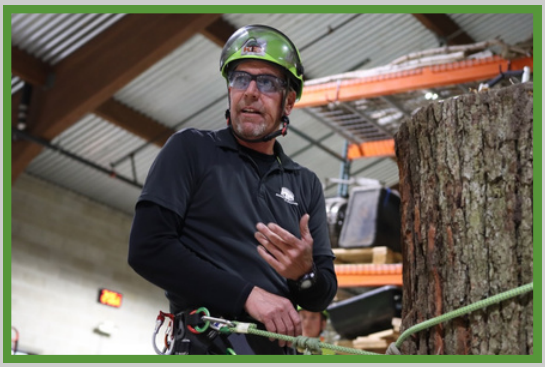
>>> JULY 2024 <<<

TRUNKLINE

50 YEARS OF KRAMER TREE SPECIALISTS

LEARNING NEVER STOPS: 50 YEARS OF INNOVATION AT KTS

By: Todd Kramer, President of KTS, ISA Certified Arborist IL-1189AT, CTSP #039



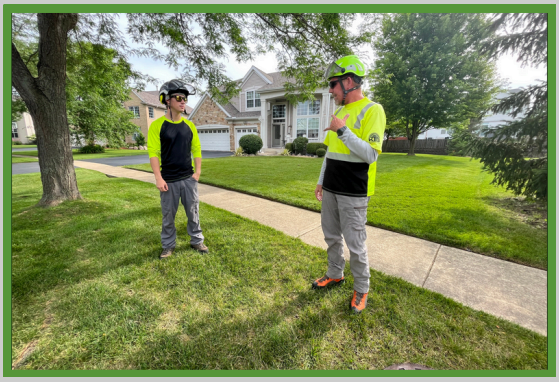
This year we are celebrating 50 years of Kramer Tree Specialists caring for residential and commercial properties. The company started the traditional way with a rope, chainsaw and truck. My brother and I were 3 and 4 years old when this journey began. We both decided to join KTS as full-time employees in the late 80's.

So here we go, Jeff and I were obviously very young (fresh out of high school) and eager to learn and develop our careers. At the time, professional training wasn't available for the tree care industry, you simply learned from your leaders who learned from their leaders - this was the way for many generations. This type training was not the best way to learn, as some great arborists are not always great trainers. In this industry, like many others, you need to learn from experience since there is no book that can teach you about every tree and every property. This is a skill that can make you improve upon successes and failures; you simply need to discuss these with your crew. Learning from experience is still a fundamental way of training and cannot be replaced.

In the early 90's my brother and I started getting involved in tree climbing competitions. At the time, this was the only form of training other than on the job. Amongst the competitors, we learned from each other on different tools and techniques.

The mid 90's rolled around, and more formal training became available, and we were eager to participate. We learned so much while not solely learning from experience, but we also learned from professional trainers. This went a long way as our performance improved and was becoming repeatable.

When I started my career at KTS there were two generations, Baby Boomers and Gen X. We all had different ways of learning; the biggest way was learning from experience with very little of "why". If you explain the "why" first, people may be better to change their behavior to have a more positive outcome of their decisions because they know the reasoning behind the action.



Training has changed over the past 50 years. At KTS, we now have 3 generations at work, Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z. Each generation learns differently. We at KTS have identified training opportunities for all involved, that could be for tree pest and disease diagnostics, human resources, climbing, rigging, equipment operation, plant health care, safety, leadership, as well as, fabrication and equipment maintenance. Over the past 5 decades we have understood the importance of training and the importance of continual improvement, while understanding that we all learn differently.

Featured Tree of The Season

AMERICAN CHESTNUT (CASTANEA DENTATA)

By Pierre Hatch, Plant Health Care Department, ISA Certified Arborist IL-4658A

Many years ago, I read about the American Chestnut (Castanea dentata) being once the primary species in the eastern U.S. and southern Ontario, with it being one out of every four trees, especially in the Appalachian region. Some specimens were over 100' tall and had a trunk girth at breast height of 18'+ and known ages of 500 years old. Unfortunately, in 1904 American Chestnuts began dying in the Bronx, NY from a fungal disease that came in with Japanese Chestnut Trees brought from Japan. By 1950, 4 billion chestnut trees were gone from New York to Georgia changing the entire look of the Appalachian Mountain range. What remained were the stump sprouts since the blight does not affect the root tissue.

