

# VitaCare: A Program That Works

## “A Stitch In Time Saves Nine”



A typical Mid-South homeowner frequently spends hundreds of dollars a year to keep their grass lush, green, and weed-free . . . and sometimes with only marginal return on that investment. Yet far fewer homeowners ever consider spending even a fraction of those dollars on a program that focuses on retaining the appearance and vitality of irreplaceable trees and plant material.

with colleagues across the country, professional continuing education and years of in-the-field experience.

tions. And only then can the appearance, vitality, and value in landscape investments be optimized on any site.



Following this initial evaluation, subsequent component parts of VitaCare may include applications of custom blended seasonal fertilization, restoration of soil mycorrhizal presence, preventative disease control, and appropriate insect control(s) based on plant damage thresholds.

VitaCare is and has been now for thirty-plus years the name for our program of plant health care. Years ago I realized that the design and implementation of any truly **on-target** program must rely on solid diagnostics, including initial soil and/or tissue testing. Since then our VitaCare program has constantly changed and evolved to incorporate the latest information gained through regular networking

Now in these last years Morgan Tree will only very rarely and only under unusual circumstances move to initiate a new site plant care program *without* this critical diagnostic work. At least minimal soil testing. Happily, while the cost of basic initial testing is usually minimal, it does serve a vital role in keeping us relevant with our treatments and applica-

As implied above, no two programs are exactly alike since each one is designed from site-specific information. But even so, one of us will be on a site three to four times a year or after any phone call, to make an inspection survey of the plant material. Diagnostic or inspection site visits to existing VitaCare clients are always free. This is a great way to catch potential problems before they sneak up, becoming expensive and devastating.

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MORGAN TREE SERVICE, INC.  
THE “VITACARE” COMPANY

# Tree Times

## Taking Care Of Our Trees



Much as I am *not* a fan of the winter months, I have to concede that there are things going on then that don't happen at any other time of the year. Yes, it's important to know that the winter months are in fact a critical preparation time for the flush of growth and green activity that is set to burst upon the scene just as soon as the days get longer and the average temperatures rise in the spring.

As I have driven around the city since last fall and thru the winter in the last few months the hundreds of plastic bags

stacked on curbs and filled with raked leaves have been impossible to ignore. In our time raking up the leaves is of course the culturally correct thing to do and moreover, our usual love affair with green lawns requires it. But there is a slight rub: the trees would actually prefer it if we didn't bother with that traditional fall project. For them it would be much better if last season's old necrotic leaf material would be left on site to compost and add to what would ultimately result in a rich organically alive top soil that encouraged aeration, water dispersal and a happy

root expansion. But that actually happens in only a small minority of cases.

The typical Memphis soil is clay, a small-pored soil type that tends to absorb water slowly but once taken up, holds onto it tightly in much the same way that a cotton string will pull water upward along its length when one end is immersed in a glass of water. This water holding characteristic encourages root rot. Moreover, when combined with the usual lack of organic