



The Massachusetts Association of Landscape Professionals elevates the professional standards and business success of its members through education, certification, advocacy and networking.

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NEWSLINE

FALL 2011

New England Grows: Above & Beyond!

February 1 – 3, 2012

Boston Convention & Exhibition Center



Registration for New England Grows is now open! Enjoy special savings when you register by January 16 — just \$45 for all three days. The early registration price drops to just \$39 per person when four or more people from the same company register together. Affordable registration fees, combined with exclusive deals on the tradeshow floor, make New England Grows the best place to do business.

This year's theme "Above & Beyond!" is reflected in the 30 ground-breaking educational seminars featuring some of the brightest minds in the industry today. The exposition will be filled with the latest tools, technology and equipment with plenty of great deals to be made. 2012 marks the 20th anniversary of New England Grows and it is expected to be better than ever. Here are a few highlights:

Education – The speaker lineup includes industry experts Tony Avent, Lew French, Dave Mellor, Frank Rossi, Brook Klausning, Lucinda Brockway, and many other trendsetting presenters. Some of the seminars you'll hear are: How Does Your Garden Age?; Vertical Landscaping: Living Walls; Where the Wild Things Are: Designing with Native Plants; Cultivating Lifestyle: Creating Outdoor Rooms; and Grass You Select = Diseases it Will Get. Check out the complete program at www.NewEnglandGrows.org.

CEU Credits – New England Grows is one-stop shopping for your CEU credits. You can earn valuable credits for MCLP, APLD, LA CES, NOFA, Pesticide Recertification, and more at the show.

More Education – Check out the latest trends, tips & techniques right on the tradeshow floor. Popular **Ask the Expert** sessions will return with rapid-fire *Sprint Sessions*, provided by extension researchers at the Great Ideas Pavilion — and the addition of solution-based *Power Sessions*, featuring top suppliers and frontline leaders in the new Expo Classroom. Watch for a complete Ask the Expert schedule in January.

Essentials of Plant ID – A fun and practical way to learn plant identification — this interactive learning experience offers a self-guided, plant ID challenge on the expo floor. Prizes awarded daily!

continues on page 3

MLP NEWSLINE is a publication of the Massachusetts Association of Landscape Professionals, Inc.

The MLP NEWSLINE is published four times a year by the Massachusetts Association of Landscape Professionals, Inc. (MLP) and is distributed free of charge to members. The purpose of the newsletter is to disseminate information to promote general standards and ethics in landscape contracting, as well as to foster research and share knowledge with its members. MLP is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to communications between its membership and the industry. MLP believes the information in this publication to be accurate as of its publication date and is not responsible for inadvertent errors. The MLP logo is a trademark of the Massachusetts Association of Landscape Professionals, Inc. MLP members only are permitted to utilize the logo. Logo stats are available by calling the MLP office at (508) 653-3373.

EDITORIAL Readers are encouraged to submit articles, announcements, reviews of products, or letters. The deadline for submission is the 10th of the month preceding publication. Address correspondence to Editor, MLP NEWSLINE, 8-D Pleasant Street South, Natick, MA 01760.

ADVERTISING For advertising rates and information, contact Diane Zinck at (508) 653-3373. Camera-ready art work and payment are due to the MLP office by the 10th of the month preceding publication. Discounted advertising rates are available to MLP members.

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President's Message



It has been an honor to serve as the MLP President over the last year and I cannot believe how fast the last 12 months have gone by. I think Mother Nature sped up the calendar by throwing us many curve balls starting with last winter's intense cold and snow, followed by rainstorms, a hurricane and to top it all off an October snow storm! These events have added additional work to our already busy schedules and it is a privilege that consumers turn to us — professionals who can help — in their time of need.

MLP has been busy as well. We kicked off the fall with two dinner meetings and one business seminar. All of the programs, with topics including Mowing for Profitability, The Importance of Tree Diversity in the Landscape, and Growing Your Business Through Email Marketing, were well attended. By the time you read this, we will have just completed our November Annual Meeting and business seminar, learning about Turf Pests, and Maintaining a Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace. One of the great things about our association is our members' commitment to continuing education. MLP provides numerous opportunities for you to do this, while networking and catching up with fellow members.

