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APRIL 1992
VOLUME 3
NUMBER 4

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COVER PHOTO:
A stately Royal Palm is being moved to a new home in southern Florida.
Photo courtesy of Zimmerman Tree Service, Lake Worth, Florida.
As I speak with arborists around the country, I continue to hear good reports about the business of tree care. Contract renewals in many areas are up. The phones are ringing and consumers are buying. There are still pockets where the economy is slow, but even arborists in those areas are optimistic. This is a good time to buy trucks and equipment. Suppliers have had a slow period, and they are anxious to get some sales on the books. I hear that there are some pretty good deals out there.

Meanwhile, the America the Beautiful program is moving forward. The Secretary of Agriculture has appointed a National Urban and Community Forestry Council. Only one seat on the council was designated for the commercial sector. Although the National Arborist Association lobbied very hard for it, it was given to the American Association of Nurserymen.

Even though commercial arborists do not have direct representation, fortunately Bill Kruidenier of the International Society of Arboriculture has been appointed council chairman. There are others on the council who are equally sympathetic to the need to focus on the care of existing trees in the urban environment. I’m confident that we will be well served.

The bad news, as most of us have heard recently, is that members of Congress have been able to bounce checks without penalty. This is just another example of how Congress often holds itself above the law. For example, Congress is a major employer but its employees are not subject to many regulations, including those put forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

A number of congressmen just might have bought the farm with this latest fiasco. We would have to tell it to the judge, but they are going to have to tell it to the voters. The bright side is that we have an opportunity to clean house. Let’s do it! Vote for those candidates who are known for their honesty and integrity. Then maybe this government can accomplish something.

In summary, the actions of the guilty politicians notwithstanding, 1992 continues to look brighter every day. Let’s make it pay!
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Trees On The Move
South Florida Ordinances Spawn A Major Industry

By Peter Gerstenberger

In southern Florida, lush, tropical landscapes contrast with some of the worst examples of urban sprawl. To counteract some of the undesirable results of unchecked development, many communities have enacted ordinances encouraging developers to preserve existing vegetation. Consequently, tree moving has become a major industry.

For Arbor Tree and Landscape, of Boynton Beach, and Zimmerman Tree Service of Lake Worth, transplanting has been an important source of revenue. Bill Hodges, president of Arbor Tree, transplants trees five days a week using two 90-inch and one 60-inch tree spade, a four-wheel-drive backhoe, a front-end loader, heavy trailers, a 30-foot tree hauling truck and a lot of manual labor. Work involving heavier equipment is subcontracted.

Most of Hodges' work comes from large commercial accounts or established residential customers. One of the company's largest jobs was at Polo Trace Country Club where the company was called upon three years ago to move cypress trees with helicopters. The bald and pond cypress weighed 25,000 pounds each and were originally located five miles away. Even though Polo Trace later declared bankruptcy and tree maintenance fell off, 70% of the trees survived.

Michael Zimmerman, president of Zimmerman Tree Service, operates a full-service tree care firm that includes a tree nursery and tree spade operation. The firm became involved in tree moving because of Zimmerman's interest in preserving native plant material and specimen trees.

"You can make a big impression by moving a few large trees," says Zimmerman. "You can make a bigger impression preserving trees."

Value is key

Key to the success of tree moving is the value put on trees. But as Zimmerman points out, that perception of value can be a double-edged sword if clients feel that trees can be easily replaced.

Another problem is that prospective clients look for the lowest price rather than experience or tree survival rate. "I've seen numerous occasions where trees, especially dicots, should never have been moved," notes Zimmerman.

The cost for moving trees can be exorbitant, sometimes the result of location and soil conditions. In the southern part of the state, for instance, coral presents a special problem.

"South Florida is all coral; you can't use a tree spade in Miami," says Hodges. "Our crews use a jackhammer to remove the rock and build a mound of topsoil to create a planting area. Often the cost of doing this is more than the customer is willing to bear."

In other situations, special equipment is needed. For example, setup costs for a 100-ton crane, which is used to move banyans and oaks, run about $5000.

According to Hodges, the tree moving business is just as competitive as the tree service industry, and fraught with the same problems. It's important for him to be able to reasonably assure the tree's survival, and for this reason he says some trees simply cannot be moved.

"When someone spends $20,000 to $30,000 to move a tree, the last thing they want is a high mortality rate. The game plan is survival," he says.

To ensure that trees survive a move, Hodges sells aftercare. Since water and proper drainage are crucial, Hodges is careful not to use city water that might contain contaminants such as ammonia. Watering can be rather expensive; Hodges cited one job where the bill for watering a single transplanted tree came to $600.
An Arbor Tree & Landscape crew plants a Cabbage Palm, the state tree of Florida. Workers have removed some of the fronds and tied up the heads with untreated twine that will disintegrate.

Proper "mudding in" is essential to transplant survival. An Arbor Tree employee uses a length of PVC pipe on the end of a water hose to eliminate air pockets around the root ball.

Hodges' aftercare program also includes fertilization, but requirements vary. When a tree is improperly planted, warns Hodges, fertilization may hurt the tree as nitrogen can accelerate the development of root rot because it feeds the pathogens.