About 15 years ago, I planted two 4' specimens from the Possibility Place Nursery (Monee, IL) just to see for myself. The seed source they found came from an old farmer that was far enough removed from the blight infection areas and his trees are 60' tall and continuing to grow. Currently mine are about 20'+ high with a breast height trunk diameter of 9". Last year, they produced the monoecious flowers (pollen and seed flowers on the same tree) appearing in June after the 8" oblong-lanceolate, alternate sharply toothed leaves were fully grown. This was followed with their first crop of chestnuts and this year they have even more coming forth. They are edible, found in small clusters of 1-3 nuts in a sharp spiny husk up to 2" in diameter, that drop from the tree mid-September to November, splitting into 4-parts. I planted these two in a natural non-mowed setting since the sharp spiny husks would be a painful hazard to walk on barefoot and general tree health is better in this natural habitat. The fruit is an edible nut in the raw state or can be roasted, grilled, boiled, pureed or preserved. In nature it is preferred by blue jays, deer, squirrels, turkey, and hogs.

The wood is ring-porous, moderately hard and strong, reddish brown and decay resistant. It has been used for timbers and lumber, furniture, flooring and is often reclaimed now from historical structures. Although fall color is not considered particularly picturesque, the leaves do turn yellow and brown before falling from the tree. The American chestnut habitat occurs on a wide variety of sites and soils in a range from Maine, southern Ontario, southern Minnesota, on south to Kentucky and mountains of central Alabama.

Currently, one promising effort to save the species is with the advances in biotechnology/ genetic engineering and gene editing using a bacterium to transfer a gene from wheat into chestnut embryos. The bacteria neutralize the blight fungus so that the embryo when growing into a tree, it can survive the blight. In upstate New York, they are now using the generations of offspring from the genetically modified version and hand pollinating American chestnut trees. Then, when the chestnut fruit drops from the parent tree, those fruits will grow into trees that will inherit the gene for blight resistance. If approved by the US Department of Agriculture, it could be used for future forest restoration.

So, although I may have limited time with my American chestnut trees, I have found it to be a satisfying experience just to try something different and watch what might happen. It has also inspired me to learn more about a previous forest giant and show others what they are like.

INSIDE LOOK

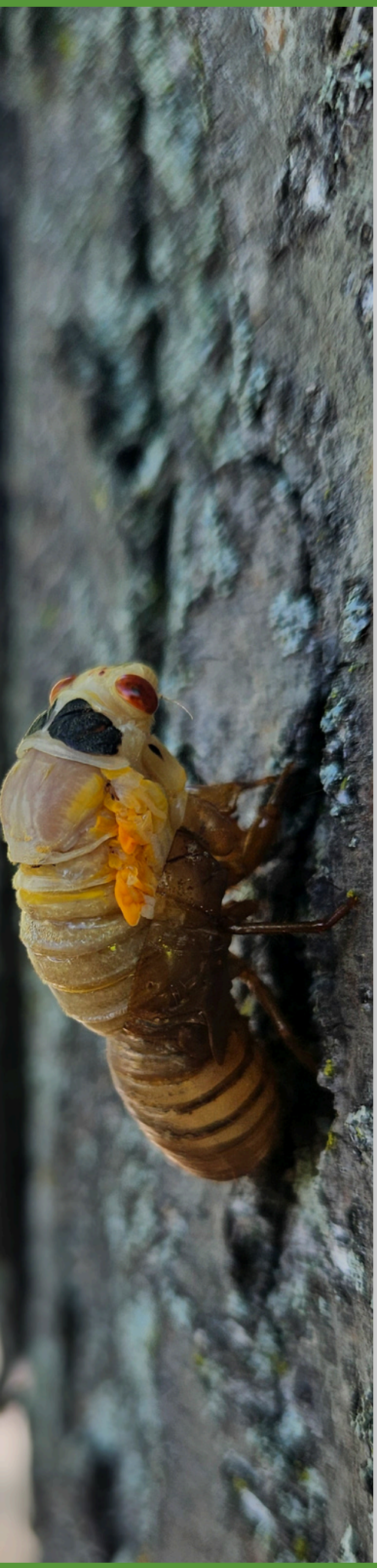
Since our last edition of Trunkline we have added two key members to the team.