New England Grows is another opportunity for education and networking. MLP's representatives on the New England Grows education committee — Paul Rapoza, MCLP and Monique Allen, MCLP — have made certain that there will be quality programming for landscape professionals at the show. The exhibitors and the deals you can make on the tradeshow floor are top-notch too!

MLP is one of the founding partner organizations of New England Grows and as such receives educational grant money from the proceeds. This funding accounts for a significant portion of our operating budget. So, the more successful New England Grows is, the greater the benefit to MLP — and your participation matters!

Gary Chase, MCLP
President

MLP Annual Meeting & Election of Officers

MLP's annual meeting and election of officers was held on Tuesday, November 15, 2011 at Ken's Steak House in Framingham, MA. Photos and a wrap-up of this important event will be featured in the winter newsletter.

Election of Officers

Matt Gramer, MCLP, chair of the nominating committee, reports that the committee recommends the following slate of officers and directors for 2012:

President

Carol Robertson, MCLP
Garden Imprint
Newburyport, MA

Director

Douglas McDuff, MCA, MCLP
Landscape America, Inc.
Wrentham, MA

Vice President

Tim Dolan, MCLP
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ValleyCrest Landscape Companies
Belmont, MA

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Mike Kelley, MCLP
Lovell's Flowers, Greenhouse & Nursery
Medfield, MA

New England Grows 2012

continued from page 1

New England Grows Bookstore – Back by popular demand, Barnes and Noble brings their best horticulture references to the bookstore on the tradeshow floor.



Stay Connected – Become a fan on Facebook — follow New England Grows and stay connected with the growing community of green industry colleagues, gurus, innovators, and thought leaders on industry news, issues and trends. Check out *myGrows* planner — an easy to use online tool to customize your own show experience. Then download the free myBCEC mobile app for quick convention center, seminar, restaurant, parking and travel updates at the show. Internet access at the BCEC is complimentary.

For more details and to register in advance visit www.NewEnglandGrows.org.



New England Grows 2012 SCHEDULE

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

Seminars: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Exposition: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 2, 2012

Seminars: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Exposition: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Friday, February 3, 2012

Seminars: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Exposition: 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Do you want to earn two free New England Grows passes?

Just let us know about your favorite vendor!

Do you have a favorite vendor who does *not* currently exhibit at New England Grows, but should? If you provide us with their information and they decide to exhibit, you'll receive two complimentary registration passes to the show. It's easy, all you have to do is:

1 Contact your favorite vendor and let them know how important you feel exhibiting at New England Grows is and how it will benefit their business. With 13,000 green industry participants, it's the most efficient way to promote their equipment, products and services. Learn more at www.NewEnglandGrows.org.

2 Pass your favorite vendor information on to Exhibit Sales Manager Diane Zinck at (508) 653-3009, or by e-mail at dzinck@NewEnglandGrows.org. Diane will take it from there!

3 If, as a result of your introduction, your favorite vendor signs on as an exhibitor at New England Grows 2012, you will receive two complimentary passes — that's a \$90 – \$130 value!

Massachusetts Association of Landscape Professionals Calendar of Events

December 1, 2011

UMass Sustainable
Landscape Symposium
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Sturbridge Host Hotel
Sturbridge, MA
[http://extension.umass.edu/
turf/events/suscon_2011](http://extension.umass.edu/turf/events/suscon_2011)

February 1-3, 2012

New England Grows
Boston Convention & Exhibition Center
Boston, MA
www.NewEnglandGrows.org

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

MCLP Program Overview:
Features & Benefits
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
MLP Winter Get Together
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Boston Convention & Exhibition Center
Boston, MA
www.mlp-mclp.org

March 9, 2012

MCLP Exam
8:30 a.m.
MHS Elm Bank Reservation
Wellesley, MA
www.mlp-mclp.org

March 14-18, 2012

Boston Flower & Garden Show
Seaport World Trade Center
Boston, MA
www.bostonflowershow.com