Despite the money, time and effort involved in the aftercare, Hodges says: "It's better to turn a job down than to build a bad name for yourself."

Both Arbor Tree and Zimmerman were involved in a mammoth transplanting effort that saw more than 20,000 trees moved over a 4-year period. The tree moving project was launched when the Palm Beach County Solid Waste Authority began to develop an incinerator site across the highway from a landfill that was scheduled to close.

To quell some of the controversy surrounding the incinerator's development, the SWA took as many plants as possible to create buffer zones around the landfill that was scheduled to close.

To quell some of the controversy surrounding the incinerator's development, the SWA took as many plants as possible to create buffer zones around the landfill that was scheduled to close. The project was expensive, but landscape plants would have been even more costly and would not have produced the same positive ecological effect.

Besides Arbor Tree and Zimmerman, four other tree moving companies were involved in the project. Numerous other companies hand dug grasses, wild flowers and plants of different types and applied mulch. The companies also recreated various ecosystems such as ponds, upland forests and wetlands. A full-time coordinator directed the work and now manages the system. The landfill will eventually become a park.

Other business

Large jobs such as the SWA project and a similar one at a Fort Myers landfill make tree moving profitable. Zimmerman points out that the SWA project proved that tree spading can be cost-effective.

Despite his success with large tree moving, Zimmerman admits that one of his major frustrations is the shortage of information on fertilization, how to water, whether to use soil amendments or water absorbent materials, when to root prune, whether pruning (thinning) is needed beforehand, and what time of year is best for transplanting specific trees. As a result, Zimmerman says, transplanters must rely on common sense and previous experience.

In addition to their tree moving work, Arbor Tree and Zimmerman maintain nurseries and buy or sell specimen trees of all sizes.

Most of their business is in palms, which are good candidates for tree spade transplanting. With most palms, roots do not regenerate from the cut root tip. Rather, new roots grow from the trunk. Large palms can be moved because the size of the root ball in relation to the size of the plant is less critical. Most trees have to be pulled in and bound if they are to be transported over the road. Moving palms is less restricting.

The newest recommended technique for palm transplanting is to cut off everything
but the meristem prior to transplanting. That is aesthetically displeasing and often unnecessary, according to Hodges. Palms grown in shade have long slender fronds that may exert pressure on the growing meristem, or bud, during transport. If the bud is severed, the palm eventually dies. He therefore advises greater caution with shade-grown palms.

**Conclusion**

If Zimmerman does not land another large contract for on-site tree moving, he will likely sell at least one of his spades. "My interests lie in the collection and reselling of specimen material. That just doesn’t happen every day," he says.

He feels his tree spades are best suited to on-site tree moving, such as the SWA project. The competition from other firms, the availability of sizeable, inexpensive trees from nurseries and the logistical problems of single tree moving restrict the profitability of using tree spades.

Hodges, on the other hand, is content to move trees five days a week. He is equipped for it, he sells it aggressively and it is what he likes and does best.
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INDUSTRY INPUT

What about insurance?

I read with interest the article entitled “Learning to Climb,” (January) until I reached the final two paragraphs.

While I fully endorse any university-level training in arboriculture, I also feel that the instructors should not refer calls for residential tree work to their students. Several questions arise of this practice, the most important being liability insurance.

Certainly there are qualified tree services in the area to whom these requests could be referred. Perhaps these students could work for these businesses on a part-time basis and still gain experience. As it is, according to the article, the students aren’t much better than the “have chain saw, will travel” guys in a business sense.

Eric Gansauer
Plant-Life
Landscape and Landscape Maintenance
Centre Hall, Pa.

Withhold approval

Upon reading “My First Take Down” (January), I was amused by young Mr. Chenail’s experience, as anyone who can remember their beginnings in arboriculture would be. However, my amusement was short-lived.

In New Jersey we average two deaths a year due to inexperienced people trying to do tree work. Did Mr. Chenail have insurance? Did he have ground help? Were they trained in aerial rescue? I doubt it. Did his friend who chipped the brush own the equipment, or was this done when the boss wasn’t looking?

I think that as a professional magazine you have shown poor judgment in publishing and paying Mr. Chenail. His actions go against the basic policies of every professional tree care organization I know of, including the National Arborist Association. (Read Outlook in the same issue.)

I’m sure Mr. Chenail will become an excellent arborist in time, but please do not show tacit approval of inexperienced, uninsured, underequipped people trying to do the work of professionals.

Bruce W. Porter
Porter’s Tree Service
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Do You Need A CDL?

By Brian Barnard
TCI Staff

If you are operating certain commercial motor vehicles and do not have a commercial driver’s license (CDL), you could receive penalties of up to $5000 or a jail term.

In order to get a CDL, you’ll have to be 21 years old and be able to read and speak English. You'll also have to take written and road skills tests.

A CDL is issued by each state in accordance with federal guidelines. The deadline for compliance was April 1.

Contact your state Department of Motor Vehicles for further information.

