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- direct acting hydraulic cylinder articulation system
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If you’re looking for an aerial device to meet your XT extraordinary requirements, look no farther than the Simon-Telelect Hi-Ranger XT-52.
Finding additional production people continues to be the greatest challenge that tree company owner faces today. We have always addressed that issue from the perspective of a need resulting from business growth or because someone is moving on. When someone leaves your employ, particularly a key employee, it always hurts. How often have you carried someone during a slow period only to have that person depart as soon as business picked up and you really needed him?

When I was in the tree business—I think that was sometime between the American Revolution and the Civil War—we used to say that a climber would go just about anywhere for a nickel an hour more, as long as he didn’t have to drive much farther. The price may have gone up but the scenario hasn’t changed, other than the fact that today the employee might be male or female.

Don’t let it get to you! Don’t spend too much time worrying about it either. That’s business. I was talking to an arborist on the phone just the other day and he said, “It doesn’t happen often anymore, but isn’t it great when you can get out on a property and concentrate on the trees rather than all of this business ‘stuff’ we have to deal with all of the time?”

Inevitably, the challenge of replacing an employee results in your hiring someone better than you had before. Nobody is indispensable. The loss of an employee can be turned into a learning experience. The replacement you hire will be an improvement over the person you lost because your additional experience gives you a better frame of reference, a better job description and better judgement.

Don’t hesitate to look within your current staff to fill a position. You would be amazed at how many people who might never volunteer can rise to the occasion if they are asked.

What prompted this editorial? Several months ago, we lost a key employee. Lo and behold, from within we found a shining star. This month two other long-time colleagues announced that they were leaving to begin careers in new fields. Sure, it’s a personal loss and definitely a short-term setback. For the long term, it’s an opportunity.

Every time you are faced with hiring new people, look at it the same way. The challenge may not thrill you, but the opportunity is unlimited.

Robert Felix, Publisher

You would be amazed at how many people who might never volunteer can rise to the occasion if they are asked.
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Rewarding Excellence in Arboriculture

By Les Kozaczek

This year’s National Arborist Association’s Winter Management Conference proved to be a week of firsts, including the installation of the NAA’s first woman president, a new non-US membership fee structure and, the showpiece of the conference, the inaugural Excellence in Arboriculture Awards, which recognized 13 NAA member companies for exemplary tree care projects in 1995. “These awards provide the type of national recognition that truly honors the highest levels of achievement nationwide,” Robert Felix, NAA executive vice president.

The awards banquet was the social highlight of the conference, during which more than 230 guests enjoyed the presentation and the engaging master of ceremonies, Al Shigo, the world-renowned expert in tree biology and care.

The awards are the first of what promises to become an eagerly anticipated annual ceremony. The 1996 Excellence in Arboriculture Awards program, sponsored by the National Arborist Foundation with funding from Altec Industries of Creedmore, NC, will offer every NAA member company the opportunity for national recognition for its best tree care achievements. Entrants for the awards complete a questionnaire and provide “before and after” photographs of projects in which they have achieved particularly positive results.

Jimmy Walden of Altec Industries confirms that Altec has committed to continue its sponsorship of the Awards at least through the NAA’s 2nd Annual 1997 Winter Management Conference in Nassau, Bahamas.

“This was our first time sponsoring this event. It was just a fabulous meeting and totally positive experience,” reports Walden. “It’s a big step in the right direction for the whole tree care industry.”

Altec hooked up with the NAA for two important reasons: the NAA’s professionalism and continued growth, and Altec Industries’ own plans for growth.

“We really want to walk hand-in-hand with the NAA through this exciting time of growth in this industry. The NAA and Altec Industries are both world leaders—us with the equipment we manufacture, and the NAA with its top flight management and tree care professionals. Together, we can help those involved in the tree care industry world-
Inside every container of Alamo you'll find a strong, healthy tree. Because Alamo is the only fungicide that’s effective in preventing oak wilt and dutch elm disease. Just call 1-800-395-TURF for more details on how it can help preserve a beautiful environment. Which, as you see, is what we’re really selling.
Mullane Associates (Division of Low Country Tree Care, Inc.) of Hilton Head Island, SC, Grand Award winner for the Marriott's Grande Ocean Resort.

Watch for details of how to participate in the 1997 Excellence in Arboriculture Awards, which will be available in early May. The NAA committee overseeing the program has expanded the scope, secured an expert panel of judges and improved the criteria used for judging entries.

All NAA Members Will Benefit From Conference

The theme of this year’s conference, held in San Diego, Feb. 13-18, was “Meeting Manpower Needs of the ‘90s and Beyond.” The benefits and the lessons learned from a week of intense industry brainstorming and member networking won’t be restricted to those who attended the conference, assures Felix.

“The opportunity to network one-on-one with expert speakers gave members an excellent perspective on the staffing challenges facing the tree care industry now and down the road. We listened very carefully to what everyone had to say, and the NAA will incorporate the best information into employee-development programs for members. We are here to help members weather any business storm they might face,” Felix notes.

Throughout the conference, attendees and expert speakers worked to untangle the knotty issue of how to improve recruitment, development and retention of personnel in the tree care industry in the face of a volatile labor market.

How volatile? Consider: In 1958, the average U.S. worker was a 40-year-old male. In
1989, he or she was a 36-year-old baby-boomer. By 2000, the average worker will be a 39-year-old woman. Finding just the right employee, then, is already a challenge for owners of tree care companies.

The ever-shifting labor market will make it even tougher, says Larry Helms, a nationally-renowned management and personal development specialist.

Helms shared this and other sobering insights with an appreciative audience of 200—representing 140 member tree care company owners and managers—at just one of the many business and industry seminars offered during the conference.

Attendees particularly enjoyed a fascinating keynote speech on successful business systems given by Michael E. Gerber, a business systems specialist and owner of Gerber Business Development Corporation of Petaluma, CA. Gerber offered excellent advice on devising ways to make businesses and employees more consistently productive.

Helms and Gerber shared the podium with a slew of expert speakers that included: Ward Peterson, who discussed personnel trends in the tree care industry; Bob Spence, who offered insights on personnel selection; Hal Slater, who presented techniques for motivating a sales force; Dave Siebold, who explored intra-company communications and employee performance appraisal techniques; and Bobbe Sommer, who delved into employer-employee communications and employee performance and training. Tapes of conference speeches are available for purchase from Tape Productions, (602) 873-4343.

### Long-time NAA Members Honored

In a separate ceremony at the conference, John Hendricksen, president of Hendricksen, The Care of Trees, and long-time NAA member Rusty Girouard...
Hendricksen received the Award of Merit from the NAA, which recognizes a person, company or institution for outstanding service to the field of commercial arboriculture. Recipients are nominated by their peers for this, the highest award bestowed by the NAA.

Hendricksen of Wheeling, Illinois, is an NAA past president, Trustee of the National Arborist Foundation, member of the ANSI Z133 Committee and chairman of ISA's Certification Board.

In presenting the award, NAA president Arthur Batson praised Hendricksen as "a man who has given of himself unselfishly, for years, to his state arborist association, the National Arborist Association and the International Society of Arboriculture. He has always been willing to serve, share information and search for ways to improve every aspect of this industry, from employee safety to financial management."

Rusty Girouard received the President's Award, a recognition of her years of dedicated service to the Association. Girouard has for many years been the chair and very active leader of the NAA's Business Development Committee. She also serves as a Foundation Trustee.
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1989 Ford F800; Diesel 6 Cylinder; 24,000 Miles; 52' Reach All Bucket. $39,500

1988 Ford C/O 8000; 3208 CAT 4x4; 5 Spd; 256 Miles; $24,500

1988 Ford LNT 8800; 3208 CAT 13 Spd; 17 Ton National Crane Model 875 & JIB; 35+50 12' Hook Height. $29,500

1986 Ford $22,500
C/O 8,000; 3208 CAT; 5 Spd; 28,500 C.I.D., Miles; Chassis & Cat. With 2 Spd; 7.5 Ton RO Crane 44' Hook Height. $29,500

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1981 International S1850; DT466; 5 Spd; With 6 Ton R.O. Crane, 36' Hook Height. $12,500

1983 GMC 3208 CAT Auto; 24,500 GVW; 78K Miles; Utility Body; Diesel Air Compressor. $13,500

(2) 1981 Int. Utility Bodies; Diesel; Auto $8,900 ea.

