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Monday, February 2, 2009

On the job

Kathryn E. Aroian, Certified Arborist, Cedar Lawn Tree Service Inc., Ashland

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What do you do?

"I assist people who are making decisions about caring for their property; trees, both large and small, and landscape plantings. Often I am trying to diagnose insect and disease problems or advising on pruning or if removal is a good option for them. I help people decide what plantings they should install, depending what they're trying to go for.

"At my company I have a fairly big role coordinating spray services. Spray services would be for winter moth, which, inside Route 495, is an invasive pest. Also, the hemlock woolly adelgid. Those insects can overtake the vitality and health of a tree. Horticultural oil would



Arborist Kathryn E. Aroian likes being outdoors and loves helping people and their trees. (T&G Staff / PAUL KAPTEYN)

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Age: 33

Family: Single

Native of: Worcester

Current residence: Hopkinton

Time in current job: Three years



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Do you prune and climb?

"I have been trained to prune and climb, but that's not the most economical thing for my boss to have me do. I do the pruning at my house but I don't do a lot of the large tree work." **How did you get into this field ?**

"I was working for Nielsen TV ratings, and I really was looking to change careers and not have to sell something I didn't believe in. When I saw the advertisement for this company, I was impressed by the size and scope of the services they were offering. It was an opportunity to work outside. I've been an avid gardener and camper, and it seemed like a natural fit. The great outdoors is very dear to my heart. Since starting here I went to UMass and got my BS in urban forestry."

A lot of trees will be cut down to fight the spread of the Asian longhorned beetle.

Why?

"The Asian longhorned beetle has been discovered in other areas of the country. The eradication has been rather severe. While they're modifying on a continual basis how to proceed with the program in Worcester, they're being more selective on what trees to remove. In past outbreaks they've removed all host trees. In Worcester they are now removing infected trees and scouting host trees. When the city was inventoried in 2006, 80 percent of street trees in the city were Norway maples, which is a host tree.

"I grew up in Greendale, a mile and a half from ground zero. I think most of those trees are infected. When I came back here after the Dec. 12 ice storm, I saw so many trees damaged. These people were already going to lose a lot of trees. Now, all the tops are broken. Some people may not own any trees."

Is there any other treatment for the beetle other than removing the tree?

"Once a tree is infected with the beetle, it has to come down. Any sign that eggs were laid or any exit holes, it's out of here. For host species with no sign of infection, there is an insecticide that can be injected into the trunk or through a soil application. ... The tree takes it up through the roots or inside the xylem, and it goes through the leaves and bark. When an insect (that the insecticide is designed for) ingests it, it kicks the bucket."

Why is the Asian beetle such a problem here?

"The reason the Asian longhorned beetle has so much potential is that it has a wide range of host species. It doesn't move very fast, but it will knock out a tree by tunneling. It makes large holes inside. You may never know the tree is infected, but it eventually stops getting enough water and food. You don't see it so much in evergreens and oaks. It's mostly maples, ash and willows. As it spreads, if people start taking wood out of this area, it's going to spread and have an economic effect. Now, the city is going to have to plan on replanting. We don't want to end up with another monoculture. There are a lot of varieties of trees people can get.

"All the street trees in Worcester are a monoculture. So, diversity is important. It's also good for the birds."

What's the best part of your job?

"I think that working with people to take care of their favorite trees and plants is rewarding. ."

What's the worst part?

"I guess, the busiest season, April, May and June. I'm at work so long I'm doing my own gardening by the light of the moon. I'm mulching by the outside light. That's an ironic fact of my job. I got into it because I'm so enthusiastic about outdoor activities. I'm generally swamped. I took my vacation in November this (past) year."

What have you learned from this job?

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"In the course of being at this job, I can look out the window and know what kind of tree I'm looking at. I can make changes that I feel good about in the community. It's not like planting trees along the street as a volunteer. But people are asking me for my opinions to strengthen the value of their landscape, aesthetic value. I knew it before, but there is such a gamut of what people think about trees. Some think they're a nuisance. They'll call to cut a tree because they don't want to rake leaves. That's a funny concept for me that I hadn't considered before."

To be featured in or to suggest a job profile, send information to Dave Greenslit, Telegram & Gazette, Box 15012, Worcester, MA 01615-0012, or send an e-mail to dgreenslit@telegram.com.



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