A CDL for operators of certain commercial vehicles has been required since 1986, when Congress passed the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act. The legislation was aimed at improving driver quality, increasing highway safety and preventing drivers from having more than one license.

Under the law, a driver must have a CDL to operate a vehicle with a manufacturer’s gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 26,001 or more pounds, a vehicle towing a unit with a manufacturer’s GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds, or a vehicle of any size that requires hazardous materials placards. Driving a vehicle designed to carry 16 or more passengers also requires a CDL.

The written exam for a CDL consists of a standardized multiple-choice test. There are tests for driving vehicles with air brakes, combination vehicles, or driving vehicles carrying hazardous materials requiring placarding. The applicant must correctly answer at least 80 percent of the questions on each test to pass.

After passing the written tests, CDL applicants must take a driving test to demonstrate that they can operate a commercial motor vehicle safely. This includes a pre-trip inspection of the vehicle, control skills such as backing up, and a road test.

Some drivers may have been exempt from taking the road test in previous years, but all applicants are now required to take the skills test.

Individuals with a CDL have added reporting requirements. Any traffic violation must be reported to the employer within 30 days, and suspension or cancellation of driving privileges within one day.

Drivers will be disqualified for various reasons, including leaving the scene of an accident or committing a felony while operating a commercial vehicle, or driving under the influence of alcohol. The legal blood alcohol concentration for commercial vehicle operators is .04%, well below the common legal limit of .08 to .10 in many states. Commercial drivers found to have any alcohol in their systems will not be allowed to operate a vehicle for at least 24 hours.

Although the procedure is similar in each state, fees and classification titles may differ. For example, maximum CDL fees in Illinois are $40, and in New York fees can be as high as $67.
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Tools & Business—Part I

By Donald F. Blair

The tools that come to mind when one thinks of a tree business are the tools of production: chain saws, chippers, aerial lifts, ropes and saddles. But while these are tools for tree work, the tools for a tree business are different: computers, multifunction watches, video cameras, fax machines—business tools that have broad and useful applications to anyone managing a service oriented to the care of trees.

For Christmas last year, my wife gave me a new generation computer that offers a whole new range of application to a tree business: the laptop.

My laptop is large and heavy by current standards, but it has some important features. Powered by a 386 processor, this LT is five times faster and more responsive than our office computers weighing 10 times more. It has a movable, nearly full-size keyboard. The 40 mb hard drive system means that once I’ve loaded my programs on the hard drive, I don’t have to carry floppy disks around with me.

This LT runs either on house current or provides about two hours running time on its rechargeable battery pack. I can transfer data back and forth between my LT and the office computers with a cable and a program called Lap Link. I can tie into any normal printer—laser jet, dot matrix or daisy wheel—in the field and on the road.

I can do all the field work I desire with two programs: PFS Professional Write and PFS Professional File. They are easy to use and do everything I need.

With PFS File, I have created a tree hazard evaluation form, bid proposal forms, fax cover letter, incoming and outgoing phone message log, day planner, invoice form, safety meeting log-in sheet, expense account sheet and a purchase order form. These files provide the data entry and retrieval capability I need to maintain a field office without a lot of baggage. Each file allows me to design a form as long as 35 pages.

On a simple consultation, I can prepare the evaluation and the invoice on the spot and present both to my impressed client. The printer also runs on batteries or a converter. If more time and preparation are needed, I can enter field data as collected and then dump it into an office computer later.

For tree hazard evaluations and other diagnostic assessments, I’ve been able to inspect a site and design a form specific to the needs of the trees and site in question.

While on the road, I keep in touch with the office through the fax cover sheet which tells where I am, at what number and for how long. I can provide a safety meeting signup sheet to seminar attendees if needed.

And the day planner is proving indispensable. I can keep data entries current during what has normally been downtime: watching a movie in a hotel room, on a plane or at home.

As versatile as PFS File is, I still need a word-processing program, so I turned to PFS Professional Write.

The Write program lets me write as I please, adjust the amount of print to various paper sizes, move lines, paragraphs or pages and check spelling.

I keep several long-range writing projects in storage so I can work on them whenever I have time and inclination.

I’ve come to view the LT as a vital business associate. The LT and printer has increased my range, versatility and professionalism in ways that were inconceivable a few years ago.

Donald F. Blair, arborist, author and lecturer, owns and operates Sierra Moreno Mercantile in Big Pool, Maryland. Look for Part II of “Business Tools” in the May issue.
Instant Trees!

Constructing A Mature Landscape For AmeriFlora '92

AmeriFlora '92—the major horticultural event of the decade—will open in Columbus, Ohio, on April 20 in celebration of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of North America.

Behind-the-scenes work has been going on for months preparing for AmeriFlora '92. The exhibit will showcase the work of landscape architects, arborists, gardeners and many other groups and will be open to the public through October 12.

Of particular note in the AmeriFlora show is the Garden Delights, Dreams and Fantasies garden, part of the America's Backyard exhibit. In addition to providing funding for the project, the Davey Tree Expert Company is removing plants from participating Ohio public gardens, including Stanley Hywet Hall and Gardens in Akron, and transplanting them at the AmeriFlora site. The plants will be returned to their original locations when the show closes.