(2) Royer Woodsman Bush Clearing Machines; 4.63 Detroit Engine. $19,500 Ea.

1989 Olafson 844 Wood & Debris Chipper; Cummins 6 Cylinder Engine; Low Miles 28' To 36' In Stock. $24,500

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New President and Board Installed

Consistent with the theme of this year's winter conference of maximizing a diverse and changing workforce, the NAA board of directors installed its first-ever woman president in its nearly 60-year history.

Susan B. Haupt, co-founder 39 years ago of the Haupt Tree Company in South Egremont, MA, began her one-year term of office on Feb. 17, during the NAA business meeting.

As NAA president, Haupt will help oversee and direct development and implementation of a variety of programs, including safety, training and business management. Haupt was first elected to the Association's board in 1990.

In her acceptance speech, Haupt focused on the great changes occurring in the tree care industry, including the growing prominence of women, the growing number of Hispanic workers, increasing computer use, and the wealth of research data now available to the professional arborist. "Women have become increasingly active in business, and Hispanics are the fastest growing group in the United States...even in my corner of western Massachusetts," noted Haupt.

Other NAA officers and directors elected for 1996: President Elect for 1997 - Richard Proudfoot, Pruett Incorporated, Lake Oswego, OR; Vice President - Paul Wolfe, II, Integrated Plant Care, Rockville, MD; Treasurer - John R. Wright, Wright Tree Service, Inc., Des Moines, IA; Directors - Peter Sortwell, Arbor Care, San Jose, CA; James C. Allard, Asplundh Tree Expert Co., Willow Grove, PA; Mark J. Tobin, Hartney/Greymont, Needham, MA; Tim Johnson, Artistic Arborist, Phoenix, AZ; Vince Newendorp, Vermeer Manufacturing Co., Pella, IA; Rusty Girouard, Madison Tree Service, Inc., Cincinnati, OH.

Non-United States Membership Category

This year's NAA Winter Management Conference produced yet another first: In response to a growing demand, the membership approved an amendment to the NAA's constitution and bylaws to accommodate tree care companies from outside the United States. Now, tree care firms from Canada, the United Kingdom and other nations can join as NAA affiliate members for a fixed fee. Previously, the constitution set all membership fees at a percentage of a company's gross income.

"The change in fees will make membership more equitable for non-U.S. tree care companies who benefit from our educational and other programs and services, but who don't benefit from the NAA's presence in Washington, DC," Felix explains.

By all accounts, the 1996 NAA Winter Management Conference was a great success. The dynamic speaker program and fun-filled social outings to Mexico and the golf course provided the perfect opportunity for learning from experienced professionals and networking with industry peers.

So, be sure to mark your calendars now for the 1997 Winter Management Conference, scheduled for Feb. 4-9, in sunny Nassau, Bahamas.

See you there!
Changing handles takes one tool and one minute.

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By the way, make it unbreakable and guarantee it forever.

That's what you told us it would take to make the perfect vineyard and orchard loppers. So we did it. And then some.

Our new line of aluminum-handled loppers cut so clean, so fast, so easy and so strong and simple to maintain, that virtually everyone who has tested them says they're the best loppers they've ever used.

The blade cuts with astonishing ease. Long, to reach into tight areas; large, to slice easily through mature vines and branches; the blade is Radial Arc™ ground and clad with a tough, slick, three-layer fluoropolymer that reduces friction to a bare minimum. This blade requires one-third less force than a conventional blade to make the same cut.

The blade is a separate component. Changing it takes one tool and one minute.

The forged hook is designed to draw the material being cut closer to the pivot. This maximizes leverage and minimizes the effort required to make a cut. The hook's curvature is shallow enough to easily slip between dense, tangled branches and support wires. Yet it is deep enough to hold the branch securely as the cut is being made. The sap groove is deep and wide for improved self-cleaning.

The square-shouldered, right-threaded pivot bolt that enables quick blade change is positioned so that the hook and blade open wide with a minimum of handle movement — in other words, with less effort. And the same coating that makes cutting so easy also self-lubricates the pivot action.

The Santoprene® bumpers, which provide a cushy rebound at the end of each cut, are located low on the tang well clear of the action. Replacing a worn bumper takes only seconds. Tools needed? Your thumb and forefinger.

Our patented new handle design has astonishing strength. The thick-walled aluminum tubing is oval — inherently stronger than round or rectangular stock. That strength is then compounded by an internal wedge of high-density, glass-filled nylon that expands as it is compressed during handle mounting. Even given severe abuse, these handles are almost impossible to break. Given proper use, they're indestructible.

The hand grips are designed for comfort and durability. They're thick, to minimize hand fatigue. They're molded of tough polyethylene and the bottom is extra thick for longer wear when used to drag brush along the ground and into a pile.

Our new aluminum handled loppers come in three models. A 21-inch version with a 1 1/2-inch cutting capacity suitable for vines and shrubs. And 26 and 32-inch models with a 2 1/2-inch cutting capacity for tree pruning.

Like all our professional tools, these loppers come with a lifetime warranty. If they break, we'll fix or replace them. Period.

We're also backing these tools with a "Fast or Free" parts warranty. If your Corona dealer is out of replacement parts, call us. We'll have them to you within 48 hours or they're yours free.

If you try these loppers, we think you'll agree that they're perfect, or close to it. So we're making you this money-back offer. Buy a pair. Prune with them for two weeks. Use 'em and abuse 'em. If you agree they're the best, buy more. If you don't, return them to us along with a note telling us what you think would make them better. We'll refund your purchase price. Fair enough?

For further information, contact your Corona dealer or call us at 1-800-234-2547.
What is marketing? Why is it important? I have asked hundreds of people for a definition of marketing, and I don't think that I have ever received the same response twice. Everyone seems to be a little confused about marketing and how it applies to his company.

My definition is this: Marketing is everything my people and I do, both at work and away from work, that causes more people to buy from our company than any other.

Everyone seems to think that marketing has to be expensive or complicated. One of the reasons that myth has persisted is that it is difficult to find a book that offers...
When you climb on our orange ropes, you’re recognized as a professional who’s serious about safety. The instant success of Braided Safety Blue High-Vee demonstrates that clearly identified climbing ropes promote safety in the tree. Now, New England Ropes introduces a high visibility version of our famous Safety Blue three-strand rope and, for those who prefer a 12-strand rope, our completely redesigned TreeLine with a new abrasion resistant finish and optional fleck pattern. New England Ropes is committed to making the best climbing ropes possible. That’s why when your safety is on the line, New England Ropes comes through with flying colors.

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small firms marketing advice.

I once asked the vice president of marketing at a large electronics firm for his definition of marketing. He took a book out of his briefcase and read part of it to me. Most of the words I didn’t understand. Then I asked, “What's your definition of a small business?”

That really stumped him. Finally, he shared his view that a small business is one that has 300 employees or fewer and does $100 million or less in business. Considering that answer, it doesn’t surprise me that I can’t go to the library or bookstore and find a book that addresses my small business.

Here are 20 low-cost marketing ideas for your company.

1.) Uniforms: They project a professional image for you and your company.

2.) Vehicle and equipment paint: It doesn’t have to be new, but it should look good and be all the same color.

3.) Letterhead and logo: Have some printed. Do not use rubber stamps.

4.) Counter tops: It could be something as simple as a piece of paper with a display easel that sits on a counter top. The great thing about this is its implied, third-party endorsement.

5.) Brochures: Have you ever visited with potential clients who are confused about how to choose a tree care company? Ever wonder why you are one of the 27 companies called for a free estimate? There is a real easy way to help them make up their minds. Create an inexpensive handout listing the key areas that you think are important for a consumer to consider in your market. You can print at the bottom, “Provided in the public interest by ...”

Stop by your town parks department and offer the handouts to the city at no charge. If they accept, print on the bottom, “Provided by the city and ...” It doesn’t cost much, and you might even get the city to help pay for the printing.

Never Stop

Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up.

It must outrun the fastest lion or it will be killed.

Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up.

It must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve.

It doesn’t matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle.