Jeremy Lake is our new Production & Safety Manager! Jeremy brings a wealth of expertise to our team. An ISA Certified Arborist with TRAQ qualifications and a CDL Class A license. Since 2016, he has excelled in leadership roles, primarily within the municipal sector. Eager to transition into commercial arboriculture, Jeremy is ready to leverage his extensive experience and skills in his new role.

Jeremy Lake

Sam Thiem

Sam Thiem is our new Marketing/Communications Specialist. In this role he will over see all of KTS Social Media Platforms, Email Campaigns, Content Creation and much more! He is a recent graduate of Illinois State University receiving his degree in Mass Media this past May. He has gained valuable experience in communications and creative video production through internships at The Forest Preserve District of Kane County and Illinois State Athletics.



POOF! AND JUST LIKE THAT, THE CICADAS ARE GONE.

By Anne Dalrymple, ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, IL-4275BT

Beginning in late-May, northern Illinois experienced the great Cicada emergence. There were pockets of areas with impressive Cicada populations where mating calls were deafening and the ground was littered deep with insects, while other areas saw little, if any, Cicadas. And then, about six weeks later, they were all gone, almost in an instant.

The aftermath of the Northern Illinois cicada brood comes with many effects, some obvious and some not so much. One of the most obvious effects being the physical damage to trees, especially young saplings and smaller branches. Female cicadas lay their eggs in the small twigs and branches of trees, which can cause a phenomenon known as "flagging." This is where the tips of branches die off due to the egg-laying process. High wind events often lead to branch breakage. This typically occurs during the first year, post-emergence. Consider this “natural pruning” and keep in mind, it is not harmful to the health of the tree. Wounds resulting from the cicada egg laying typically are callused over, by the tree, within 1-2 yrs.

A not so obvious effect of the cicada emergence is the significant, though temporary, nutrient influx to the soil. When cicadas die, their decomposing bodies enrich the soil with nitrogen and other nutrients, a process known as nutrient cycling, aiding in tree health. This is similar to when the leaves fall from the trees during the autumn season and break down into the soil.

If you found yourself in the areas where cicadas were present, these are a few steps to consider ensuring the continued health of your trees, post-emergence:

- If you chose to wrap netting around the tree canopies for protection against female egg-laying behavior, it is time to remove the netting.
- Proper watering practices are crucial. Ensuring trees, especially younger ones, receive adequate water during dry periods can help them recover from cicada-related stress.
- Mulching around the base of trees can help retain soil moisture further promoting healthy growth. Mulch around the base of trees aids in temperature regulation protecting the fine feeder roots, adds organic material to the soil, and suppresses weeds. A 3” layer of organic mulch is ideal.
- Inspect for damaged branches carefully. Inspect trees for broken or flagged branches. Pruning may be necessary; however, remember, many branches impacted by cicada activity will recover. Consult with an ISA Certified Arborist to determine if pruning is necessary. A Certified Arborist can also help to evaluate for any signs of secondary pests or diseases that may take advantage of the trees’ weakened state.

The 2024 cicada brood brought both challenges and benefits to Northern Illinois. We will not see another emergence of this magnitude for another 17 years, giving the environment ample time to recover and thrive until the next cycle begins.

