariensis*, and *Gauras*. Everything is designed to bring in bees, butterflies, and small birds. A great deal of aerial activity is visible from late June through frost.

My philosophy is that most people need to smile more, and people smile more easily when they have beautiful landscapes to look at. Well-done gardens with healthy grass borders and sweeps can make people feel up for another day's challenges.



ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE: A NEW INTRODUCTION

This information is courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Asian longhorned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*) has been found attacking trees in the United States. Tunneling by larvae girdles tree stems and branches. Repeated attacks lead to dieback of the tree crown and eventual tree death. ALB probably traveled to the US inside wood packing material. It is a serious pest in China, where it kills hardwood trees.

BEETLE continued on pg. 5

Annual Appeal

Our Mission

The Ecological Landscaping Association, through education and networking, advocates environmentally responsible landscaping and horticultural practices to professionals and the public. As stewards of the land and its resources, ELA supports landscape design, installation, and maintenance which are guided by a knowledge of and respect for natural ecosystems.

The need is clear.
The time is now.

ELA is kicking off the
2008 Annual Appeal
to continue its
important mission.

Please send your
contribution to:

Ecological Landscaping
Association
1257 Worcester Road, #262
Framingham, MA 01701

***Thank you for your
generous support!***



Adult ALB Male



Adult ALB Female

In the US, it prefers maple species (*Acer* spp.), although a complete list of host trees has not been determined.

Currently, the only effective means to eliminate ALB is to remove infested trees and destroy them by chipping or burning. Quarantines should be established to avoid transporting infested trees and branches from the area. Early detection of infestations and rapid treatment response are crucial.

The adult beetles are .75-1.5 inches long, glossy black with irregular white spots and long, banded anten-

nae. If you suspect an ALB infestation, collect an adult beetle in a jar, place the jar in the freezer, and immediately notify any of these officials: State Plant Regulatory Official, State Entomologist, US Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, US Forest Service, County Cooperative Extension Office, State Forester, or Department of Natural Resources.

For more information:
www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/alb/ or
www.aphis.usda.gov



Advertise in
The Ecological Landscaper
Your logo and company name
could be here!

For advertising information:
Call ELA at (617) 436-5838
or email: ela.info@comcast.net

The Ecological
Landscaping Association
presents:

The 15th Annual Conference & Eco-marketplace

“Digging In: The
Theory & Practice of
Ecological Landscaping”

Springfield, MA
Feb 26-28, 2009

Calling All Exhibitors

Reserve Your Booth Now!

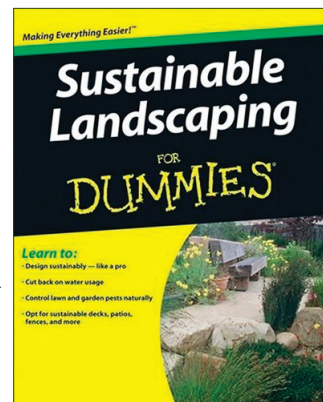
For more information,
please contact:

M.L. Altobelli at
(978) 874-1373

SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING FOR DUMMIES

Owen Dell, ELA member and owner of County Landscape & Design, is in the process of writing *Sustainable Landscaping for Dummies*, a new title in the “green” *Dummies* series, which focuses on sustainable living. SLFD will cover every aspect of environmentally conscious landscaping including principles of sustainable design, construction, hardscape, irrigation, plantings, maintenance, and growing your own food—plus, like all *Dummies* titles, it will be fun to read.

The book will draw on Owen’s 37 years of experience as a landscape contractor, architect, and educator, as well as incorporating extensive research on the latest and best ideas in the field. It is available for pre-purchase and early delivery at a substantial discount at www.amazon.com and other online booksellers.



PATHOGEN ALERT: CHRYSANTHEMUM WHITE RUST

This information is courtesy of the Massachusetts Introduced Pest Outreach Project.

Chrysanthemum white rust (*Puccinia horiana*), a serious fungal disease of chrysanthemums, has been discovered in Massachusetts at nurseries and retail stores. This pathogen can spread quickly in greenhouse and nursery environments, causing severe crop losses.

CWR is a pest of quarantine significance, requiring state and federal regulatory action. The MA Department of Agricultural Resources and USDA APHIS-PPQ are currently working together with nurseries to eradicate it from Massachusetts.

Over the last 25 years, localized introductions of CWR have occurred within the United States or Canada and have subsequently been

eradicated. Earlier this year, CWR was found in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Michigan.

CWR attacks several species, including potted mums, spray mums, and garden mums. The symptoms are very distinct. Light green or yellow spots up to 5mm in diameter appear on the upper surface of the leaf, becoming brown and necrotic with age. Beige or pink pustules form on the underside of leaf and become white with age.