The Davey offices in Akron and Columbus specialize in custom transplanting and avoid tree spade transplanting, which is highly competitive in this area. The fact that caretakers at Stanley Hywet Hall are allowing Davey crews to move some irreplaceable specimens speaks well of the company’s expertise in transplanting and the care the plants will receive during the show.

Mark Klein, Davey assistant district manager from the Akron residential-commercial office, was responsible for removing selected mature dwarf evergreens from Stanley Hywet Hall. His crews carefully dug, balled and burlapped 41 specimen plants, mostly dwarf conifers, for the move.

Among the plants were nine dwarf Alberta spruce, a 20-foot goldthread cypress, a weeping cedar of Lebanon, a recumbent Norway spruce with an 8-foot spread, a 25-foot skyrocket juniper, and a large bloodgood Japanese maple.

**Joseph Hashman, Mark Kline, Roy Montan and Christopher Mendiola, left to right, employees at Davey's Akron office, prepare dwarf evergreens for removal from Stanley Hywet Hall & Gardens. The evergreens were transplanted at Garden Delights, Dreams and Fantasies, at AmeriFlora '92.**

**The Garden Delights, Dreams and Fantasies exhibit during transplanting.**
Crews carefully pruned roots as the root balls were cut. The Alberta spruce grew in tight clumps so crews lifted them the same way, in groups of four and five plants. The huge root balls were drum laced, then fitted in baskets made of heavy-gauge hog wire, which will remain on the plants for the duration of the show. They were lifted with the help of a chain crane and knuckleboom crane or front-end loader.

Because of the odd-shaped root balls and brittle lower branches on many of the specimens, most had to remain upright for the 130-mile ride to Columbus, arranged on two semi-trailers like the pieces of two huge jigsaw puzzles.

Once the trees reached Columbus, Davey District Manager Dan Joy and crews from the Columbus residential-commercial office took over. Their first task was to determine the best way of unloading the trees into a staging area and transplanting them, a job that took four days.

While the planting followed a diagram prepared by the Garden Delights' designer, plans had to be changed somewhat as most of the root balls were far larger than had been anticipated.

Since Davey transplanted the larger trees, other teams of volunteers have delivered more plant material from surrounding nurseries and arboreta, completed the walkways, trellises and decks, planted perennials and annuals and laid down mulch.
While this study guide has been developed for use by candidates for ISA Arborist Certification, it has also been immediately recognized as an invaluable addition to any reference library. With over 160 pages of information and nearly 200 illustrations and photos, it provides ready-reference for arborists on all levels. The guide is housed in a handsome 3-ring looseleaf binder with each chapter separated by tabbed reference dividers.

The Study Guide is intended to serve as a recommended program of study. It is not intended to be the only program of study to obtain certification. The narrative portion of this guide is general in nature and serves as a primer.

Each chapter of the guide contains: objectives for study; list of new terms; narrative with illustrations/photos; workbook section; other suggested sources of information; challenge questions; and sample exam questions.

Chapter topics include:
- Tree Biology
- Identification
- Tree/Soil Relations
- Water Management
- Tree Nutrition and Fertilization
- Tree Selection
- Installation and Establishment
- Pruning
- Cabling, Bracing and Lightning Protection
- Problem Diagnosis and Management
- Construction Management
- Climbing Techniques and Working in the Tree
- Safety and First Aid
- 350 Word Glossary

Noteworthy comments from a few professionals:

"The study guide is a great step in the right direction. Arborist certification is helping to raise the professional standards of the industry."
—Don Blair
M.F. Blair Tree Experts

"This long-overdue guide fills a gap in the literature available to arborists. It will be a great educational tool."
—Donald L. Ham
Immediate Past ISA President

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The cost of the study guide is $60.00 for ISA members, $90.00 for non-members. Add $10.00 to obtain the ANSI Z-133 Safety Standards (referenced in text). It can be ordered pre-paid from ISA, P.O. Box 908, Urbana, IL 61801, or FAX VISA/MasterCard orders with card number and expiration date to (217) 328-7483.
Commentary:

**Insure Affordably**

By Barry Rosenberg

Tough times demand creative solutions that do not require you to settle for fewer benefits to save money.

Many businesses make the mistake of substituting quality health coverage with plans that appear "inexpensive and adequate to meet my needs." You should consider, however, what cost those reduced benefits will have at claim time or in the event of a catastrophic illness. What dollar amount do you attribute to service? Is it important to be able to get the answers you need from the first person you speak to? Do you like to be paid for claims in a timely manner and without a lot of paperwork?

The point is that quality and service are too important to sacrifice and should be considered before you discover that they are missing from the "bargain" plan you sign up for. By taking a more creative approach, you can maintain a quality plan at a manageable cost.

What it comes down to is cost shifting. Consumers often use healthcare services with little or no concern over what these services cost. Ironically, overuse drives the cost of health insurance upward. Thus, employees have little or no incentive not to use services if they are not required. Simply put, do you really have to go to the emergency room when all you really need is a bandage?