March 20, 2012

MLP Business Seminar
2:30 – 4:30 p.m.
MHS Elm Bank Reservation
Wellesley, MA
and

MLP Dinner Meeting
5:00 p.m.
Ken's Steak House
Framingham, MA
www.mlp-mclp.org

April 17, 2012

MLP Business Seminar
2:30 – 4:30 p.m.
MHS Elm Bank Reservation
Wellesley, MA
and

MLP Dinner Meeting
5:00 p.m.
Ken's Steak House
Framingham, MA
www.mlp-mclp.org

All MLP educational events are approved for MCLP recertification credit, and online registration is available a few weeks prior to the event.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

In this feature, we hear from active MLP members who are making a difference in today's challenging business environment. Featured members have shown themselves to be innovative business people, generous mentors and dedicated volunteers. This month, we get to know Doug McDuff, MCA, MCLP who was elected to the MLP Board of Directors on November 15.



Doug McDuff, MCA, MCLP
President
Landscape America, Inc.
Wrentham, MA

When did you join MLP? Our company, Landscape America, Inc. has been a commercial active member since 2006.

What was your first job in the landscape industry? I worked for Dineen Landscaping of Walpole in the summer of 2000 installing plant material and pruning.

Where did you go from there? I went to the Stockbridge School for Landscape Contracting (2000-2002) and then on to UMass for Urban Forestry (2002-2004.) While I was in school and then for a couple of years after graduation, I worked for Hartney Greymont in Needham until my brother and I started our own company in 2006.

Who was your mentor when you were first starting out in the business? I would say Mark Tobin, MCA at Hartney Greymont had a great influence on me. He helped me understand how to successfully serve and interact with clients, as well as appreciate the trees and plant material we all work with.

What's the best business advice you've ever received? "Never grow your business faster than you can personally finance."
Burton Sperber – Founder of ValleyCrest

What advice would you share with people starting out in the landscape industry today? Find someone that has been involved in the industry for a long time and ask as many questions and take away as much information from them as possible. I have several people that I call on a regular basis when I have an issue or a question, and they are happy to offer knowledge and advice. There is no amount of money or schooling that can replace the advice that our industry veterans hold.

Since the beginning of your career, what is the biggest change you've seen in the landscape industry? The recent economy has forced companies to drive out waste and operate more efficiently to maintain their margins.

What is the next "game-changer" you see on the horizon for the landscape industry? With the influx of unemployed people starting up landscape companies to make cash on the side, we have a tough battle ahead. We need to get our clients to understand that there is a difference in the quality of work and services provided by an MCLP compared to the guy in the pickup truck who just wants some cash on top of his unemployment check. There is value in our services and we need to maintain our fees accordingly.

What's your favorite plant, shrub, or tree? Why? My favorite tree is the Sugar Maple. This native species is symbolic of New England and we should do whatever necessary to protect it from threats such as the Asian longhorned beetle.

What's your favorite/most useful: **Equipment?** Bobcat T-300
Product? iPad

What have you enjoyed most about being an MLP member? I enjoy the networking the most. It's very important to be up-to-date with education and industry news, but having the ability to call an industry peer and solve an issue, in my opinion, is the most beneficial reward of being involved.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with your fellow MLP members? MLP has been, and will continue to be, a major part of Landscape America Inc.'s foundation for success. It has allowed me, my brother Andy, and our team to grow, be inspired, and build strong relationships among the industry elite. I recommend joining and getting involved to help our whole industry grow and continue to improve our professionalism.

Act Now If Your Organization Seeks to Hire an Employee on an H-1B Visa

As of October 21, 2011, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reported having already received 46,200 regular cap H-1B petitions and 20,000 H-1B Master's Exemption petitions. The annual cap on H-1B visas is 65,000 for FY 2012. In addition, during FY 2012, 20,000 additional visas are available to foreign nationals who hold an advanced degree from a U.S. academic institution (commonly referred to as "advanced degree" H-1B visas). Once the 20,000 limit is reached for the Master's Exemption, these petitions will be counted against the 65,000 regular cap.

The individuals affected may include:

- F-1 student status holders who need H-1B status to continue working once the OPT expires;
- Individuals residing outside of the USA who do not fall within the "remainder option" exception and are subject to the cap;
- Individuals who are currently holding TN status and need to commence the green card process;

- L-1 visa holders who want to pursue the green card and need the ability to extend work authorization beyond the 6th year and may thus need to convert to H-1B; and
- J-1 visa holders who have limited practical training time remaining and/or live outside of the USA.