If you have seen CWR in MA, please call the MDAR Plant Pest Hotline at 617-626-1779. Outside of MA, contact your local office of the USDA. For more information, visit: <http://massnrc.org/pests/>



Photo Credit: Daniel J. Kepich, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org

gleanings

University of Massachusetts researchers seek annual bluegrass plant material for low temperature physiology studies. We are specifically looking for highly maintained annual bluegrass, either from putting greens or nursery areas with high annual bluegrass populations. If you have areas in which we could take about 20 two-inch plugs, please contact Dr. Michelle DaCosta at (413) 545-2547 or mdacosta@psis.umass.edu.

The University of Massachusetts **Alternative Herbicide Study** is now available on the web at www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/publicationother&sid=about

The California Master Composter Training Program is currently accepting applications. For more information, call (510) 444-SOIL or visit www.BayFriendly.org and look for the training under "What's New."



events

Bioneers by the Bay: Connecting for Change October 23-26

An annual gathering of environmental, industry and social justice innovators in New Bedford, MA, www.connectingforchange.org or (508) 748-0816.

20th Annual Conference on Urban and Community Forestry October 23

Wallingford, CT
www.cturbanforestcouncil.org

Tree Steward Training October 31-November 1

Hosted by the MA Urban and Community Forestry Program and the MA Community Forestry Council. Contact Alan Snow at 413-577-2966 or alan.snow@state.ma.us.

Extending the Garden in Time and Space November 1

A New England Wildflower Society symposium in Framingham, MA
www.newfs.org/learn/fall-2008-symposium.html

November 19th, 3:00pm

Millican Nurseries, 187 Pleasant Street, Chichester, NH

ELA in partnership with Millican Nurseries presents: **Controlling Insects and Diseases in Nursery Stock**

Speakers: Tom Durkis, State Entomologist and Chris Rallis, Entomologist, NH Department of

Agriculture, Division of Plant Industry
Fee: \$25.00 ELA Members; \$35 Non-Members
Topics:

- Invasive insects and fungal diseases
Emerald Ash Borer; Asian Longhorned Beetle; Hemlock Woolly Adelgid; and more.
- Quarantines and pest regulatory issues and their effects on the nursery and landscape industry.

Registration: Call (617) 436-5838 to pre-register. Walk-ins are welcome. Payment at the door is by cash or check only. *

Let's Talk Turf: Organic Lawns January 28, 2009

An interactive roundtable discussion with Chip Osborne and Bernadette Giblin, cosponsored by ELA and the NOFA Organic Land Care Program. Appropriate for professionals in the field. Doyle Conservation Center, Leominster, MA. Call (617) 436-5838 to pre-register. Walk-ins are welcome. Payment at the door is by cash or check only.*

** Pesticide credits have been requested for the New England states. CEU credits have been requested from ALCM, ISA, MNLA, MAA, and NOFA.*

New England Grows February 4-6, 2009

Business advice from industry experts. Tips and tools for green industry businesses. Deals on products and materials for horticulture professionals. Boston Convention & Exhibition Center. Visit www.NEGrows.org or call (508) 653-3009.

15th Annual ELA Conference & Eco-Marketplace-Digging In: The Theory & Practice of Ecological Landscaping February 26-28, 2009

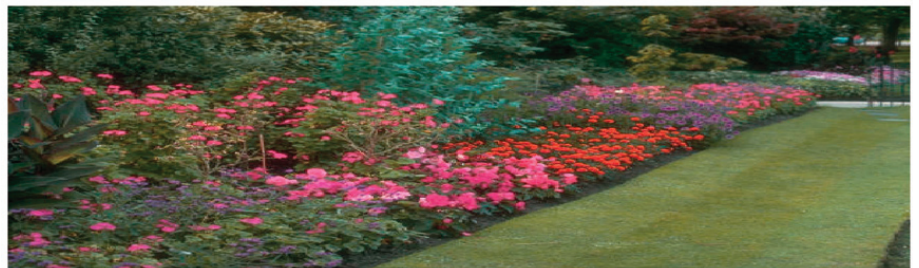
MassMutual Center, Springfield, MA.
Check www.ecolandscaping in mid-December for details.

unclassifieds

Well Water Connection, Inc. provides practical, cost-effective and environmentally conscious solutions to water-related problems experienced by green industry professionals and their clients. Our unique approach combines professional project management with water well, pump, filtration and stain removal services. For immediate service or more information, contact John Larsen at (978) 640-6900 or jlarsen@wellwaterconnection.com.



Green lawns and beautiful landscapes begin with...Well Water!



- Water Well Design
- Project Management
- Pump Repair Service
- Stain Removal & Filtration
- Pump Design/Installation
- Evaluation & Assessment

Please call our office for immediate service.

978-640-6900

www.WellWaterConnection.com