You can reduce unnecessary usage by modifying your insurance plan to shift more out-of-pocket expense on to your employees. This shift means you will also be reducing your premiums.

This change may also mean that you can now afford a program that previously appeared too expensive. As time goes on, reduced usage will also improve on renewals.

Another important feature to include in a health benefit program is cost containment. This will enable the health insurance carrier to monitor scheduled surgical procedures.

Its purpose is not to tell the doctor how to do his job or to take shortcuts. Its purpose is to limit extra days in the hospital and to encourage that procedures be performed on an outpatient basis when appropriate. This not only reduces claims but it also protects the patient from unnecessary inconveniences.

If increasing employee out-of-pocket expense is unpopular, consider the alternatives. You could eliminate the plan altogether, require your employees to contribute to the plan’s cost, or increase their contributions if they are already making one. Which option would then seem unpopular? At least with a higher out-of-pocket cost, the extra expense is a potential cost and will be incurred only with use.

Suppose you institute a plan that calls for higher out-of-pocket expenses for your employees, and you put the savings into a money market account. In the event of a hardship situation, the money could be made available to the employee who may need it.

You can provide yourself and your employees with a quality plan offering excellent benefits and service now through the health insurance program sponsored by the National Arborist Association. You do not have to sacrifice benefits to make your health insurance program manageable.

I am available to help you structure your health program in a way that will make it both affordable and beneficial for your company.

Barry Rosenberg is a senior benefit specialist with Albiez Insurance Agency, in Union, New Jersey. Phone: 800-ARBORS-1

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Plant Living History In Your Own Backyard

Young trees linked historically to more than a dozen U.S. presidents are available through the American Forestry Association’s Famous & Historic Trees project.

The AFA is America’s 117-year-old non-profit citizens’ conservation organization. The Famous & Historic Trees project makes available hundreds of different varieties of young trees, each grown from seeds or cuttings taken from trees either planted by a president or linked directly to a famous person or historical event.

Ready for planting now are a red maple and a silver maple from George Washington’s Mount Vernon; a crape myrtle from Montpelier, the home of James Madison; and a catalpa from Thomas Jefferson’s home, Monticello.

A historic grove doesn’t have to be made up just of presidential trees. Flowering varieties like the goldenrain or golden-chain can be mixed with shade trees for variety. And exotics such as the shittah and the monkey puzzle make a grove more interesting and can teach observers about unusual species.

With spring here, it’s time to start planting trees. Arborists, foresters, horticulturists, public works managers and others can get involved by mounting campaigns to get presidential and other historic trees planted in parks, zoos and arboreums, around schools, libraries and other public buildings and on campuses and in office parks. Selected trees are available individually and cost $30, 30% of which goes directly to aid AFA environmental projects.

Also available are two-tree grove starter kits and groves of 20 or more Famous & Historic Trees offspring.

Groves are shipped as a complete package. Each container-grown Famous & Historic tree is carefully boxed in sturdy cardboard and shipped via United Parcel Service. A one-year guarantee assures buyers that if a tree does not survive its first year, Famous & Historic Trees will replace that tree with another one at the nominal cost of shipping and handling.

Along with each tree buyers receive a photodegradable tree shelter complete with supporting stake and bird safety net, fertilizer, planting instructions and a one-year subscription to “Classic Tree News,” a quarterly newsletter.

Also provided is an 11-by-17-inch Certificate of Authenticity. The certificates tell in whose name a tree is being planted and relate the lineage of the tree.

Publicity and educational materials are included in grove shipments along with a videotape, “How to Plant Famous & Historic Trees.”

To order your trees, call 800-677-0727 or write: Famous & Historic Trees, 8555 Plummer Road, Jacksonville, FL 32219. Checks, credit cards and purchase orders are accepted.
Doggett Corp. introduces two organic tree fertilizers/soil amendments. One is a 14-3-6 organic-based product with slow release nitrogen and the other is a 100% organic 3-6-3. Both products are a homogeneous poultry base and are outstanding for improving soil texture and adding organic matter, while providing some fertilizer benefit and a high micronutrient content. These solid amendments are designed to be applied to augered holes in the root area of landscape trees and shrubs. Punch bars are not recommended.

The Model 484 Kendall Cutter rotary mower is designed for high production clearing on distribution and transmission right-of-way. Standard features include heavy-duty 7-foot hydraulic cutterhead, hydrostatic transmission, Franklin planetary axles, 20,000-pound Braden winch, Sunstrand hydrostats, enclosed cab and more. Most of what you hand-cut now can be cleared in minutes with the Kendall Cutter. For further information, contact Kendall Mfg., Inc., P.O. Box 831, Lawrenceville, GA 30246. Phone: 404-822-9822.

Shindaiwa Inc., introduces the 377 chain saw. The gasoline engine features increased displacement for more torque, yet the chain saw weighs only 8.8 pounds. The 377 is the latest addition to Shindaiwa's line of high-performance, vertical-cylinder chain saws. Its responsive 37.7cc engine generates more torque, making the 377 the most powerful saw of its size on the market. It comes with .325-inch Oregon 33s1 chisel chain and a 16-inch double guard bar. The 377 chain saw is manufactured to professional quality standards throughout.

