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VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – As you get ready to tackle spring cleaning jobs, don't forget your trees. Keeping trees and landscaping green takes constant commitment; and, as they say, timing is everything.

As we turn away from the harsh winter months and head toward the growing season, here are some tips from expert tree care professional **Mark Chisholm** and **STIHL** to help keep your trees and plants healthy. Chisholm is a third-generation arborist with the Aspen Tree Expert Company in New Jersey and a three-time winner of the International Society of Arboriculture's (ISA) International Tree Climbing Championship. STIHL is a leading manufacturer of handheld outdoor power equipment for both professional and home users.

PREPARE TO PRUNE

The best time to prune trees and shrubs varies depending upon species and desired results. Pruning during the "dormant season," or when the trees have no leaves, is usually best. This is the time to prune young trees for future structure, remove live limbs that are too low or close to the house, and remove limbs that might have been damaged in winter storms. Keep in mind, though, that dead and damaged limbs can be pruned any time throughout the year. Visit stihlusa.com/information for Chisholm's instruction guide on how to prune properly.

MAXIMIZE YOUR MULCH

Trees and landscape beds respond well to being mulched. Remove competing grass away from the trunks of trees and plants to help them flourish. Just remember that, in this case, more is not better. Keep mulch thickness down to just a few inches and pull it back near the trunk to avoid contact as if mulch is piled around the trunk, it holds moisture and heat. This can cause developments of cankers and other ailments. It also encourages a secondary roots system to develop above the primary one, which could include girdling roots.

CHECK IRRIGATION

Now is the time to make any necessary adjustments to your sprinkler system. Watch to see if there is any water pooling around trees and provide a remedy if there is. Watch to ensure that plants that are prone to fungal problems are not sprayed directly with sprinklers, which could result in a severe issue if left as is. For example, if your sprinklers are spraying the foliage of a dogwood tree, it may be more likely to host powdery mildew and anthracnose. A mugo pine battling with diploдия tip blight will have more trouble defending itself with the extra watering. Be sure to look into the needs of each species within the sprinkler's reach.

REMOVE LEAF LITTER

If the trees in your landscape are susceptible to certain fungal problems (such as dogwood or sycamore anthracnose and pines affected by diploдия tip blight), removing leaf and needle debris will help reduce this effect.

STUDY YOUR SOIL

A soil sample can alert you to any nutrient deficiencies in your trees. Have a specialist come out and take a sample before you start a fertilization program of any kind. Prescription programs are much more precise than blanket programs and they can help you to save money if fertilizer and additives are not needed.

TALK WITH A PRO

Get in touch with an ISA Certified Arborist or a Board Certified Master Arborist now to discuss your specific landscape needs. They can spot problems that need your attention before they develop or advance too far. They can also make sure that you are in tune with how to best care for your trees and provide accurate advice so that you can keep them green on your own.

For more tips from Chisholm and STIHL, visit www.stihlusa.com. For more information on how to find a certified arborist or tree care company and other tree tips, visit www.treesaregood.org or www.treecaretips.org.

About STIHL Inc.:

STIHL Inc. manufactures the number one selling brand of gasoline-powered handheld outdoor power equipment in America for homeowners and professional landscapers*, as well as the number one selling brand of chain saws in the world. STIHL products are sold through servicing power equipment retailers from coast to coast – not mass merchants. STIHL products sold through U.S. STIHL dealers are for distribution in the United States only. For more information or for the name of a local STIHL retailer, call toll free 1-800-GO STIHL (1-800-467-8445) or visit the dealer locator on the STIHL website at www.stihlusa.com.

**"Number one selling brand" is based on syndicated Irwin Broh Research (commercial landscapers) as well as independent consumer research of 2009-2011 U.S. sales and market share data for the gasoline-powered handheld outdoor power equipment category combined sales to consumers and commercial landscapers.*

STIHL is pleased to support the work of **Independent We Stand**, the **Tree Research and Education Endowment Fund (TREE Fund)**, the **International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)**, the **Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA)**, the **National FFA**, the **Professional Landcare Network (PLANET)**, the **American Tree Farm System (ATFS)**, and the **National Association of State Park Directors**.

About Mark Chisholm

One part acrobat, one part expert rope climber, one part tree physiologist, and several parts competitor and thrill seeker,

Mark Chisholm is a third-generation arborist with his family-owned Aspen Tree Expert Company in New Jersey. His expertise in tree care has made him a sought after consultant and industry spokesperson for the world of arboriculture, and he regularly travels the globe to consult with international arborist associations.

Chisholm has won every International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) New Jersey Chapter Tree Climbing Championship for the last 19 years and has conquered the wider tree-climbing world on three occasions, most recently in 2010, when he won his third ISA International Tree Climbing Championship. He will compete for the 2012 New Jersey Tree Climbing Champion title in June.