Employers should not file two applications for a single employee, under either the regular and advanced degree categories or other types of multiple filings, as such filings would violate the law.

We strongly encourage employers to prepare new H-1B petitions promptly, as the annual cap will soon be reached. Once reached for this fiscal year, employers will only be able to submit petitions for cap-subject H-1Bs on April 1, 2012 for a start date of October 1, 2012. 🍀

This information was provided by William E. Hannum III, Managing Partner at Schwartz Hannum PC. He can be reached at whannum@shpclaw.com or at (978) 623-0900.

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MCLP Update

Congratulations to our newest MCLPs

The following people passed the MCLP exam on November 4, 2011:

Christopher Bailey, MCLP
Schumacher Company
West Bridgewater, MA

Kate Bandzmer, MCLP
Natick, MA

N. Barbara Conolly, MCLP
Maffei Landscape Contractors, Inc.
Mashpee, MA

Vincent Greco, MCLP
Maffei Landscape Contractors, Inc.
Mashpee, MA

Kayla Harrison, MCLP
NatureWorks Landscape Services, Inc.
Walpole, MA

Andrew Langlois, MCLP
Szczechowicz Landscape Services, Inc.
Rowley, MA

Tracy van Schouwen, MCLP
Bigelow Nurseries, Inc.
Northborough, MA

David J. Vetelino, MCLP
Vetelino Landscape Inc.
Rockland, MA



Member / Industry News

Congratulations – Chris Joyce, MCLP of Joyce Landscaping in Marstons Mills, MA, will receive the Cape Cod Landscape Association's 2011 Legacy Award at their Annual Meeting on December 17. Chris will be recognized for his outstanding contributions to the industry.

ValleyCrest Founder Passes Away – Burt Sperber, FASLA, founder and chairman of ValleyCrest Landscape Cos., died September 30 at the age of 82 of complications from surgery. He founded ValleyCrest in 1949, and saw it grow to become one of the largest landscape organizations in the world.

Lawn and Landscape Products Coalition Information Website Launched – The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently announced the launch of the U.S. Chamber's Lawn and Landscape Products Coalition Information website: www.USCCLawnandlandscapecoalition.com. The website is intended to be a clearing house of information regarding environmental and human health issues associated with lawn and landscape products. It is also intended to serve as a forum for informed discussion and debate of federal, state and local regulatory policy regarding these products.

Green Industry Reference – The UMass Extension website, www.umassgreeninfo.org is a great resource providing an extensive list of publications designed to help Green Industry professionals as well as homeowners. Each year, UMass publishes the UMass Extension Green Directory. This free publication is available online or by calling (413) 545-0895. The directory lists the services available from UMass Extension.

Trees at the 9/11 Memorial Site – The National September 11 Memorial opened to the public recently. Green Industry professionals watching coverage of the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks may have wondered about the trees in the memorial. The landscape architect on the project selected swamp white oak for the design, which includes 412 individual trees. Bartlett Tree Experts was selected to raise the trees, and they were contracted to care for the transplanted trees at the site for at least the next two years. Bartlett grew the trees in large containers for five years at one of their New Jersey locations, so that they could be transplanted with the entire root system intact. To read more about the trees at the memorial, and the challenges and strategies that went into the plans, visit www.hortmag.com/plants/9-11-memorial-trees.

MCLP Prep Course at North Shore Community College

Are you interested in taking the MCLP exam? There is an MCLP prep course available January 31- March 6, 2012, at the North Shore Community College in Danvers, MA. The course runs for six weeks on Tuesday nights from 6:30-8:30 p.m. To register, call (978) 236-1200 or register online at www.northshore.edu. The instructor is Carol Robertson, MCLP. Carol has been an MCLP since 2000, has served on the MLP exam and education committees, and is a member of the MLP Board of Directors. While it is not required or necessary to take a prep course in advance of taking the MCLP exam, many feel that it is very helpful.