PHC Corner:

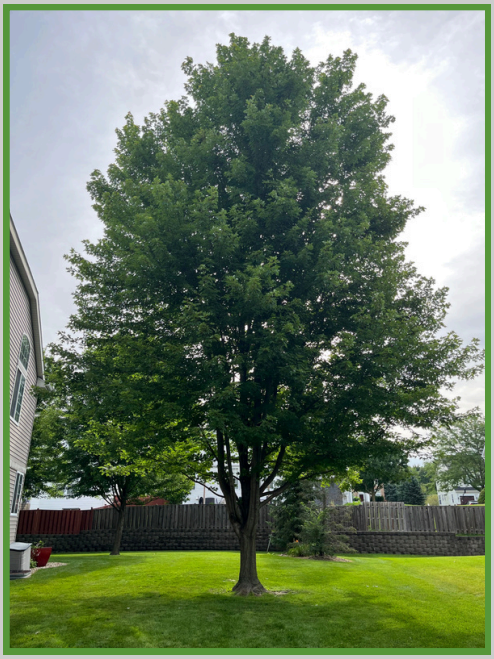
SPRING FLING OR FRIGID FRENZY? HOW UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER IMPACTED YOUR LANDSCAPE

By Ben Deutsch, Plant Health Care Manager, ISA Certified Arborist IL-1794-A

What a Spring and Summer it's been! There were 70-degree days at the end of February and then two days later it was 16 degrees overnight. March was not much better with 60 degrees one week and then the following week below freezing temperatures. The rainfall totals have been above average, with downpours one week and then dry as a bone the following week. On top of all that, we've experienced such high winds! It seemed like it was breezy almost every day with many of those days having wind gusts of 20-30 mph.

The entire Spring was running about two weeks ahead of an average Spring. Because of the early warm temperatures, some trees and plants were budding out. The overnight freezing temperatures damaged parts of these plants, possibly affecting food production for next year's bulbs. Those same temperatures, especially in the 28-24 degree range, could result in a loss of fruit production from 10%-90%.

Even trees that generally leaf out early that have frost damage will be fine. The new leaves may have brown tips or may drop off completely. Not to worry, trees put out new leaves throughout the spring. These new leaves will not be affected by the freezing temps. The fact that trees such as crabapples and hawthorns put out new leaves during the spring is why we do three rounds of fungicide sprays. These sprays will protect them from getting scab or rust and allow them to keep their leaves all season.



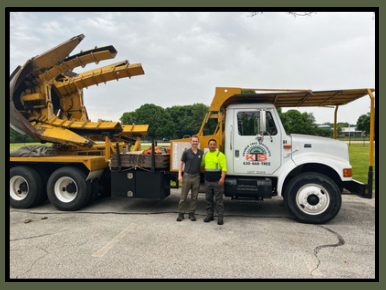
This spring has been more stormy than usual with the heavy rains and winds. Trees can be uprooted, but many times it can result in the loss of limbs. Even if the limb came all the way to the ground, you should have the tree looked at for damage and make clean cuts to prevent decay.

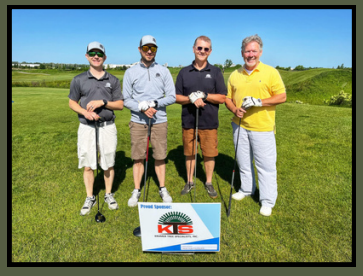
Trees and plants are resilient, but you can also help them stay healthy. During time of drought, water them. If your trees or shrubs were affected by springs extremes or storms, fertilizing them is a great option. If you feel like your trees or shrubs are stressed out or just not looking right, give us a call. We can have an ISA Certified Arborist stop out to see what can be done for them.