When the sun comes up, best be running.
6. Testimonials: Save letters from satisfied customers. Potential clients have a difficult time making the proper buying decision. Dump your box of testimonial letters out and ask the customer if he wants to be as happy as those people. You can’t do that if the letters are filed away in the office.

7. Thank-you letters: Every time you make a client contact, you should send a hand-written thank-you note. Every time you make a sales call and the homeowner chooses a lower bid, send him a note anyway. Whenever somebody wants to think your estimate over, send a note. Send follow-up letters to all of your existing customers, as well.

Start doing this as a matter of routine. It will set you apart from the rest of the crowd. It is so easy to go the extra mile, because no one else out there is doing it.

8. Customer files: There are 66 things that you should know about every customer. Minimum: Name, date of birth, where he went to school, wife’s name, hometown, her birthday, children’s names, ages, dogs, cats, boat, hobbies and brand of whiskey. With computers, it’s easy to keep that information.

9. Follow-up calls: You can absolutely knock the socks off a customer. Call every customer after a year and ask how his child did in his freshman year at Purdue. “And did you ever housebreak that cute puppy, Betsy?”

Business should be based on personal relationships, not low price or low bid. Nobody wins with low-bid practices. For some reason, we have business confused with athletics—low bid wins. Without a lifetime commitment to your clients and a heartfelt personal relationship, you don’t have anything. But with it, you have everything.

10. Telephone research: Call your competition’s customers. It’s better to know what they are doing to make their customers unhappy or happy than to guess. Every time you drive down a street and see the competition working on a property that you should be working on, jot down the address. Call them. Be honest. Tell them you want to know what other companies are doing right, so you can do a better job for your customers.

There is more information waiting at the other end of that phone than the most expensive, highest priced consultant could ever provide. All you have to do is call.

11. Knock next door: When you are with a potential client, ask him, “How long have those neighbors lived there? That’s a nice tree they have. Does someone take care of that?”

Folks will give you all kinds of information about their neighbors. When you are done with them, say, “Listen, I’m going next door. Would it be all right if I use your name?” If not, they will tell you. In this way, you can double the number of sales calls you make each day.

Someone once told me this method wouldn’t work, because I would be at a psychological disadvantage. He’s probably right. Some marketing expert somewhere probably figured that out. I don’t care. I’d rather be at a psychological disadvantage than a financial disadvantage, so I knock. You choose.

12. Door hangers: The one I like says, “We’ll be in your neighborhood. Call our office for a free estimate.” Have your crew do the doors around the job site for five minutes.

13. Neighborhood selling: When your crew gets to a neighborhood, the circus has arrived: Big mess, lots of noise. In—
If you’re looking for a new Stump Cutter, compare durability. Then compare cutting performance and serviceability. And after you’ve done all that, then take a look at the price tag.

There’s a difference between Carlton Stump Grinders and the competition. And that difference amounts to simply a day of down-time. A day your business can’t afford to lose. Carlton doesn’t cut corners on quality. Carlton’s heavy-duty components last longer than competitive machines. Compare Carlton’s specifications to the competition. You’ll quickly see why a Carlton is the best choice.

Don’t trust your bottom line to anyone else. If you can’t afford down-time, you can afford Carlton.

J.P. Carlton builds the highest quality Stump Cutters available.
For more information, or to arrange a demonstration call:
(800) 243-9335
vite people over to watch your expertise.

14.) Open house: Have one at your office or a city facility or park. Get your books out, display your cuts. Put those uniforms on.

15.) City park display: Many potential clients can be found at the park. Get permission from the city first, of course. Bring your wood samples and other items. Ask the city about performing a free pruning demonstration. This also creates an implied third-party endorsement from the city parks department.

16.) Tree walks: Most tree people have an amazing amount of knowledge. They know where the interesting trees are in town. Most towns would love to have a qualified arborist do tree walks for the city. The city will even organize one. Most communities have organizations that work through the community center to organize structured walks, which were originally for older people. Contact them.

17.) Pruning demonstration: Be recognized as the tree expert in your town. Share your knowledge of trees with the public. They will tell everyone.

Generate Interest in Trees

The National Arbor Day Foundation runs a historic tree nursery in Florida, which offers a great opportunity to generate publicity for an Arbor Day function.

In the Civil War Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest skirmish ever in the history of the United States, in excess of 20,000 Americans lost their lives. At the base of the bridge is a giant, beautiful sycamore. It was there during the battle. It witnessed the slaughter. And you can buy a tree out of the nursery in Florida, for about $30, that came from that tree. It doesn’t cost a lot to create some excitement in your town during Arbor Day and get your name and picture on the front page of the local newspaper.

If you involve a school, you will be absolutely dumbfounded, because the children will care. They will put on a program and make something out of it. At the last one we did at a middle school, we attracted over 800 citizens, along with the entire school population.

At the local high school, which is named after Thomas Jefferson, we planted a Jefferson Maple from a tree at Monticello. The entire high school was there, over 2,500 citizens, for us to plant a sapling. And we didn’t have to do anything to generate a crowd. The city parks department handled all the press.
The risks you face every day aren’t like those of other business owners. That’s why you need an insurance program that was specifically designed for arborists. One that covers pesticide and herbicide applications. Workers’ compensation. Property losses. Liability claims. Commercial automobile losses. And everything else you’ll find covered in this cost-effective insurance program from ITT Hartford.

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Selling Your Services

Yogi Berra once said that you can observe a lot just by watching. You can also learn a lot about customer expectations just by asking. That is what selling should be all about. Ask the client: “What do you want? What do you expect?”

If the client says, “We are getting 17 other bids,” then ask, “Why am I here?”

If you don’t, then you should at least think about the question.

Whenever people buy something, they are buying the anticipated good feelings that result from their purchase. That’s it. Period. There are no exceptions. People buy emotionally. They make intellectual decisions later. All buying decisions are emotional decisions. Maybe the good feeling is caused by nothing more than the fact that a problem will go away. Beyond solving the problem, they want to feel good. Your selling purpose should be to help people get the good feeling they want.

Hundreds of years ago, a philosopher wrote down the basic law of compensation, and it was as true then as it is today: “To get more, give more.”

It’s a wonderful paradox. If you stop trying to get what you want and start helping people get what they want, then you’ll get what you want. To get more, give more. Don’t sell me things, sell me feelings, ideas, comfort, safety, good looks, peace of mind or pride of ownership.

Almost every contact will begin with the customer being committed to rejecting your proposal. All buyers feel and act on the urge to say no, at first.

Do you know why? They don’t know you, your company or your employees. They haven’t experienced your service. It’s a whole long list of things. In the past, they have been hurt, let down, disappointed and taken advantage of—possibly
in their last purchase.

But more importantly, they are committed to saying no because it’s not their idea. We didn’t allow them to develop ownership during the sales interview. We told them what we thought. We impressed them with our technical knowledge, and we got them so confused that they acted on their basic urge to say, “I’m going to think it over, thank you.”

This is why following specific steps in a specific sales process is so important. If you don’t use a specific, defined, written-on-paper sales process every time you are on a sales call, then you should develop one.

Typically, we are not in charge on a sales call. We are subservient, and we react to the client. We don’t have a plan, so we don’t really know where we are. We do the best job we can and hope that the client is going to like us and someday call. You need a plan. If you have a plan, you can begin to be in control.

The very first thing in your sales program should be a defined prospecting plan; you should actively be looking for new customers all the time. It could be something as simple as making sure that every time you make a purchase, you give that person your card, including the clerk at the gas station or supermarket. Start doing it every time.

Say you meet someone at a function. He agrees to talk to you, and gives you his card. The next day when you call you have to get past three secretaries to speak to him. You need a planned approach. Work one out before you call.

Building credibility and filling needs are where you need to spend about half of your time—not out under the tree. You are an expert who can look at a tree and pretty quickly figure out what that tree needs and how those needs coincide with the client’s desires and expectations.

Have a credibility statement memorized that sounds something like this: “I want to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today and discuss your tree care needs. Before we get started, I’d like to take just a minute and share with you some information about our company that I know you will find important. As you are probably aware, our company has been providing tree care in this very neighborhood for over 60 years. Now, what that means to you is that you can be confident that we are going to be here in the future to continue to provide for the care of your trees. Doesn’t that sound like the kind of company you would like caring for your trees, sir?

