



The Plant Doctor's LANDSCAPE TIPS

By Dr. David L. Roberts, The Plant Doctor LLC a.k.a. The Tree Doctor

DECLINING PINES ESTATES WHAT'S IN A NAME?

INTRODUCTION

Many cities, streets, businesses and a plethora of other venues and locations are named after plants (Photo 1). Pines and oaks are among the most common names used: Royal Oak, MI; Pinehurst, North Carolina (Home of Golf); Pine Island Glacier in Antarctica (Are there any Pines there?); Big Pine Key in Florida (Photo 2); and of course, our own local favorite, the Red Oak's Bar and Grill (Photo 3) . . . among numerous others.

While the names of plants are frequently used in various location names, we don't often assign names that denote negative aspects about a location. In Photo 1, at Declining Pines Estates, a fictitious name I fabricated, I was asked this past summer to visit this location to assess the plethora

of issues with their pines because "Pine" was in the name of the subdivision. With so many problems associated with their pines accompanied by the loss of so many pines over the years, the HOA thought they should do something to preserve as many as possible.

The following are a few of the issues I found and discussed with the HOA.

"Pine Decline": Many of the pines in this subdivision were in a state of decline (Photo 4A). These white pines were exhibiting severe off-color (chlorosis=yellowing) and very poor growth (Photo 4B). Soil conditions such as pH and moisture (drought) were undoubtedly contributors. Due to the severe stress, various insects were attacking the tree leading to copious sap secretions on the lower trunk (4A Inset). I was able to find evidence of the Pine Root Collar Weevil among other contributors (Photo 4C).

Location, Location, Location: Many conifers such as this white pine were planted in areas where there is little sunlight (Photo 5). Many conifers perform much better when established in conditions more conducive to good health.

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Photo 4A



Photo 4B



Photo 4C

Photos 4A, 4B, & 4C: Pine Decline is a nebulous name we can assign to pines that exhibit severe decline from a variety of issues. Symptoms include yellowing (4A), stunted growth (4B), and damage to trunks (4A Inset) and roots collar areas that are likely leading to inhibited uptake of water and nutrients.



Photo 1

Photo 1: "Declining Pines Estates" is a fictional name I fabricated because the residents believed they should (finally) consider a budget to improve the health of their pine trees since "Pine" was in the name of their subdivision.



Photo 2

Photo 2: I have visited Big Pine Key in the Florida Keys several times. This lower Key is home to the National Key Deer Refuge, which protects the Key Deer, a small, endangered subspecies of the Whitetail. No hunting here, except with a camera, or you'll wind up in long term confinement in your own little private "condo".
Photo Credit: National Key deer Refuge.



Photo 3

Photo 3: Plant names are used at many venues. Early in my work on Oak Wilt, I occasionally drove by this bar and couldn't resist snapping a photo, probably from the 1980s. Unfortunately, this local establishment has now passed on to Red Oak Heaven where many oaks have gone due to Oak Wilt. I never had the pleasure of an adult libation at this establishment before its demise.

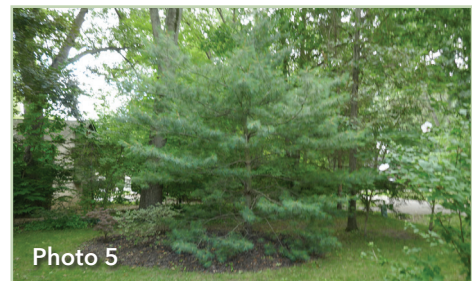


Photo 5

Photo 5: The community's devotion to white pine is ill-advised because too many of this species have been planted in their landscapes. In this example, white pine performs much better if planted in full sun rather than crowded by large deciduous trees. Creating a screen is probably the goal but this is the wrong species even though this example will struggle on for many years.



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Structural/Hazard Issues: Some of the "pine trees" on site exhibited potential hazards due to a variety of issues. Collar rots, weevils, and animal damage can result in threats to property and people (Photo 6A & 6B). Weevils and animals that attack the lower trunk and root collar can destabilize trees, leading to structural failure (Photo 4B).



Photo 7

Photo 7: Many of the pines on site exhibited large girdling roots, likely resulting from excessive applications of mulch years ago. Girdling roots of this magnitude are not easily managed.



Photo 6A



Photo 6B

Photos 6A & 6B: All of the pines in this island will need to be removed because of severe decline (6A) and structural problems caused by Pileated Woodpeckers (6B). Many of the residents did not understand the threat caused by hazardous trees and were despondent with my diagnosis.



Photo 8A

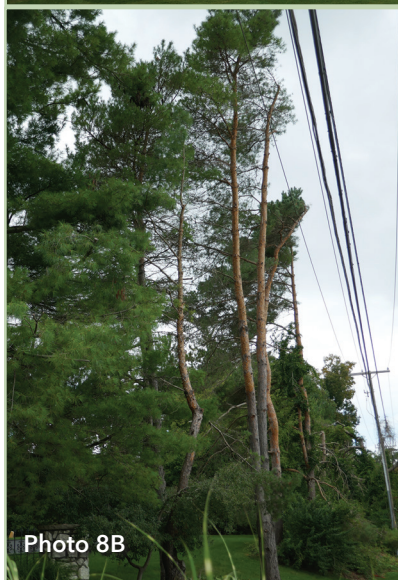


Photo 8B

Photos 8A & 8B: These Red pines were very sparse and barely alive due to years of attack by Diplodia Tip Blight and Needle Blight (8A). A few Scotch pines were also ravaged by Diplodia Tip Blight and other needlecast diseases. Luckily, there was no evidence of Pine Wilt, which is lethal to this species.

Girdling Roots: Many of the pines exhibited "Girdling Roots", likely due to applications of excessive mulch years ago (Photo 7). Girdling roots may contribute to decline issues and when they are of this size, corrective procedures are practically non-existent.

Other Pines: While white pine was the predominant species at "Declining Pines Estates", there were some other species as well. Red Pines appeared ratty and stressed (Photo 8A). The Scotts Pines near the entrance were lucky to be alive (Photo 8B); this species is usually killed by Pine Wilt Nematode by the time they reach this size and age. Both the Reds and the Scotts pines were plastered with Diplodia Tip Blight, which caused dead and thinning branches. Among other foliar diseases (blights, needlecasts), these species are also affected by some of the insects that affect white pine, as discussed above.

AMELIORATION

During my visit to Declining Pines Estates, I discussed the various issues and some of the management methods to hopefully correct many of the problems. After years of neglect and no plant health care input, the HOA at Declining Pines Estates believed they needed to take corrective actions to thwart further losses of their name-sake plants. I referred the HOA members to



Photo 9



Photo 10

Photos 9 & 10: Of some compensation for the many conifer issues at “Declining Pines Estates”, some of the landscapes within the community appeared absolutely exquisite. Perhaps more funding to the community’s tree welfare would go a long way to making the community overall more aesthetically pleasing.

such as Green Giant Arb and various species of spruce, etc., to add diversity to the plantings, which are largely lacking in this community. Of interest to counteract the pine tree issues, some landscapes were truly impressive (Photos 9 & 10). 🌿

the Landsculptor articles on my website. Where trees needed to be replaced, I recommended some diversity of conifer species. For example, a screen of trees was desired along the street near the entrance street, so, I recommended some options

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