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Compacted Soil
—The Silent Killer

By Dick Proudfoot

One of the worst cases of soil compaction I've treated was also one of the most common. It was a classic case of builder ignorance.

A 75-foot Douglas fir tree was singled out by the developers of an upscale office park in Lake Oswego, Oregon, as a feature that would beautify and draw tenants to the park's three-story brick buildings. In fact, the large tract was scattered with majestic firs, oaks, cedars and redwoods. Lake Oswego is a city of trees, and the office park—by incorporating those trees into the design—would preserve the wooded feel.

So the buildings went up, and the parking lot swept around the Douglas fir. In all, it was a handsome design.

By the time construction was finished and I was called to the project, the tree showed all the symptoms of dying: excessive dead wood and brown needles that were beginning to blanket the ground below. I learned that no fencing had been erected to protect the tree during construction, and the tree was completely surrounded by asphalt in the final design. It was being suffocated because of compacted soil.

Largest, single killer

Soil compaction is the largest single killer of trees in urban areas. On the building site, it happens every time a contractor drives a truck over the tree's roots, or stacks lumber around it, or uses heavy equipment to lay asphalt or concrete around it.

Builders don't intentionally kill trees; they just don't know that this is what they're doing.

Our company was able to save the tree. We cut holes in the asphalt to allow water to enter the root zone, fractured the soil to allow lateral movement of the water, and introduced soil amendments and fertilizer.

Today, five years after the initial root zone therapy, the tree is doing beautifully.

Root zone therapy

Root zone therapy is a term we use for techniques that remedy a number of root problems, almost all of which are caused by compaction. The process is simple, the tools are few, and the results can mean the difference between life and death for the trees.

A major tool in our arsenal is a soil-fracturing device called the Grow Gun, developed and manufactured by Grow Gun Corporation, of Arvada, Colorado. The company is one of several that make soil-fracturing equipment; we chose this model because of its affordable price, ease of handling and effectiveness.

The Grow Gun looks like a big syringe. The user lowers the gun's stem into an augered hole in the tree's root zone and shoots compressed air into the hole, which fractures the soil in a radius of up to 12 feet.

The user keeps the gun in place by standing on a ground-level base plate. The above-ground housing is fitted with two valves, one for compressed air and the other for water—many jobs require only compressed air, but some require an air-water combination. A hopper on the top of the housing allows the user to introduce fertilizer and soil amendments to the area at the same time he is breaking up the soil.

The gun is typically inserted in a number of spots in concentric circles throughout the root zone to assure that all the soil has been loosened.

Once the soil is fractured, several beneficial things start to happen. Absorbing roots that were declining due to a lack of available oxygen and water can now function better. Water can percolate through the soil, which had been hard as rock. And various amendments that can be introduced through the Grow Gun can break up the soil and keep it porous.

The other tools we use with the therapy are an air compressor for the Grow Gun, an augering device and a compaction testing tool called a penetrometer—which consists of a pressure-sensitive rod that is pushed into the soil, giving a readout in foot pounds of pressure, which can be correlated with bulk density. Some arborists use an oxygen meter along with a penetrometer to achieve a detailed picture of the soil.

With this kind of therapy, we have been able to save many significant trees and appreciably extend their life.

The need to breathe

You can easily imagine the effects of root compaction: How long could you breathe with a 300-pound gorilla sitting on your chest or with a plastic bag covering your head? Not very long. Trees, in that way, are a lot heartier than humans—the process takes longer, although the end result is the same.

The top few inches of soil where the absorbing roots do their work is rich with oxygen and moisture. When a contractor compacts the soil through normal building activity, he can cut this oxygen supply in half without even thinking about it.

Not only is the tree gasping for air, but it is harmed in two other ways. A fungus that grows on the roots and converts nutrients into a form the tree can absorb is killed because its own oxygen supply is cut off. Meanwhile, this anaerobic condition can result in hydrogen sulfide poisoning.

Since roots have been known to push up sidewalks and crack house foundations, most people feel that roots are quite
An oak in Lake Oswego was preserved when builders routed a two-way street around it.

John Abercrombie of Pruett Tree Service uses the Grow Gun to reduce soil compaction around a Douglas fir tree in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

Birch trees planted on a berm in a Lake Oswego office park were drowning because the soil underneath the berm was so compacted that it did not allow water to drain from the soil above.

A tree’s natural growth and survival depend on the roots’ ability to move and breathe; the tree simply cannot survive if the soil is so compacted that the roots have no space.

Our company encounters soil compaction problems constantly. For example, an oak tree was located in the middle of a proposed two-way street. Rather than cut it down, the developer placed it in an island and built the road around it. Like the fir, it was surrounded by pavement, and by the time we got to it, the leaves were small, the color was poor and it had considerable dead wood.