“Our company provides only the highest quality tree care. In fact, we are so confident in our people and in the quality of the service they provide that we give the only written, no-hassle guarantee in the market. Sir, if you’re not happy, you don’t pay. That’s easy to understand, isn’t it. And what that means to you is that you can be certain you are going to get exactly what you want and expect. Isn’t it nice to know that you can choose a tree care company that still adheres to old-fashioned values?

“It’s also important to me that you know that I will be personally responsible for all the work we do on your property. I am personally responsible for your satisfaction.”

Under these circumstances, the customer is taking no risk. Why do we have to stumble around the tree and try to impress him with our knowledge?

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look at the tree. We also have clients who do all sorts of crazy things. Some will drag the neighbor over and sign their neighbor up—before we have even done any work at their house.

Once you have gotten past the initial presentation and you are walking out to look at the tree, let the customer feel in control by setting a time limit. Ask the customer, “How much time do we have? At the end of our time, what is it you expect to have from me?”

Get that on the table. Price is never the primary concern with my company’s customers. Unfortunately, it always seems to be a big concern with us. If that is the case, you should bring it up at the beginning. Your conversation could go something like this: “How did you find out about our business? The Yellow Pages? What do you know about our company? We have been here for 60 years. You never heard that we are the most expensive? Well, we are.”

Often, business comes via a reference from a friend. Ask, “Did this friend tell you we’re the most expensive?”

Put this issue on the table right at the beginning. Wouldn’t you want to know, when you only have five minutes invested, whether or not this client is simply looking for the lowest price?

I want to know up front. I will also guarantee that if you put it on the table early, it will be less of an issue later. Nobody likes cheap. Everyone wants quality with good value.

If you want the image of high quality, should you advertise low price? Of course not. Ask a potential client, “How much do you have budgeted for this? Confidentially, off the record.”

If he names a low figure, respond, “It’s not real important to you, huh?”

Most of our problems are right between our ears. They are not with our clients, they are with us. If you remember the basic law of compensation—if you want to get more, give more—if you follow a specific sales process and if you understand that all sales decisions are emotional decisions, not intellectual decisions, you are on your way to greater sales and success.

Richard Proudfoot, president-elect of the NAA, is president of Pruett, Inc., of Lake Oswego, Oregon.

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Do You Have All the Tools You Need?

By spring, your business should have all the equipment and tools necessary to handle the seasonal rush of work. Unfortunately, some firms lack the most important tool—a friendly, workable Profit & Loss Statement organized so you can spot specific trends, both good and bad.

If your P&L Statement format does not arrange the costs of doing business in related groups logical for a service business, then it isn't an effective management tool. If your statement starts off with Sales and the item below is Cost of Goods Sold, immediately rush it to the nearest wastebasket. We are not in the retail business selling shoes and frying pans. We are in the service business selling hours of labor and equipment. Even in plant health care, materials make up a minor percentage of the cost of doing business.

A specific accounting ledger designed for your business is probably the most important management tool you will ever have. An effective Profit & Loss Statement is really four inter-related sections: Income (Sales); Direct Expense (Variable Production Costs); Sales & Administrative Expense (Fixed Overhead); and Profit.

Think of each section as falling under a specific area of responsibility within your company. The sales person is concerned with bringing money into the business. Those involved in getting the work done are concerned with the second section. Management is responsible for the third and, of course, all other sections. Everyone should be concerned with profits.

Doesn't it make sense to collect the various costs involved in a service business in a logical grouping? Why have "Equipment Repair" expenses listed just below the "Office Maintenance" category? Group costs in a logical sequence of function and responsibility.

For example, in the first section under Income create separate categories for tree care, removal, fertilizing, pest management, landscaping and other regular revenue generators.

Section two, Direct Expenses, might have separate line items for production payroll, payroll taxes, workers' compensation insurance, health and life insurance, equipment depreciation, insurance and license, equipment maintenance, equipment fuel and oil, general liability insurance, materials and supplies and other regular operating expenses.

Section three, Sales and Administrative Expenses, also called fixed overhead, should include administration and sales payroll, payroll taxes and insurance, health insurance, telephone, advertising, professional dues and subscriptions, building rent or depreciation, building maintenance, meetings and training, office expenses, office equipment depreciation, professional fees, interest, and other regular sales and administrative expenses.

Once the cost categories are arranged logically, they can be expanded as needed. For example, an item such as advertising may be broken down into subsections that chart costs for newspapers, handouts, direct mail and Yellow Pages.

By listing costs in terms of dollars and then those dollars as a percentage of sales, historic averages can be accumulated and used as a reference. In the middle of the busy season, if monthly profits are down in both dollars and as a percentage of sales, it won't take long to scan your lists of costs and percentages to see what is out of kilter with past averages or plans.

We all start out with money coming in from customers. But to run a profitable company, we must understand where and why it disappears on its way to the bottom line. In the income section, profits are determined by our pricing and, more importantly, our time estimates. The production staff has considerable influence and responsibility over these direct costs.

Using the Balance Sheet

An hourly sales or billing rate for a service business can be developed by taking all costs and dividing by a yearly total of regular, 40-hours-per-week billing hours. While the actual accounting isn't quite this simple, since some jobs will cost more in terms of wear and tear on equipment and other factors, this method is a good place to start. After a desired profit is added, a per hour billing rate is created.

Once you understand how and where money flows through your company, it becomes easier to determine whether you are pricing jobs appropriately, and where you need to focus your attention to increase sales or cut costs.

For example, do you lose profits if you pay overtime? Are you giving up profits if you encourage everyone to work as many over-
time hours as possible? The answer can be determined by utilizing your new profit and loss format.

Normally, the price you charge per hour cannot be adjusted once a job begins. When you arrive at a price for a job, there is no telling if it will be worked on straight time or at overtime rates, so the income section of your balance sheet is of little help in deciding whether overtime cancels profits.

In the direct expenses section, costs will rise with overtime, which means extra half-time pay plus higher payroll taxes and workers' compensation insurance based on the higher wage rate. Other costs in this section are variable and will rise as well. The exceptions are equipment depreciation and health insurance. These two items have been funded in the first 40 billable hours of the week and do not carry over into an overtime situation.

Even with no increase in the equipment depreciation and health insurance costs, the remaining variable expenses for overtime work will be greater than the straight 40-hour cost total. So, how can we pay overtime and still make a profit?

The answer lies in the Sales and Administration costs. In reviewing the fixed costs section, it is obvious that very few of these will increase as a result of paying overtime wages in a billable situation.

Almost every one of the costs in this section has been funded in the first 40 hours of billing. If an employee is in billable production work and has already worked 40 billable hours, your profits can actually increase by as much as 80% on the overtime hours billed. After all, when you arrived at your estimate for a job, you factored in costs such as sales, advertising and rent. Those costs have already been paid for before the higher wage expenses kicked in.

An organized Profit & Loss Statement is a wonderful tool that helps take the guesswork and some of the worry out of running a business. If yours isn’t serving that purpose, it is well past time to create a new one.

Mr. Eckel is a management consultant to the green industry. He draws on over 25 years of experience, and was formerly executive vice president of Davey Tree Expert Company.

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How Trees Grow
By Dr. William Chaney

In the early 1900s, a German plant physiologist named Kiebs proposed a concept that is still very appropriate today. He was the first to note that the only way environmental factors and heredity can affect organism growth is by affecting its internal physiological processes. A tree’s physiological processes constitute the mechanism by which genes and environmental factors operate to control growth. Whatever you do with a tree—whether you are selecting a superior individual, planting, fertilizing, watering or pruning—you are ultimately dealing with that tree’s physiological processes.

For arborists to understand why any condition or treatment affects trees, they must know how this factor or treatment affects physiological processes. Arborists can use this kind of knowledge as a basis for developing better methods for growing and maintaining trees.

Cells
The basic structural unit of trees is a cell, millions of which connect and coordinate into a harmonious whole. Mature cells perform various functions, but are very similar when they are first formed, when they all have the capacity to become a whole tree. Each has a nucleus that contains all the genetic information needed to produce a specific tree.

