

October 19, 2002

To whom it may concern,

As victims of the Rodeo-Chediski fire, we were completely devastated by what we found upon our return on Saturday, June 29, 2002. Twelve days before, under an evacuation order, we left our home, which sat on a beautiful, heavily wooded acre, in the small community of Pinedale, Arizona. We returned to find much of that acre completely burned. We were forced to cut down over 420 trees in total. We lost ponderosa pines, juniper, pinion, and oak, many of which were mature trees. Those that were left, were heavily damaged and most were in danger of dying from the stress of the fire and the drought. We were faced with losing most of the trees on our land.

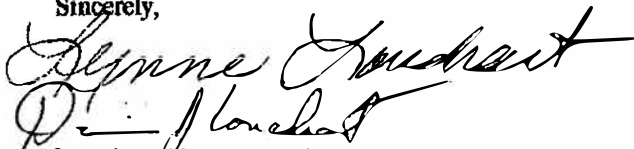
We were heartbroken by the thought of having to cut down all of our once beautiful trees. The members of the Knights of Columbus, from St. Rita's church volunteered to come and help us with the daunting task that lay ahead. The night before they came out, Dave Nila called and asked if he could bring out a friend of his, "a high - powered scientist guy". We readily agreed. Any help, particularly on an expert level would certainly be welcome. If we could save even a few of the trees, we would be delighted.

When they arrived the next morning, they brought with them, much to our surprise, Bill and Kay Ruth. Lynne had known and worked with both of them at Show Low High School some years before. Aside from the happy reunion, we were immediately more comfortable with Dave's "scientist guy". Lynne had complete faith in Bill, having known and worked with both he and Kay before. Bill directed the volunteer workers on which trees to cut and which trees could be saved. Under his direction, many more trees were saved than we ever thought possible. And after a day of backbreaking work, they left us with directions for use and a gallon of Vita-Planta, which we used faithfully.

Nila - Cunningham then returned in a week or so and began treating the land. Our trees started to come out of shock and began to turn green almost immediately. One of the effects that we noticed right away was that the smell of smoke which totally engulfed our land, was gone. You can't imagine what it is like to live with the smell of "dead campfire" for over a month and then to have it disappear in a matter of hours. We noticed, as well, that when the rains finally did come, we had much less damage from erosion, even in areas where the water ran normally after a storm. Bill also gave us a break on the cost of the treatments, as victims of Arizona's most devastating fire. Help that was greatly appreciated, we might add.

In the end, we went from utter devastation to recovery in a much shorter time that we had thought possible. Thanks to Bill and Kay Ruth and Nila - Cunningham, we have saved a great number of trees. Although our land has changed, we feel that it is much healthier now than it was even before the fire. No one will ever understand how much it meant to us to be able to save as many of these trees as we have been able to save with these treatments. It has helped us to retain our property value, where many people have lost everything. Many of our friends and neighbors are amazed, because their property has not recovered as well as ours has with just simple hydration. Our property is not only recovering, it is growing and is healthy.

Sincerely,



Dennis and Lynne Louchart  
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