

## **ARBORICIDE** *by Jeff Young*

Joe was riding his beautiful new riding lawn mower over his ever so green, weedless lawn. He was driving slowly to admire the perfect placement of the flowers, shrubs and trees. Suddenly, there was a man waving for him to stop. Joe thought it was someone who wanted to remark on his beautiful outdoor creation.

"Howdy, Mister, I'm the Tree Sheriff. I've come to stop you from committing arborcide."

"Arborcide? What's that?"

"Tree killin,'" said the Sheriff.

"But, but...I haven't killed any trees, I love trees. Look at all these trees I've planted over the last 3 years." Joe runs over to a 10' tall red maple. "Look at this!" said Joe.



The Tree Sheriff slowly followed Joe and looked at the tree, "it's dying."

Joe looked at the tree, "What!? It's... it's ...full ....and... and green. How could it be dying?"

Like a TV CSI tech, the Tree Sheriff knelt on one knee at the foot of the tree. Joe had surrounded his new tree with a lot of dyed cedar mulch, which gave the tree a nice appearance in his rich green lawn. The Tree Sheriff pulled back a big handful of this pretty-but-deadly mulch. Startled insects ran everywhere.

"You've built a beautiful house for all the insects to eat away at your tree. The mulch has kept the bark nice and soft so the insects can burrow into the tree and feed on the sap, behind them comes infecting disease into an open wound. Then there's this." The tree sheriff pointed to some roots growing in the mulch, "These roots are not coming from the root system, they are coming from the tree trunk, and they will eventually circle the tree and strangle it."

Joe was stunned; he didn't know what to say. He certainly didn't want to hurt the beautiful trees he had planted. He just didn't know. A bit dejected, he said, "Well Sheriff, is there anything I can do to fix it?"

The Tree Sheriff was matter-of-fact, "Get rid of the dyed cedar mulch. Cut all those roots that were in the mulch. If you want a mulch ring to protect the tree, keep it away from the tree trunk and spread it only 2-3 inches deep."

Joe quickly added, "I'll put down some fertilizer, too."

The Sheriff shook his head, "No, no, no, you don't need fertilizer. Just keep it well watered. And keep away from it with that riding lawnmower, it compacts the soil and squashes the roots."

"Yes, Sir, Sheriff, Sir, and....thanks, I really didn't know," said Joe a bit embarrassed.

The Tree Sheriff turned to leave, "I know, I know.... if you have any questions, just give me a holler." A few more trees saved; just another day for the Tree Sheriff.

***Jeff Young is the local Tree Sheriff (City Tree Warden) for St. Albans.***