Cells have several organelles in addition to a nucleus. The chloroplasts, the site for photosynthesis, are green because they contain the pigment chlorophyll, which can convert the sun’s radiant energy into chemical energy in the form of glucose. This sugar is the basic food and building material for new cells and trees.

Another cell organelle—the mitochondria—uses sugar from the chloroplasts and releases the captured solar energy in a form useful to cells. The chloroplasts and mitochondria work in concert—one captures the energy and the other releases it to cells.

A less familiar cell organelle is the dictyosome. Like any organism, trees must dispose of waste products resulting from cell metabolism. The dictyosomes accumulate tannins, phenols and other toxic substances in spherical membrane-bound structures called vesicles. These are pinched off from the edges of the dictyosomes, migrate to the outer cell membrane, attach themselves to that membrane and belch the material into dead cell walls. This is important to the tree because individual cells are protected from those toxic compounds, which impart disease and insect resistance to the tree as a whole. Some of these waste products are dumped into a central envelope inside cells called the vacuole, which contains the cell sap. Here they are isolated from the cell’s living contents. The vacuole also keeps cells fully expanded, a condition necessary for peak performance of all the organelles. Leaves on a tree wilt when water in the cell sap is lost. This allows living cytoplasm inside the cell to collapse and fold, slowing down or even stopping organelles from functioning. Hence, the vacuole is a very important part of a cell, although its contents are nonliving.

We can begin the fascinating story of tree growth with flowering. All trees have flowers, although many aren’t very showy. Their purpose is to be pollinated and fertilized and to develop into seed-bearing fruits or cones.

The Seed
Seeds contain an aggregation of cells in an embryo that reflects all the parts of a mature tree. But each cell has all the organelles described above and the genetic capacity to become a whole tree. Some parts of the tree are already recognizable under a microscope. These include cotyledons, the first leaves, where sugars and starch to fuel the growth of the new tree are stored, and the apical meristems, the growing points for the shoot and root that emerge upon germination. Incredibly, all the cells are derived from the single cell that resulted from fertilization. As the embryo develops and becomes a tree, many cells differentiate and specialize to form leaves, roots and other organs.
Hazard Minimization

By Steve Hanson

Safety has now moved to the forefront of every industry in the United States. It has always been a part of our daily lives, but now our success or failure is measured by not only how well a job has been done, but if it was completed safely. Finding the best solution to a known safety hazard is a key part of any safety program.

Often the first response to a hazard is a bandage approach to the symptoms without ever fully evaluating the risks. There is a three stage hierarchy to protecting the worker that includes: eliminating the hazard; preventing the worker from being exposed to the hazard; and protecting the worker from injury. If an employee is at risk of falling and is placed in a body belt and lanyard (third stage) when engineered controls could have been used to do the same job from the ground (first stage), then we may have put that employee at higher risk unnecessarily. Recommendations should always be made in progression from elimination, to prevention, to protection, until safety needs are satisfied.

The first choice to hazard minimization is always elimination. This is done in different ways, either by eliminating the job or by engineering out the hazard. The most common way to eliminate hazards is to use engineered controls by removing the employee from the hazard. An example would be to use binoculars to do inspections from the ground. Any function that keeps the employees on the ground and not at risk eliminates the fall hazard.

If it is necessary to have the employee in an elevated work zone and exposed to a fall hazard, then the next alternative would be fall prevention by providing a physical barrier. A bucket truck with a restraint device that prevents the employee from exiting the bucket is one example.

If the hazard cannot be eliminated or prevented, then the employees must be protected by use of personal protective gear. Fall protection systems like harness, lanyards, and rope systems are very effective. Consult with professionals in the tree care industry and fall protection manufactures to select the right equipment. Do not rely on only history to make your decision, regulatory laws change and so do safety practices.

Fall hazards will always exist in the tree care industry. It is our job to minimize the risk by eliminating, preventing, and protecting the workers.
produce enough leaf area with chloroplasts to support itself through photosynthesis, it uses food stored in the seed.

The fascinating growth processes that result in the leaves, stems, wood, bark, roots and other tree tissues are controlled by hormones.

Hormones

There are several kinds of naturally occurring hormones—auxins, gibberellins, cytokinins, ethylene, and some inhibitors. Each has its special functions.

In the 1930s, auxin was discovered. Being the only known hormone, plant physiologists attributed to it the control of almost all growth processes. As other compounds were discovered, they realized that gibberellin controls cell enlargement, cytokinins influence cell division and specialization, and ethylene affects the degeneration of cells and plant response to wounding. Also, natural inhibitors interact with all of these growth promoters.

A hormone is a chemical messenger that in very low concentrations regulates the physiological processes dictated in the genes and influenced by environmental factors. Anything an arborist does to a tree influences the production and balance of hormones. When a tree is pruned, for example, the balance of hormones is altered enough to cause a dormant bud to grow, or perhaps a whole new bud to appear. Roots, buds and stems respond differently to a range of concentrations. Extremely low concentrations of auxins promote root growth and do not affect stems. At slightly higher concentration, auxins become an inhibitor of roots, but promote stem activity.

Balance and concentration determine if auxins promote or inhibit growth. Vegetation managers employ this dichotomy in controlling plant growth. Some of the most potent herbicides, such as 2,4-D, are synthetic auxin compounds. Many of the chemicals used to influence tree growth are really hormones that promote or inhibit physiological processes, based on their concentration.

Cells are totipotent, meaning that every living cell in a tree can potentially become any tissue in that tree.

This is the basis for tissue culture in which new plants are produced from a few cells taken from a parent. It won't be too long before we know enough about hormonal balance to make tree tissue culture more common.

The Root System

The root system develops from the embryonic root within the seed. As cells in the apical meristem of the root divide and elongate, they push the root tip into the soil. Roots lengthen in this manner. The rootcap, whose cells are constantly being sloughed off, protects the tender cells in the apical meristem and lubricates the root as it is rammed into the soil. Expanded root cells differentiate to carry out functions of uptake and transport of water and nutrients to above ground parts of the tree.

Lateral roots do not grow from a bud like lateral shoots. They grow from internal root tissue. Some internal root cells, in response to the right balance and mixture of hormones, produce a new root meristem. These cells divide and elongate and are forced between and around cells in the root, rupturing root tissue and emerging as a lateral root. This creates a pathway for easy movement from the soil into roots that avoids entering living cells. If fertilizers or any other chemicals are applied in close contact with branched roots, or even at the base of a tree, uptake will occur. Fine feeder roots are not essential to have uptake. However, water and nutrients move through soil very slowly and for only short distances. Anything near a stationary root is quickly depleted from the soil around the root. Hence, to be healthy, a tree must have existing and new roots growing in length to explore the soil for water and nutrients.

Tree roots are not very deep. Basic tree biology education should convey that most of the root system is quite shallow and can extend far from a tree, even far beyond the dripline. Much of this is genetically controlled, but the principal reason for shallow rooting, especially in urban areas, is the very stressful environment, particularly poor soil conditions. Low oxygen content and soil compaction predispose trees to many other problems.
To survive, roots need 3 percent oxygen in the soil. If they are to grow, existing apical meristems require 5-10 percent oxygen. And, for new roots to form, soil oxygen content must be at least 12 percent. Our atmosphere is about 21 percent oxygen. In an undisturbed loam soil six inches below the surface, the percent oxygen is only slightly less than that in the air. A compacted loam will have about 5 percent oxygen 15 inches deep into the soil. Tree roots would survive at this depth, but new roots would be stressed. A clay loam soil at three feet has an insufficient oxygen level to support new root growth. In a sandy soil, even at five feet, the oxygen content is about 15 percent, where roots can survive and grow.

The Shoot System

The first shoot of a tree emerges from the seed as the cells of the embryo expand during germination. At its tip, and at the tip of every lateral shoot that develops, is an apical meristem where increases in length and height occur. Growth is similar to that in the root only in that cells divide and elongate. Noth-
The organization of the apical meristem in shoots is more complex than that of the roots because buds are produced from which lateral branches, leaves and flowers form.

As the cells derived from the apical meristem of shoots differentiate to form the various tissues of the shoot system, some specialize to form two lateral meristems: the vascular cambium and the cork cambium. These account, respectively, for increase in girth and bark production. The vascular cambium is located between the water-conducting xylem tissue to the inside and the food-conducting phloem tissue to the outside. The vascular cambium is the origin of new cells that become xylem and phloem tissue.