MCLP Overview at New England Grows

Make plans to attend "MCLP Overview: Program, Features & Benefits" at New England Grows on Wednesday, February 1 from 3:30 – 4:00 p.m. This popular session, led by the MCLP committee and Mike Davidsohn, MCLP of UMass Amherst, offers an overview of the many benefits of the MCLP program. Participants will learn how to use the MCLP Study Guide, what to expect at an exam, and tips on how to use the MCLP designation to benefit their business.

MCLP Exam

The next MCLP exam will be held on Friday, March 9, 2012 at 8:30 a.m. at MHS Elm Bank Reservation in Wellesley, MA. To register, print an application form from the Study Guide CD. To purchase a CD, order online at www.mlp-mclp.org or call (508) 653-3373.



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The Program is specifically designed for MLP members who are landscape professionals, providing landscape and related services, including incidental snow plowing and tree service operations. It is available to members of the Massachusetts Association of Landscape Professionals (MLP). Since 1963, MLP has served the landscape industry providing valuable resources and education to enhance the professionalism and expertise of its members.



Massachusetts Association
of Landscape Professionals

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Halloween Weekend Snow Storm 2011

By H. Dennis P. Ryan, Ed.D. & Brian Kane, Ph.D. – University of Massachusetts, Amherst

The Halloween Weekend Snow Storm has been a rough one for trees. With the leaves still on many of the trees, we are seeing trees that usually do not present a problem, such as Pin Oak, that are severely damaged. We would like to remind everyone to inspect your clients' trees, especially those that are weak-wooded or have a tendency to grow poor branch attachments. For starters, make sure a qualified arborist does the inspections. The arborist should be a Massachusetts Certified Arborist (MCA) and have sufficient experience with tree failures and inspections. If you don't have a qualified arborist on staff, then hire a consulting arborist to help.

Inspection process for storm damaged area:

Start by assessing that area on the property that is used most often. Remember to always inspect trees in a systematic fashion. An evaluator must inspect each part of the tree: crown, stem, and roots; and the tree should be viewed from all sides. The inspector should proceed in the inspection in the same manner each time, to achieve a pattern of investigation that will help make comparisons to other trees and defects.

In the crown, the inspector looks for problems with the branches. These can come in the form of dead, broken, hanging, or cracked branches with significant decay and cavities. It is recommended that a threshold for defective branch size be established, generally around two inches in diameter. Smaller defective branches may be present, but do not present a hazard risk because of their small size.

Weak branch attachments are also a common defect in trees. Weak branch attachments can be found not only between the stem and a lateral branch,

but also between co-dominant leaders. Because tight, "V-shaped" attachments with included bark have little sound wood holding the branches together, they are more likely to fail when subjected to wind, ice, or snow loads. In fact, as the branches continue to increase in girth, the included bark acts like a plate preventing the stems from supporting one another. Eventually, the respective growth pushes each other apart enough to cause cracking or failure.

In the trunk, look for cracks, cavities, and decay. Trunks that have been overloaded by the snow may not have completely failed, but cracks indicate that the tree is in the process of failing. When cracks go all the way through the tree, or when they occur on two sides of the trunk at right angles (like the north and east or the south and east sides of the trunk), this is a very dangerous situation. When decay or a cavity is present right next to a crack, the situation is also very dangerous. Be extremely careful about climbing such trees, as they may not be able to support a climber's weight, or the forces involved in rigging a tree for removal. When trees have severe structural defects, use a bucket truck and/or crane to minimize the risk to a climber.

In the root zone, the inspector should look for soil heaving or root plate lifting as a result of the ice/snow weight. The roots are ultimately responsible for a tree's structural stability and a final flaw to look for is the presence of a lean. When trees show signs of leaning, but have gradually straightened up over time, this is usually not a hazardous situation. Such leaning and straightening is due to a past impetus, but by straightening, the tree shows that it has regained apical dominance and, in most cases, will ultimately balance the crown. In scenarios where trees are unnaturally leaning as a result of wind, ice, or snow loads, a hazard may occur. Poor soil conditions, mounding and cracking of the soil behind the leaning tree, and exposed roots protruding from the soil all identify an unnatural lean; this is where the tree is in danger of completely falling over.