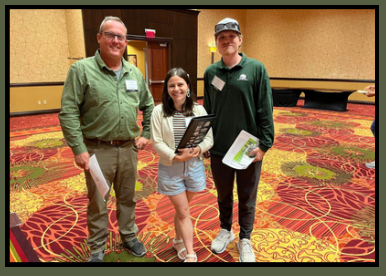
Out and About with KTS

We've been out and about, spreading our love for trees and connecting with you! Here's a quick recap:

- **Illinois Tree Climbing Championship** - Our team shined, and our grill masters sizzled, raising over $400 for the TREE Fund!
- **Touch-A-Truck - West Chicago** - We joined the fun at Reed-Keppler Park, letting kids explore all sorts of cool vehicles, including our very own spade truck!
- **3-W Golf Classic** - We hit the green at the Western DuPage Chamber's event, connecting with fellow businesses and enjoying some friendly competition. A hole in one for networking!
- **IAA Summer Conference** - Knowledge is power! Brittany, Mark, and Sam soaked up everything they could about tree care to better serve you.





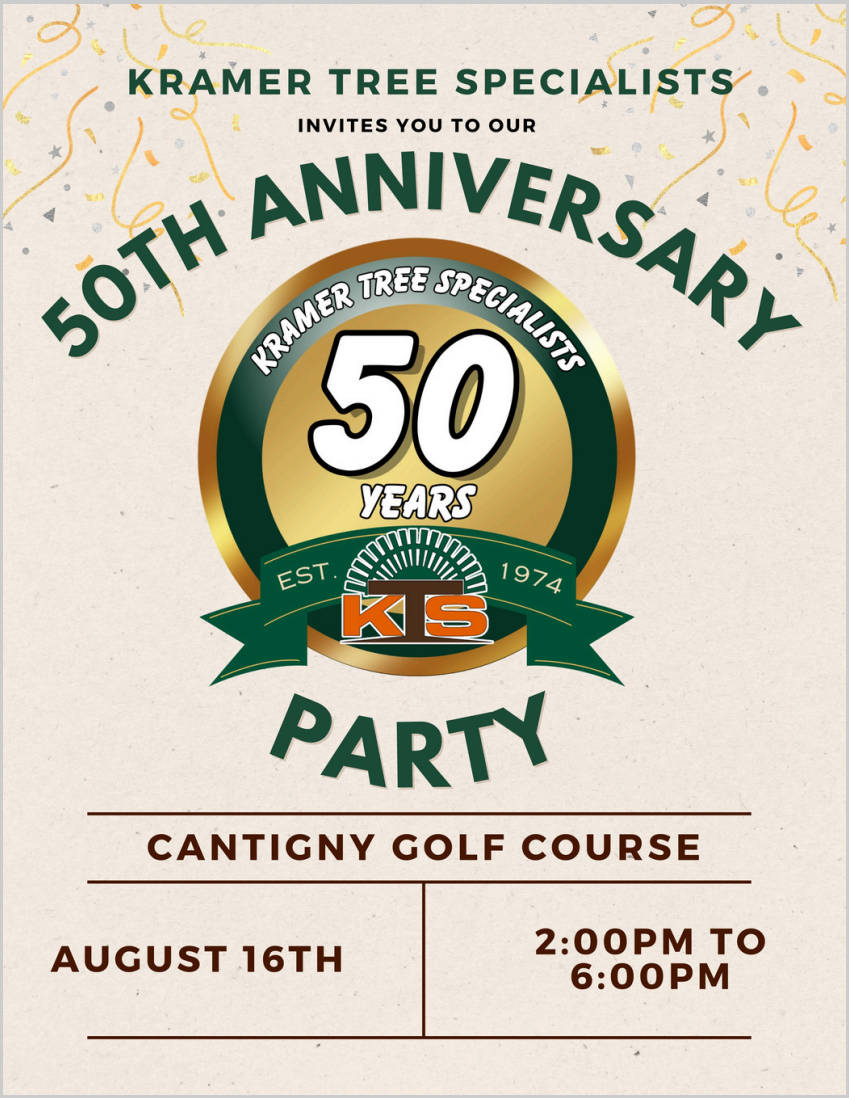


We're passionate about trees and being a part of our community. Stay tuned for more exciting KTS events!

>>>YOU'RE INVITED<<<

Whether you're a valued client, a dedicated vendor, or a past or present team member, your presence means the world to us. Help us celebrate this milestone!

Click **HERE** or **Scan** the QR code to RSVP!



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