The other secondary meristem, the cork cambium, found just outside the functional phloem, also produces two kinds of cells. These constitute the bark, which protects and insulates the succulent tissues beneath.

**The Xylem**

The water-conducting xylem tissue, or wood, consists of only four kinds of cells. But there can be great size and shape differences among these cells as well as differences in their arrangement and proportion. In fact, these characteristics are so singular that a wood anatomist can identify trees just by inspecting the wood.

The most primitive type of xylem cell is a tracheid, a narrow tapered cell, usually about 1 mm long, with pits in the sidewalls and closed on both ends. The cells are arranged vertically in the xylem and joined by pit pairs. Water, with its dissolved contents, moves upward in the cells for a short distance before it must move through the pit pairs into an adjacent tracheid. Upward conduction follows a tortuous and inefficient pathway in wood dominated by tracheids.

Vessels, an evolutionary advancement for transport of water, have a much bigger diameter than tracheids and still have pits in the side wall. But, most importantly, they have large pores in the end walls. The vessels are arranged end to end in long stacks that in trees such as ashes and oaks, could extend from a root through the trunk and up to a leaf in the tree crown. They can reach 30-40 feet, creating a good system for moving water and nutrients up trees.

Fibers, usually shorter and narrower than tracheids, have very thick walls containing few pit pairs and closed ends. They don't conduct water, but instead function in the xylem to provide structural strength. When mature and functional, the tracheids, vessels and fibers are dead, hollow cells. They normally constitute the largest portion of the xylem.

The fourth type of xylem cell is the parenchyma, an undifferentiated cell that remains alive in the xylem for several years. These cells are scattered in the xylem and constitute the vascular rays, which provide a pathway for lateral movement across the xylem. Like the other parenchyma cells in the xylem, they are the storage sites for carbohydrates essential for the vitality and growth of trees. These living parenchyma cells allow the tree to respond to wounds. The callus that forms around the edges of a wound on the trunk or a pruned branch arises from the totipotent parenchyma cells in the xylem. Paren-
chyma cells at the bottom of a stem cutting begin to divide and form roots whereas those at the upper end of the cutting develop into shoots.

The xylem accumulates in annual layers, extending from the shoots in the crown into the roots to form a tapered column of wood. When viewed in cross-section, as on the surface of a cut stump, annual rings of xylem are visible because of the different ways cells develop during a growing season. Active cell division early in the growing season in apical meristems in a tree crown produces auxins that move downward along the trunk into the cambial zone. The high concentration of auxins promote the development of spring wood with large-diameter, thin-walled xylem cells. In mid-summer when growing conditions are more stressful, shoots slow down or stop growing, and the production of auxins also diminishes. Cells produced by the cambium shrink and develop thicker cell walls, forming summer wood. During the winter the cambium is dormant, but will resume growing the following year with the production of auxins from apical meristems in a tree crown. The sapwood is the physiologically active portion of the xylem, where tracheids and vessels are used for conduction of water and dissolved nutrients, and the parenchyma cells are alive and function in carbohydrate storage. The heartwood is nonfunctional and even the parenchyma cells are dead. They may have died because they were buried by accumulating layers of oxygen-limiting xylem. It is more likely that they died because the tree used these cells as a dump site for its own toxic waste—tannins and phenols. The heartwood is particularly decay-resistant because of the accumulation of these compounds, which account for its darker color too.

Water that flows through the dead, hollow xylem cells is driven by transpiration—the evaporation of water from the leaves. Continuous columns of water extend from the cells of the leaves through the xylem of the branches and trunk into the roots. The water columns are essentially pulled up the tree along a gradient of decreasing pressure. Because water movement is related to...
transpiration, environmental factors such as air temperature and relative humidity affect the rate of movement. Understanding this relationship is important in trunk injection applications of systemic pesticides and growth regulators. The weather and its effects on water movement in the xylem influence the speed and ease of injections.

The transport of water occurs through dead cells, and the path of least resistance, which, in nonporous wood is the larger-diameter spring wood tracheids.

The water conduction pathway in this type of wood is a series of concentric rings of spring wood tracheids in three to four annual layers of xylem. In porous wood, the vessels provide the principal conduit for transport because of their large diameter and open end walls.

Diffuse-porous trees conduct water in the vessels scattered throughout two to three annual layers of xylem. Ring-porous wood, in contrast, has a conduction pathway that utilizes the large-diameter vessels of the spring wood in only the current year’s xylem layer.

To get good uptake and distribution of material injected into the xylem, it is important to inject into the actively conducting portion of the xylem. For ring-porous trees, this is very shallow, since only the new xylem tissue conducts. In diffuse-porous and nonporous trees, materials can be injected deeper.

The Phloem

Although the phloem constitutes only a small portion of a tree’s tissues, its function in transporting food and hormones is exceedingly important. Phloem is derived from the vascular cambium, but the phloem does not accumulate in annual layers as does the xylem.

Five kinds of cells are found in the phloem. The specialized phloem cells are the sieve cells and sieve tube members. Sieve cells are the most primitive and the counterpart to tracheids in the xylem. Sieve cells have pits in the side and end walls that allow movement between cells. The evolutionary advanced sieve tube member characterizes the phloem of hardwood Angiosperm trees. The sieve tube member also has pits in the side walls but, more importantly, has perforation plates with large openings at the ends of the cells. Stacked end to end, they provide efficient conduits for transport. Two types of phloem cells, the fibers and parenchyma, are exactly like those in the xylem. Sclerids or stone cells are small and fiber-like.

Every year a new ring of phloem is produced. The fleshy phloem cells are located between the woody xylem and the dead outer bark. The cells of the phloem must be alive with their protoplasm intact. The phloem’s fibers and sclerids prevent the active phloem cells from being crushed. The living cells are finally destroyed and the contents reabsorbed or incorporated into the bark and shed from the tree. Thus, phloem does not accumulate like the xylem.

Movement in the phloem occurs both upward and downward to allow for distribution of food and hormones to and from sites of production, storage and utilization. Conduction in the phloem results in a positive pressure in the cells. The best evidence of this is the feeding of aphids. The aphid is a clever little insect that can delicately stick its feeding tube into a phloem cell just under the bark. The pressure in the cell
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forces more sugary solution through its body than it can digest. The resulting overflow, called honeydew, drips on sidewalks and cars beneath infested trees.

The Bark

Bark is formed from the other secondary meristem, the cork cambium. The anatomy and development of bark, basically, a protective tissue, is probably the least understood of all the tissues in trees, even though its texture and color is a prime consideration in selecting a tree for landscape planting. The variations in bark appearance are enormous and change as individual trees age. However, the characteristics of the bark are frequently so closely associated with each particular kind of tree that they can serve to identify the tree species.

At least four types of bark development have been recognized. Smooth bark trees have a single cork cambium that remains with a tree for its entire life. The cork cambium produces a layer of cork cells toward the outside each year. The other kinds of bark are variations of the same theme. Ring bark trees, such as eastern red cedar, produce a new and complete cork cambium each year, resulting in concentric rings of cork cambium and the cells derived from them. These are eventually forced outward by diameter growth, rupture, and clinging to trees as long, stringy strips. For scale bark trees such as pines, the first cork cambium does not increase in circumference rapidly enough to avoid being torn apart by increases in diameter of the xylem. Beneath each point of rupture, a new cork cambium is formed. The process is repeated thousands of times. The shape and size of each new cork cambium is reflected in the shape of the scales that cling to the bark for a few years before they are shed. The furrowed bark of trees such as ashes develops similarly to scale bark trees. The difference, however, is that the new cork cambia form in the old phloem and its fibers become incorporated into the bark. Even these tough fibers are finally forced apart by diameter growth. The deep furrows, ridges and diamond-shaped patterns of bark reflect the original orientation of the phloem fibers.

Cork cells are so impermeable to both water and gasses that they could limit oxygen from reaching the living cells beneath. However, a specialized structure, the lenticel, consists of loosely arranged cells extending across the bark to provide for gas exchange. The short, horizontal lines that often are so apparent on smooth bark species of flowering crab, for example, are lenticels. They are an essential part of all bark, just not as obvious when the bark is furrowed and rough. The next time you examine a wine bottle cork, notice the dark lines running perpendicular to the annual rings of cork. These are the lenticels that provided aeration for the cambia and other living cells.