In another situation, a road at an office complex in Washington County, Oregon, was built right up to the drip line of several redwoods. We were called in to do anything we could to keep them alive, so we performed extensive root zone therapy, in-
including soil fracturing with the Grow Gun and the introduction of custom-mixed backfill amendments.

On yet another occasion, developers at another office park built a berm near a brick building and planted several young birch trees on it. The added soil of the berm compressed the soil underneath, leaving groundwater nowhere to go. The trees died when their roots became waterlogged. The developers replanted them twice before calling us; we solved the problem with soil fracturing.

And generally west of the Cascades, where the soil is heavy clay, augering large holes for planting young trees often glazes the sides of the hole, leaving no room for the tree’s roots to breathe or grow. Again, soil fracturing will break apart that glazed surface, giving roots the porous living space they need.

On the home front

Commercial construction sites are not the only places we see soil compaction. Residential lots, even where the trees are set back from the home, also can use soil fracturing—children playing and the homeowner mowing the lawn take a toll on the soil. Over time, it will become compacted.

The concept of air fracturing can be traced as far back as the 1930s. The technology was put on the shelf until the early 1980s, however, because research proving its benefit was inconclusive, according to Tim Johnson, owner of Artistic Arborist in Phoenix, Arizona. Compaction had become such a problem that new tools were introduced, and although the research is still inconclusive, soil fracturing seems to work, he said.

Other methods of root zone therapy include vertical mulching, ripping, hydraulic pressure and the use of chemicals that flocculate the soil.

"Air fracturing doesn’t take the place of anything," says Johnson. "The severity of the situation dictates the method used, and in fact could involve a combination of methods. Sometimes I will fracture the soil first, then go in and do hydraulic for amendments and fertilizing."

Johnson said the Grow Gun comes in handy where compaction is significant but access is difficult. He’s used it to ventilate soils contaminated with toxic gases caused by line leaks, to help dry out over-saturated soils, and to inject activated charcoal into soil that has been rendered toxic because of residual herbicides. In his area, it can come in handy to add amendments that can counteract the high levels of sodium and calcium and low organic matter in the soil—a mixture that can turn as hard as cement.

Here in the Northwest where the soil is heavy and where builders and property owners demand trees on their property, we have no shortage of calls for root zone therapy. It’s amazing what a few blasts of air into the trampled ground will do for trees’ health—and for the owner’s happiness.

Dick Proudfoot is the manager of Pruett Tree Service in Lake Oswego, Oregon.
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Auction: Discontinuing logging, tree and landscape operations in N.H., sale time: Saturday, May 16, 1992, 10 a.m., rain or shine, Westmoreland, N.H. (12 miles north of Keene on Rte. 12). Logging, tree and landscape equipment, John Deere dozers, rubber tire loaders, log trucks, skidders, sprayers, chippers, etc., plus small related items, and firewood processor. Real estate: farm, land and luxury condo in down-


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First-Hand Experience

By Jim Brunner

As I read a recent From the Field article, I reflected on a few experiences of my own in the tree business. This is one of many.

As a professional landscaper and tree surgeon with 10 years experience, I became rather comfortable using chain saws and other various equipment. This story begins on a Sunday, while I was doing some work for myself.

A friend who had come for a visit needed some firewood so he and I decided to remove a rather large dead maple from beside my garage. He had been in the business as long as I had. I went up in the bucket and was feeling rather arrogant with my abilities in removing this tree. I didn’t even want a rope to guide the main leaders. Finally, after some persuasion, I decided to use the guide ropes. After dropping the main leaders right down the driveway, I decided we should cut them up to make room for the main trunk.

This is when disaster struck. As my friend and I were sawing firewood, I put the larger saw into a section of log. The saw bounced out of the log. Like a rookie, I put the saw right back into the same cut. The saw kicked back before I even had a chance to know what happened. The saw had no safety equipment on it. The saw wrapped itself around my left hand so the chain ripped my hand down between two fingers almost to my wrist.

This little episode cost me about six months of healing and left me with about 90% use of my hand. I was lucky. From that day on, I have preached and trained my employees about safety. My employees have had the benefit of seeing me at my worst. It was a very awakening lesson of tree equipment safety.

Since that day only one employee in seven years has had an accident with a saw. I have seen many close calls on the job. Each time I stop and tell them again to look at my hand. Since then all saws have been replaced with new safety feature saws.

Not everyone has the benefit of seeing first-hand the damage this equipment that we use every day can do. We shouldn’t forget about safety when the work week ends in the public eye.

Jim Brunner is the owner of Brunner Landscaping, Spring Hill, Florida.