During the inspection process, the arborist needs to evaluate the tree and make a determination as to whether or not the tree can or should be saved. Trees that are severely disfigured or have lost much of their crown need to be removed. But trees that may only have several broken branches or a broken leader, can and should be saved. If the tree has lost some of its crown but the root system is intact, removing damaged branches and pruning remaining leaders to encourage one to become apically dominant will help preserve the tree. Subsequent pruning will likely be necessary, as will continued tree risk inspections to ensure the tree has not become a hazard.

When pruning broken or damaged branches from the tree, make proper pruning cuts to help the tree callus over the wound. Natural target pruning will result in a healthier tree with fewer internal defects and less suckering around pruning cuts. In most cases the pruning of branches is accomplished with 3 cuts of the saw. By using 3 cuts instead of just one top cut we can eliminate any ripping of the bark down the trunk of the tree. With large branches, in addition to using 3 cuts, the weight of the branch will also have to be supported with a lowering rope. Bark rips are common in the springtime if the pruner is not careful.

Now is the time to take a look around the properties that you are responsible for, make sure that you inspect the trees and have a great season. 🍂

For additional information and to find a Massachusetts Certified Arborist contact the Massachusetts Arborist Association at info@massarbor.org or 508-653-3320.



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Membership Survey Results

By Stephen L. Crowe, MCLP, Member Experiences Chairman



Over the summer, the MLP Member Experiences Committee conducted a membership needs assessment survey. As a committee, we analyzed the results and made recommendations to the MLP board of directors. We are pleased to report that the overall satisfaction level was high for members and the leaders of MLP will use the feedback they received to inform their decisions moving forward.

Results

292 MLP members were surveyed, 55 members responded, for an overall 19% response rate.

The average survey participant is an owner with more than 20 years of experience, whose company derives its revenue primarily from landscape construction, installation, and maintenance. "Fine gardening" emerged as a new and noteworthy source of revenue. Hardscape design and installation followed as the largest secondary source of revenue.

MLP activities that are valued most by the membership are the MCLP program, New England Grows, and educational dinner meetings. The most appealing potential member services would be basic field training for staff, executive peer networking, a better understanding of legislation, and discounts on equipment and supplies. The majority of members prefer to receive information from MLP electronically. Participation in social networking is an even split between the membership with Facebook and Linked-In as the platforms used on a regular basis. The MLP website is visited several times a year by members, while books and trade magazines are the most popular resource for landscape industry information. Networking opportunities with business peers is the top motivator to renew membership.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Member Experiences Committee, or the soon-to-be-formed, MLP Social Media Committee (a group of volunteers that will help develop content for MLP groups on Facebook and Linked-In), please contact the MLP office at info@mlp-mclp.org or (508) 653-3373. 📧

Thank you Member Experiences Committee

Stephen L. Crowe, MCLP, *Chairman*
Sunshine Landscaping Co., Inc.
Cherry Valley, MA

Jenny Sherman, MCLP
NatureWorks Landscape Services, Inc.
Walpole, MA

Bob Beaumont, MCH
Bigelow Nurseries, Inc.
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Solid references available upon request. Call Larry Antonellis at 617-592-7044 for information.



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Christopher Bailey, MCLP
Schumacher Company
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Dawn DiPersio
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North Andover, MA

Julie Giannone
Husqvarna
Randolph, NJ

Edward MacLean
Potted Up, Inc.
Boston, MA

James McGuire
Arbor Specialties
North Marshfield, MA

Dean Schwartz
Milton CAT
Milford, MA

Committee Members Wanted

The MLP is looking for members interested in serving the landscape industry through volunteer involvement. We have a variety of opportunities including educational program development, member experiences, certification, and legislative representation. If you are interested in getting involved with the MLP organization on one of our committees, please give us a call at (508) 653-3373 or contact us by email at info@mlp-mclp.org. We will give you information on the various committees and the level of commitment required by each. 🌱

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Lyme Disease: Myths & Facts for Green Industry Professionals

By Richard S. Ostfeld, Ph.D., Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, Millbrook, NY

Lyme disease was first discovered in coastal New England in the 1970s and has now spread throughout the northeastern, mid Atlantic, and upper midwestern regions of the United States. It also occurs in southern Canada, Europe, and Asia. It is caused by a spirochete bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is spread by the bite of a tick — the North American culprit is the blacklegged tick, *Ixodes scapularis*. Lyme disease is unusually complex both in its ecological and medical aspects, and misunderstandings of the disease have led to the proliferation of many myths and legends. Clearing up some of these misunderstandings can help green industry professionals and ordinary residents of Lyme-endemic zones to avoid exposure.