The growth of a tree from a single cell in a fertilized flower to a coordinated accumulation of millions of cells with diverse sizes, shapes and functions is a wondrous phenomenon. Arborists should be proud to work with trees, realizing that through their care and maintenance practices they are dealing with the physiological processes of immensely complex and massive organisms.

Dr. William Chaney is professor of tree physiology at Purdue University
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According to a recent Harris poll, 46% of Americans measured success as having a family or children, not work or money. Hewitt Associates, a benefits consulting firm, reports that child-care assistance is now offered by 85% of employers, up from 64% in 1990. Record-keeping, regulatory compliance and budgeting take up an average of 22 hours per week for the average small business owner, according to MasterCard International. The Wall Street Journal's Quarterly Survey of Politics, Economics and Values always makes for interesting reading. Among the most recent findings, the Journal reports that Americans most resent in line (41%), followed by household chores (21%) and people who talk too much (17%). Some advice: The next time you are standing in line, don't annoy the people behind you by talking too much about household chores.

The 1990's trend toward perks and cash back on credit card purchases has spawned a new battle between employers and employees. Workers can pile up frequent flyer miles and discounts on cars and hotels by using personal credit cards for business-related expenses. The fight over who gets to keep the perquisite is causing headaches for businesses large and small.

The battle may end soon, however, as some card issuers are ending promotional offers. Visa dropped automatic purchase insurance on its Gold Cards this month; Citicorp recently ended free extended warranties on its Visa and MasterCard, a move Chase Manhattan is expected to follow.

Whether or not you take advantage of these kinds of benefits, interest rates and fees vary, too. Shop around for the best fees and rates, low price guarantees, discounts and other benefits. It pays.

Many businesses these days are successfully limiting their liability in lawsuits by claiming that employees who sue should pursue workers' compensation claims instead. That strategy limits compensation to lost wages and medical expenses and avoids the possibility of a large jury award. Most states prohibit workers from bringing negligence claims against employers in workers' compensation cases.

The original idea behind workers' compensation was a no-fault compromise. Employees would be guaranteed swift redress for their injuries. Employers would avoid the possibility of a jury verdict.

Most claims today are still for industrial accidents and injuries on the job. Recently, however, employers have turned to the workers' compensation system to answer lawsuits claiming the employer was negligent in cases of on-the-job assault, harassment or rape. Judges in different states have ruled differently on these lawsuits, and the issue is far from settled.

Sport-utility vehicles such as the Chevy Blazer and Jeep Grand Cherokee are popular with small business owners who appreciate their storage capacity and ruggedness. But the Institute for Highway Safety reports that these vehicles aren't as rugged as they should be in low-speed crashes.

When the Institute conducted crash tests on the most popular 1996 models, it found that the cars sustained thousands of dollars in damage after crashes at speeds as low as five miles per hour – about the pace of a rapid walk. Faring worst was the Isuzu Rodeo (also sold as the Honda Passport), which sustained $8,173 in damage after a five-mile-per-hour fender bender. Next was the Toyota 4Runner at $7,147, followed by the Land Rover Discovery ($6,555), the Jeep Grand Cherokee ($5,763), the Ford Explorer ($5,639), and the Chevy Blazer ($4,168).

In contrast, America's most popular passenger sedan, the Ford Taurus, sustained no damage at five miles per hour.
Though an avid gardener, Leroy Walblatt has a poor understanding of pruning trees.

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April 27
9am - 5pm Mid-Atlantic Climbers Jam-boree for 1996
Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia
Contact: ISA Mid-Atlantic Chapter
Contact: Jim Martin, 703-818-8228
Fax: 703-818-0616
Rain date, May 4

April 30, May 1
Urban Tree Residues: New Opportunities and Solutions
Birmingham, Alabama
Contact: ISA Research Trust,
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May 2, 3
Urban Tree Residues: New Opportunities and Solutions
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May 7-11
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Hawaiian Regent Hotel,
Honolulu, Hawaii
Western Chapter ISA
Contact: 916-641-2990

May 9-11
Texas Urban Forestry Conference
Waco Convention Center, Waco, Texas
Texas Chapter of ISA
Arborist Workshop
Contact: Texas Forest Service, 409-845-2641

May 9 & June 1
Contact: Gary Lovallo, 908-591-1113

May 17
Minnesota Society of Arboriculture Spring Workshop: “Arborist Training.”
Hennepin Technical College
Eden Prairie, MN
Contact: Tom Dunlap, 612-536-0550

May 24
The Fifth Annual Desert Horticulture Conference
The Performing Arts Center,
Pima Community College
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June 6-8
Tree City USA National Conference
Arbor Day Farm
Lied Conference Center
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June 7
Minnesota Society of Arboriculture Annual Climbers’ Jam-boree
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Congress Considers Cleaning Up Product Liability Laws

For the first time in more than two decades, product liability reform has passed Congress. Both the House- and Senate-passed versions of the legislation (H.R. 956) address such problems as the “deep pocket” theory of litigation, frivolous lawsuits and excessive punitive damage awards.

At the time of printing, a House-Senate conference committee is reconciling the differences between the two bills. The House bill applies to all civil lawsuits, while the Senate version applies only to product liability actions.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the number of federal lawsuits has tripled in the past 30 years. In addition, the liability component of the United States’ legal system is estimated to cost more than $150 billion a year. Punitive damage awards have increased 89 times in the past 20 years, and liability insurance costs for American companies are 15 to 20 times higher than in Japan or Europe. The Product Liability Fairness Act is designed to address these legal problems.

The House bill would also cap punitive damages and standardize product liability cases. Particularly important to small businesses, the bill limits punitive damages against an individual whose net worth does not exceed $500,000, or against an owner of an unincorporated business, or any partnership, corporation, association, units of local government, or organization with fewer than 25 full-time employees.

“A limit to liability needs to be passed,” a spokesperson for a brush chipper manufacturer said recently. “About $200 to $300 per (chipper) unit is a direct result of insurance,” he added.

Inadequate training of equipment users is the leading cause of accidents, but the “deep pocket” theory often applies when an accident occurs.

An amendment to the bill prior to House passage addressed rented products. For example, if a tree firm rents a perfectly sound stump grinder and an accident occurred during, the rental company cannot be sued, unless the tree firm proves that the rental company knowingly rented the stump grinder when it shouldn’t have.

The measure passed both the House and Senate several months ago. Conference committees are now addressing the issue in an attempt to iron out differences, as the Senate version is much less sweeping than the House’s. Nancy Fulco, manager of regulatory policy for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, feels that any reform legislation is a step in the right direction. Fulco predicts the likelihood of passing liability reform is very good. “The Republicans will have to go home to campaign soon, and they don’t have a lot to talk about. Passing liability reform will help their cause,” Fulco notes.

Most Americans would agree that if a manufacturer is at fault, it should be held liable for damages. But frivolous lawsuits are out of hand. The following summation appeared in the Feb. 26 edition of Newsweek. “If an American is hit on the head by a ball at the ballpark, he sues. If a Japanese person is hit on the head he says, ‘It’s my honor. It’s my fault. I shouldn’t have been standing there.’” said Japanese bar association official Koji Yanase, explaining one reason why his country has half as many lawyers as the Greater Washington, D.C. area alone.

OSHA Reform Advances

On March 5, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee approved reform legislation (S1423) entitled the “Occupational Safety and Health Reform and Reinvention Act.” The vote was 9-7, split along party lines with the Republican majority in favor.

Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) and labor committee chairwoman Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan) introduced the bill in November 1995. Kassebaum has accelerated this issue in an attempt to get it passed before her retirement this fall.

Less movement on Rep. Cass Ballenger’s (R-NC) OSHA legislation (HR 1834) has occurred in the House.

Despite Kassebaum’s enthusiasm, Vice President Gore announced that President Clinton will veto OSHA reform legislation as proposed in the House and Senate. Labor Secretary Robert Reich and OSHA administrator Joseph Dear have criticized the OSHA reform measures.

Downplaying Gore’s comments, Patrick Murphy, Rep. Ballenger’s spokesman, called the threat a “dog and pony show,” adding that it was the administration’s way of mustering political support from labor unions in an election year.