Do you have a story for From the Field? TCI will pay $100 for published articles. Submissions become the property of TCI and are subject to editing for grammar, style and length. Entries must include the name of a company and a contact person or they will not be considered for publication. Articles and photos must be received by the first day of the month for the following month’s issue.
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- TWELVE MONTH RATE GUARANTEE
- COVERAGE OF ROUTINE PHYSICALS, OBGYN EXAMS, AND OTHER WELL CARE PROCEDURES
- ONLY TWO DEDUCTIBLES PER FAMILY THAT CAN BE MET ON A CUMULATIVE BASIS
- SIMPLIFIED CLAIMS SYSTEM - ONLY ONE CLAIM FORM PER PERSON PER LIFETIME IS REQUIRED
- OPTIONS AVAILABLE SUCH AS MATERNITY, PRESCRIPTION DRUG CARD, SUPPLEMENTAL ACCIDENT, AND DENTAL PLAN
- ONE MAN GROUPS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FULL BENEFITS
- MANY PLAN DESIGN OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO MEET YOUR PERSONAL NEEDS
- LIFE INSURANCE AUTOMATICALLY INCLUDED
- COMPETITIVELY PRICED FOR COST SAVINGS AND VALUE

MARKETED BY
Albiez Insurance Agency
2444 MORRIS AVENUE
UNION, NJ 07083
PROVIDING INSURANCE PROTECTION SINCE 1929

UNDERWRITTEN BY
The New England
RATED A+ SUPERIOR BY
A.M. BEST COMPANY
PROVIDING INSURANCE PRODUCTS SINCE 1835
FREE PROPOSAL REQUEST QUESTIONNAIRE
PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN AS INSTRUCTED ON BACK PANEL

DEDUCTIBLE OPTIONS  CO INSURANCE OPTIONS  STOP LOSS OPTIONS

PLAN A  □ $100  □ 250  □ 500  □ 1000
100%  □ 100%  □ NOT APPLICABLE
PLAN B  □ $100  □ 250  □ 500  □ 1000  □ 1500
80%  □ 80%  □ $2500  □ 5000  □ 10,000
PLAN C  □ $300  □ 500
50%  □ 50%  □ $2500  □ 5000  □ $10,000

OPTIONAL COVERAGES

□ MATERNITY  □ PRESCRIPTION CARD (AVAILABLE WITH $100 AND $250 DEDUCTIBLE)
□ DEPENDENT LIFE INSURANCE  □ SUPPLEMENTAL ACCIDENT (INCLUDED WITH PLAN A)
□ DENTAL PLAN WITH ORTHODONTIA BENEFITS  □ DENTAL PLAN WITH NO ORTHODONTIA BENEFITS

NAME OF COMPANY

ADDRESS

TEL. ______________  FAX ______________  CONTACT NAME

BEST TIME TO CALL __________ AM __________ PM

DO YOU HAVE GROUP INSURANCE NOW? □ YES  □ NO

(If yes please staple copy of last invoice as indicated on back and indicate current plan's anniversary date on it.)

DO YOU BELONG TO THE NAA □ YES  □ NO

CENSUS DATA

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NAME OF EMPLOYEE</th>
<th>MALE OR FEMALE</th>
<th>AGE LAST BIRTHDAY</th>
<th>DEPENDENT COVERAGE (S.F.K.T.)*</th>
<th>LIFE INSURANCE AMOUNT MIN. 10,000 MAX. 50,000</th>
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* DEPENDENT COVERAGE S = SINGLE  F = FAMILY  K = SINGLE WITH CHILD(REN)  T = HUSBAND AND WIFE

PLEASE CALL BARRY ROSENBERG WITH ANY QUESTIONS
1-800-ARBORS-1
THE **DEDUCTIBLE** IS THE MEDICAL EXPENSES PAID 100% BY THE EMPLOYEE. AFTER THE DEDUCTIBLE IS MET THE NEW ENGLAND SHARES IN PAYMENT OF MEDICAL EXPENSES ACCORDING TO THE CO-INSURANCE AND STOP LOSS.

AFTER THE DEDUCTIBLE IS MET, THE **CO-INSURANCE** IS THE PERCENTAGE PAID BY THE NEW ENGLAND.

THE **STOP LOSS** IS THE TOTAL MEDICAL EXPENSES THAT THE EMPLOYEE AND THE NEW ENGLAND SHARE. THE AMOUNT OF MEDICAL EXPENSES OVER THE STOP LOSS ARE PAID 100% BY THE NEW ENGLAND.

IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT, **SUPPLEMENTAL ACCIDENT** MEANS THAT ALL MEDICAL COSTS ARE PAID 100% BY THE NEW ENGLAND WITHOUT BEING APPLIED TO THE DEDUCTIBLE FIRST.

**PLEASE CALL US - 1-800-ARBORS-1**
MAILING INSTRUCTIONS

• HAVE YOU COMPLETED THE PROPOSAL QUESTIONNAIRE?

• TO RETURN TO US POSTAGE FREE, PLEASE OPEN BOOKLET AND FOLD QUESTIONNAIRE PAGE COMPLETELY OVER AND BEHIND BUSINESS REPLY PANEL. THEN FOLD TOP HALF OF BOOKLET DOWN BEHIND BUSINESS REPLY PANEL.

• PLEASE INSERT A COPY OF YOUR MOST RECENT INVOICE FROM YOUR CURRENT HEALTH CARRIER AND STAPLE RETURN MAILER AS INDICATED.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO RESPOND.

WE WILL CALL YOU SOON.

ARE YOU PAYING TOO MUCH FOR HEALTH INSURANCE? WE CAN HELP!