Myth #1: Lawns are a risky place for Lyme disease. Several researchers have estimated tick abundance on lawns, old fields, shrubby thickets, and deciduous forests of the Northeast. They are unanimous in finding that lawns and grassy fields support the lowest abundances of ticks, with forests having by far the highest. The difference between the tick population in a lawn and adjacent forest can be 100-fold. Black-legged ticks are unable to live out their life cycle in a lawn. Ticks can be transported from woods to lawns by mammals and birds, but they don't persist for very long, because the ticks are sensitive to desiccation and over-heating.

Myth #2: Edges are risky for Lyme disease. Much less research has addressed this assertion, but the few studies that have, reject it. In southeastern New York State, studies show that tick abundance is much higher in the forest interior than it is on forest-field edges. Some studies have suggested that people are more likely to get Lyme disease if they live in landscapes with a lot of forest-field edge. But this appears to be caused by human behavior and not the "tickiness" of edges. Lots of edge means many opportunities to cross into forests.

Myth #3: Deer abundance determines tick abundance. When Lyme disease was first discovered, scientists thought they had found a new species of tick never before known to science. They named it the "deer tick" because they found the adult, reproductive stage to be abundant on deer. (The immature stages called larvae and nymphs were more widespread, being found on mice, chipmunks, deer, and many other hosts.) More than a decade later, careful study of the "new" tick revealed that it was not new at all. The scientists had simply found a New England population of a tick that had been described and named back in 1821, namely the blacklegged tick. Biologists have rules for naming species, and these rules reject the name "deer tick". Unfortunately, the name persists in many circles and helps perpetuate myth #3.

Two studies on islands off the New England coast were highly influential in establishing the notion that deer abundance determines tick abundance. In both cases, deer herds were nearly eliminated (Great Island, MA) or completely eliminated (Monhegan Island, ME) by hunters, and tick populations crashed to very low levels. Unfortunately, several studies on the mainland of New England, New York, and New Jersey have found little or no effect of deer reduction on tick numbers. It turns out that the adult ticks also feed on things like raccoons, foxes, opossums, and skunks, but these animals were scarce (Great Island) or completely absent (Monhegan Island) on some islands, so when the deer were eliminated, there was no other game in town for the ticks. On mainland sites, when deer are culled, ticks are able to crowd onto the remaining deer or onto other hosts, so the total number feeding does not decline. In addition, although deer are an important host for adult ticks, they virtually never infect ticks with the Lyme disease spirochete. So, other hosts, like mice and chipmunks, are essential for the perpetuation of Lyme disease risk.

Myth #4: A benign climate is required for tick survival. Ticks are very easy to kill in the laboratory by either freezing or drying them to death. In fact, ticks will die within hours if they're held at less than about 85% relative humidity. This observation combined with the coastal, maritime climate where Lyme disease first emerged led to the notion that ticks need mild climates to survive. It turns out that ticks in the wild are extremely good at avoiding cold or dry conditions. During droughts they stay under leaf litter or in soil pores where humidity is high, and during winter they go underground to avoid freezing. Lyme disease is now more prevalent in upper Wisconsin and Minnesota — areas with anything but a benign climate — than in many coastal parts of New England, and the disease is rapidly expanding northwards into Ontario and Quebec, Canada.

