Leaflets News and Information for the Arborists of Michigan

Resolutions for Better COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

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Introduction:

Modern societies have a multitude of rules we must live by. These rules may range from Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, to international trade agreements, to nuclear arms limitation agreements, to local building code ordinances. Supposedly, these "rules" are designed to benefit our society; however, most are so complex that it would take an attorney to decipher what they actually mean . . . and then, attorneys will argue incessantly over the language and their intent. Resolutions and ordinances can also have significant impacts in our plant health care industries.

Pest and Disease Resolutions:

Various pests and diseases lend themselves to development of resolutions and or local ordinances. Following are some examples:

Emerald Ash Borer: As the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) advances across North America, various communities may address this invasive pest in different approaches, as has already been witnessed. Some cities have decided to remove all ash trees within their right-of way (Photo 1), followed by a gradual replanting program with a more diverse urban forest. Other cities are treating many of their right of way ash trees to preserve the established urban forest, realizing that preserving large ash trees may be better than mass destruction of such a large percentage of their urban tree population. Subsequently, trees will gradually be replaced over time through attrition as they become old, as they become hazard trees from other influences and as they decline from other causes. A resolution would assist a tree preservation program, for example, by specifying that all non-treated ash trees must be removed. Removal of non-treated trees will reduce the risks associated with the buildup of EAB populations in an area and will make treatments more efficacious on those trees that are designated for treatment. Such resolutions may prescribe when non-treated trees will be removed and how the wood is to be processed, either into wood chips for mulch or transported to distant locations.

Photo 1: As the Emerald Ash borer advances across North America, communities would be wise to adopt legal resolutions to properly address this threat from both environmental and hazard standpoints.

Oak Wilt: Oak Wilt has several properties that make a resolution particularly applicable. First, many communities are established in oak forests; these oak trees are considered valuable by the community. We also know that the lethal disease Oak Wilt may be introduced into particular trees by irresponsible pruning during the warm season (Photo 2): sap beetles are attracted to fresh wounds, thus transmitting the lethal fungus to the wound and the tree may die within a month after infection. Once oak wilt infects a tree, it automatically becomes a community problem, providing a source of fungus and sap beetles for other trees in the community. Also, because of transmission through root grafts, many other trees in the community are at risk. Given our knowledge of Oak Wilt

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Photo 2: This oak, like several others on the property, died from improper pruning at the wrong time of year. An Oak Wilt Resolution might have prevented these losses and others which are likely to occur as a result of misunderstanding of the disease.

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management, it usually becomes very expensive to stop or eliminate oak wilt from the neighborhood and community once it is established there. A resolution would help prevent oak wilt infections and spread by prescribing when oak trees can be pruned and how infection epicenters should be managed.

Dutch Elm Disease: Dutch Elm Disease (DED), caused by an exotic fungus introduced into the U.S. many decades ago, has pretty much "run its course" in North America. However, it's astonishing how many large elms still exist in certain communities. Why do they exist? All present day large native elms, particularly American elms, exist simply because they are "escapees"- they have escaped the disease. The reason why some cities and villages have so many large elms is due to implementation of strict policy. Sanitation, the prompt removal of diseased elms, has been used as a primary tool to save many elms, for example in Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan (Photo 3) and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Elm trees in cities that lacked an implementation of strict policies generally succumbed years before.

Photo 3: These large elms represent an unusually large population that still exists in Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, due to enacting strict sanitation and treatment policy.

Pine Wilt: Pine Wilt, caused by a pathogenic nematode, lends itself very well to Resolutions and Ordinances, particularly in communities that have large populations of landscape and naturally occurring Scotts Pine. Typically, a Resolution would prescribe that infected trees be removed promptly to prevent the build up of populations of nematodes and the Pine Sawyer beetle vector. This simple act of sanitation can save many other Scotts Pines in the community.

Benefits of Resolutions:

Resolutions have a number of distinct benefits. First, they are great educational tools, relaying information to the general public about important issues in their communities and their own landscapes. Much of the reason epidemics of diseases and insects occur in communities is because citizens know very little about these problems. Second, resolutions help to establish relationships among citizens in communities, local government entities and our plant health care industry. A prudent arborist will encourage the establishment of these relationships and provide the necessary skills and qualifications to not only remove diseased specimens but to also provide the experience to monitor and recognize the various issues of importance to a community. Third, resolutions actually provide realistic benefits, saving many trees in our urban forests. Commensurate with saving our urban forests, community governments and individual citizens will avoid unnecessary and sometimes exorbitant expenses in addressing these issues.

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