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Tree Times

MORGAN TREE SERVICE
THE "VITACARE" COMPANY

Transition: The Invisible Performance

I have always had an odd bitter-sweet ambivalent relationship with the idea of, and my own experiences with, autumn. I think of it as a magic season, in some ways like, but also very different than Spring. I wrote a poem once upon a time that I called Markings. It was an effort to touch this very ambiguity.

My eyes open to the morning light
Streaming into the room,
See a difference,
Something subconsciously
askew,
Change, but subtly
So that I could not find it.
My shirt across the chair;
My shoes at the door
Kicked off in the darkness.
Staring, looking, studying:
The light!
The light coming from a different place,
From a new angle;
From another window
Southward along the wall
Changed nothing but changed everything.
Color, feel, texture, and place.
My window had become a
helical register,
Marking inexorable motions of the universe
Toward winter and entropy.

And it is in our trees that we can see another, albeit different, illustration of this. When we think about our trees, it's easy to relate fall with the beginning of shut-down, hibernation, and even "temporary death", symbolized by leaf fall, barrenness, and cessation of function. Yet this can be a very unfair and misleading overstatement. Indeed, what many may consider as an autumnal apogee in the botanic cycle of life is, in reality, a critical and necessary time in the growth and health of green trees. It is, when understood, the season of promise.

Historically, botanically, romantically, and in other ways, springtime is recognized as the season of the resurgence of life. . .and rightfully so. Yet most often the critical functions of that *other* transitional season are either unknown or ignored. In fact, it is fall and winter that together lay the base for life. It is a beautifully recurring theme that can be encouraging and even awe-inspiring. Peering in a little deeper, like Alice looking down the rabbit hole, may change forever our appreciation of the perennially resident miracles of adaptation, response, and continuance of life.

It is very true to assert that fall – and winter -- is the "season of the roots." There below the soil and out of our sight, occurs the supply and support for next year's growth and glory. Roots provide support (anchorage), storage of energy (sugar-carbohydrate), absorption of water and nutrient, and transport along an intricately designed two-way highway. This fourfold behind-the-scenes role should win "Best Supporting Actor" in season and out.

In season, the recombining of carbon molecules in the photosynthetic process requires water. This water requirement is supplied by extraction and absorption of soil water by tiny blonde non-woody root hairs. In most undisturbed soils, these little root hairs (.1mm to .5mm in diameter) are greatly assisted by the presence of fungal hyphae called mycorrhizae (Gk= fungus roots). This tiny procurement system is so delicate and fine that it may never be seen in a spadeful of dirt. It is therefore very susceptible to damage or dysfunction when the projects of men intersect with this botanic symphony.

Near the end of summer, with the coming of shortened days and decreased light, the chloroplasts in the leaf (where sugar energy is manufactured) begin to shut down. So the function of the individual leaf is now nearly complete. Soon after the leaf's true colors (pigments) are unmasked by the departure of chlorophyll, the leaf will die. The sugar energy that has been manufactured will be stored in all parts of the tree and is used in the root system for new root extension. So long as the soil temperatures remain generally above 47 degrees F. root growth may continue throughout the winter months, ceasing only as the lengthening spring days and rising mean temperatures cause bud swell and the capillary uptake of water and sugars.

So for the fall and wintertimes, the root zones, the roots and their functions occupy center stage. But a lot can go wrong, especially with the trees growing in busy places occupied by people and the things that people do. But primarily in the interest of limited space here and as well, for maybe just a bit of drama, I want to reserve that topic for a more complete treatment in the next edition of this letter.

Stay tuned . . .

(Continued from page 2)

this sudden and very unexpected gush of emotion here at the meat counter, his gaze went back to the pork chops as if to quickly refocus on a safer and more easily handled mundane duty. As I stood there, his words pulled at my heart. Because I was a romantic and a sometime-poet, I knew exactly how he felt. Somehow it seemed I frequently had the ability, a dubious gift, to know things a little ahead of my time.

Then, like a bolting deer that startles the hunter, another thought tumbled spontaneously over my lips and out of my mouth.

"Maybe all you remember is just the dress rehearsal." I was surprised at my own words. "Maybe the real thing is still ahead."

Ford smiled again with his eyes and silently nodded in agreement. It was the truth and I think we both knew it in the same instant.

"Tell your Mom hello," he said.

"I will." I looked once more into the old man's friendly eyes, shook his hand again and then turned and walked out.

Bill Gates' Rules

Bill Gates recently dished out advise to a high school audience: **Eleven things they did not learn in school**. Gates says feel good politically correct teaching has created a full generation of kids with no concept of reality. He says this concept sets them up for failure in the real world.

Rule 1: Life is not fair - get used to it.

Rule 2: The world won't care about your self esteem, The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.

Rule 3: You will not make 40 thousand dollars a year out of high school and you won't be a vice-president with a car phone until you earn both.

Rule 4: If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure.

Rule 5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping - they called it opportunity.

Rule 6: If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes; learn from them.

Rule 7: Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from parasites of your parents' generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.

Rule 8: Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades and they'll give you as many times as you want to get the answer right. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to ANYTHING in real life.

Rule 9: Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you "find yourself". Do that on your own time.

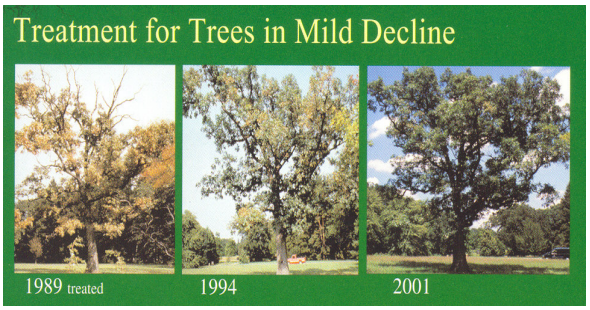
Rule 10: Television in NOT real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

Rule 11: Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

Cambistat (Reprised)

In the past Winter edition of this letter, I introduced to you a new product in our line that offers the twin benefits of growth rate reduction along with enhancement of a plant or tree's resistance to drought, heat, insect and disease attacks. Acting as a switch in the plant's genetic mechanism, Cambistat has proved effective in redirecting sugar energy to slow annual plant growth up to 40-70% over a three-year period. The actual percentage of growth retardation is a function of plant genus and species.

Cambistat is a catalytic chemical that blocks the production of gibberellic acid, the hormone responsible for cell elongation. At the same time it impacts the same starting material to enhance production of abscisic acid, which is a "stress" hormone that sets up a stronger defense in the plant. One of several specific benefits of abscisic acid increase is the reduction of water loss from the plant or tree.



As a consequence, in addition to plant's that are simply outgrowing their spaces, other uses for Cambistat include application to stressed trees around recent construction sites or where grade changes, soil compaction, or root loss has occurred; e.g., recent irrigation installation and/or hardscape additions or modifications.

If you would like to have more information about this exciting product or would like for me to come out to provide a cost estimate, please call the office at 901-756-9893.