These myths are slowly being replaced by a more complicated but still understandable science. Numbers of tick nymphs, the stage responsible for most cases of Lyme disease, are better predicted by abundance of white-footed mice than by numbers of deer. Mice are responsible for infecting the ticks with Lyme spirochetes. Mouse populations explode after years of heavy acorn production ("mast" years), because the acorns provide excellent food over winter and boost mice the next summer. Thus, acorn production predicts future Lyme disease risk. Landscapes with many small forest patches embedded within suburban development are the riskiest places for Lyme disease. This is mostly because fragmented forests lose much of their native mammal and bird diversity, which increases Lyme disease risk for at least two reasons. First, many of the species we lose when we destroy or fragment forest — such as foxes, weasels, owls, and hawks — prey on mice, and so mice thrive under fragmentation. And second, these same species, when present, act as hosts for ticks, but either fail to infect them or actually kill them when they groom (mice are poor at grooming). When we lose these non-mouse animals, more ticks feed on mice, more survive, and more get infected.

The complexity of the Lyme disease system is a challenge. But, continued research is busting myths, unlocking mysteries, and suggesting ways of managing our landscapes to reduce risk. 🐾

Richard S. Ostfeld, Ph.D. is a Senior Scientist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies and is the author of a new book entitled Lyme Disease: The Ecology of a Complex System. Dr. Ostfeld will be speaking at New England Grows on Thursday, February 2, 2012. His seminar topic is: "The Fight Against Ticks & Lyme Disease Continues."

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The Beacon Hill Report

By Stephen A. Boksanski
MLP's Legislative Agent



The legislative calendar is nearing an end as Joint Rule 12A dictates that no formal business will be considered for the remainder of the session during the first year of the two-year cycle. The House and Senate will continue meeting and considering only those items that enjoy unanimous consent. During these informal meetings, any single legislator can halt the progress of any bill. Committees may still hold hearings and executive sessions, although this is rare.

A balanced budget has been approved, state and congressional redistricting is required and expanded gambling seems like a safe bet. More progress has been made on pension reform, human trafficking crimes and the budget included a controversial municipal health reform. This last issue was as contentious as it can get with organized labor pitted against reformers and municipal leaders but in the end the legislature took a bold step toward lowering the costs of health care for cities and towns.

Below please find an update on some MLP priorities:

- **Fertilizer Pre-Emption (Senate Budget, S.333)**
This bill would give the Department of Agricultural Resources sole authority over the regulation of fertilizer. The DAR would also be directed to work with the UMass Extension School on all written materials published by the state. The committee reported a redrafted bill out of committee favorably on October 19, 2011 that incorporates language that will grandfather-in any local regulations existing at the time. This was a concern brought forward by the Town of Barre as they have a local bylaw that prohibits the use of products containing sludge. We expect the bill to be referred to the Senate for further consideration.
- **Pesticides (H.228)**
Legislation that establishes a pesticide advisory committee and authorizes them to develop a priority toxic pesticide list and ban the use of products on said list. The bill also calls for the establishment of a pesticide use reporting system that would include new requirements for applicators. This bill had a public hearing before the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture on July 12th and remains pending before the committee.
- **Landscape Architect (H.2027, H.3266)**
These bills had a public hearing on Tuesday, June 21st before the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure. These are competing bills relative to a landscape architect practice law and have the potential to disrupt current market boundaries and create an unlevel playing field. Monique Allen, on behalf of MLP, took the stand and offered comments questioning the need for either bill. Proponents turned out to support the bill but the committee appeared concerned with the lack of consensus on this issue and the matters remain before the committee.
- **Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals (H.1136, S.397)**
Two bills have been re-filed for consideration and had a public hearing before the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture on June 12, 2011. Various stakeholders on both sides of the issue turned out to deliver passionate testimony.

Given the broad-based coalition, the multi-year effort to educate legislators and offer opposition, and the economic environment we are confident that by continuing to vigorously oppose, this matter can be defeated again.

- **Small Group Health Purchasing Cooperatives**
The Division of Insurance is accepting applications to become a qualified association, a designation that allows an organization to participate in one of the purchasing cooperatives. The next phase is for the cooperatives to be qualified. The qualification process is underway and should continue throughout the fall, with a hope to commence operations on January 1, 2012. To access the online applications follow: www.mass.gov/doi.
- **Water Conservation (S.83, S.327)**
Legislation to license irrigation contractors (S.83) had a public hearing before the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure on May 17th. Legislation requiring system interruption devices for all new irrigation systems (S.327) had a public hearing before the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture on July 14, 2011. Both matters remain pending before the committee.

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Fall 2011



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