The National Arborist Association supports OSHA reform legislation, as it includes several helpful points for tree care firms. The Senate bill would allow employers to correct hazards before receiving an OSHA citation, and would require OSHA to spend at least 15 percent of its funding on education and consultation programs.

To express your opinion on S. 1423, contact your Senator at: United States Senate, Washington DC 20510.

Brian Barnard is government affairs specialist for the National Arborist Association.
Joining National Council

Drawing on 46 years of tree care experience, Ellis N. Allen of Mashpee, MA, has been appointed to represent the National Arborist Association as a member of the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA). Allen was an active NAA member for 24 years, prior to selling his tree care business and becoming a Privileged Member of the NAA.

Allen owned and operated Allen Tree Experts, Inc., in Medfield, MA, from 1950-1988, and was Medfield's tree warden for most of those years. He is a 15-year veteran of the Massachusetts Certified Arborists Board of Examiners, is a member of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), is an ISA certified arborist, and is past president of the Massachusetts Arborist Association.

"It's an honor to be asked to represent the NAA, and it sounds like an exciting challenge," says Allen. "Even in semi-retirement, I'm still very much interested and involved in tree care, and I'm an active member of the American Society of Consulting Arborists."

Changes at the Top

The American Society of Consulting Arborists has a new executive director and a new location. As of April 1, Beth Palys (pronounced "police") brings her experience and knowledge to the organization. Palys is a certified association executive with more than 12 years of award-winning green-industry association management experience.

The ASCA will be relocating its national headquarters to Washington, DC, to serve the rapidly emerging profession of consulting arboriculture, as well as administer the affairs of the Council of Tree & Landscape Appraisers. Retiring Executive Director John Duke noted the organization is "fortunate to have someone of Beth's quality to help shape its exciting future. Her proven experience, leadership skills, commitment to excellence and engaging personality will be a great fit!"

Palys will have available an expanded support staff to manage the new programs undertaken in recent years. The phone number and address of the new office were not available at press time. For information, call (303) 466-2722.

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The Arborsonic Decay Detector, available from Fujikura Europe Ltd., is an easy-to-use, battery-powered tool that reveals tree decay not apparent with external inspection. The DecayDetector eliminates unnecessary drilling and is a valuable aid in assessing hazards. Based on a device to measure decay in wooden transmission poles, the detector uses ultrasound to assess decay levels. The nature of the ultrasonic signal makes the testing independent of species or seasonal variations. It is weatherproof and easy to use and interpret. After extensive testing by arborists, the compact and lightweight device is being used successfully in the United Kingdom by public and private organizations. The detector can be used on individual trees or for large-scale surveys, and on hard or soft woods. Prospective agents or distributors may contact the British company: Phil Wade, Fujikura Europe Ltd., Brook Lane, Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 4ES, England. Phone: 011 44 1373 825582.

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9. Ten thousand ways to get back to your roots. The Cleveland Bicentennial Commission is working with Clean-Land, Ohio to plant 10,000 trees to help celebrate our 200th birthday.

8. The Arbor Day people have a thing for us. Cleveland was selected by the National Arbor Day Foundation in 1995 as a Tree City U.S.A. — the 15th year Cleveland received this national award.

7. A bumper crop of cultures. Eighty ethnic groups representing all continents and races live here. So no matter what part of the world you hail from, you'll feel right at home in Greater Cleveland, the New American City.

6. Catch fever on our newest lawn. Indians fever, that is. Our newest green space is growing in Jacobs Field, part of our famous $435 million Gateway sports and entertainment complex.

5. The Interior guy likes our exterior. U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt said our “Flats” entertainment district along the Cuyahoga River is “starting to look like Venice.”

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Much time and focus is devoted to new techniques and equipment for tree work. Occasionally, however, the old remedies can provide the best solutions to old problems. In New Hampshire in January, taking down trees is the easy part. Getting the brush and wood to the chipper can be a different matter, particularly when the snow accumulates.

Picture this typical scenario. Your client, who has a house in a wooded setting, wishes to remove several mature hemlocks to allow more sunlight into the house and garden. Typically, the nice lawn, shrubs and the septic system prevent the equipment from parking close to the trees for easy debris removal. Nothing unusual, right? After all, if the task were easy, the homeowner wouldn't need us in the first place. The normal bag of tricks for this scenario includes the use of tractors, Bobcats, plant carts, winches and "brushies" to haul the debris out. Certainly, there are many efficient ways to remove the debris, but let's not forget some of the older remedies.

As the photo illustrates, traditional horse-logging is easily adapted to backyard tree removal. This particular site at the home of John and Charlotte Goodhue in Hancock, NH, was under three feet of snow by early January. Fortunately, a midwinter thaw washed a lot away. Still, the horses turned a difficult task of dragging debris through the snow into an easy one by skidding the brush and wood right to the equipment. The snow and frozen ground protected the lawn and septic system from damage. If you're really creative in your marketing, you might be able to charge extra for the "fertilizer" you spread around.

Most of you do not have horses on staff, and neither do we. This portion of the job we subcontracted to Lou Cadorette. He has six horses, and we've used three on various jobs. They will skid individually or in teams of two. The week prior to this removal, we had Mike and Dan doing the skidding. This caused considerable confusion as the two humans giving the orders were Mike Hennas and Dan Tremblay.

On smaller jobs, Lou might bring Skip to do the skidding. Man and beast make quite a pair. Lou will point out that he's half deaf, while Skip is half blind. Neither minor deficiency is a handicap. We had a tough time keeping up with them. You can imagine the ribbing we took from Lou when the chipper wouldn't start one Monday morning after sitting over a three-day weekend in sub-zero temperatures.

" Didn't have no trouble starting my engines this morning," Lou remarked.

What do the clients think? Typically, they have a grand day watching the unusual action. We've all experienced situations where clients and passersby enjoy watching a tree climber do his work. However, the horses attract more attention than the crowds that gathered at my previous jobs. Friends, neighbors and grandchildren all stop to watch the show.

This situation does present one dilemma. What do you say to the boss when he yells, "Quit horsing around and get back to work?"

The writer is the owner of Broad Oak Tree & Shrub Care, Inc., of Milford, New Hampshire.
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How to Get Repeat Customers

Have you ever driven past a previous customer’s house to discover another tree company at work? Why weren’t you called back?

If your company doesn’t have a steadily growing list of regular customers, if people don’t call you back next year, if you seldom get referrals, it is time to recognize that you are doing something wrong. You need to examine how you conduct your business. Maybe the following suggestions will help:

• **Put energy into your estimates.** Show enthusiasm when with the customer and demonstrate your genuine desire to do his tree work. Just because you might have worked for him before, do not take his business for granted. Customers like to feel their business is important. If you’re complacent and display a don’t-give-a-dam attitude, you probably will not be called back.

  Have the patience to answer all of your customer’s questions, and be tolerant. A lot of folks know very little about trees and have no inkling what tree work entails. If you do a good job on your initial estimate, your energy may land you the job, even if your competitors have submitted lower bids!

• **Plan ahead and stay organized.** Allow for a little more time than you believe you’ll actually need in case the customer adds to the job or inclement weather slows you down. In the event of a delay, it is vital to let your customer know, even if you are only running an hour late. Most customers understand about delays, and a simple phone call conveys the impression that you care enough to keep them informed.

• **Be honest.** It is very easy to cheat people for a quick buck simply because most don’t know much about tree work. To an uneducated customer, the dead sycamore in the looms as an imposing monstrosity, hopelessly beyond his capabilities to deal with. He cannot imagine how it might be safely removed. Daunted by how difficult it would be for him, he assumes the cost of such a job will be high. You, a seasoned pro, can see at a glance that it is actually a simple knock-down that can be executed in less than half a day. It’s at this point that your integrity (or lack of it) matters. The customer fully expects to pay a costly sum. The money is yours for the taking. All you have to do is agree that it is, indeed, a very tough job.

  You can get away with this sort of underhandedness most of the time, but word spreads fast, even in large towns. Long after the check has cleared the customer will learn just how badly he was treated. You can be certain that he will never call you again, and neither will anyone who hears his story. Sooner or later, your shady business habits will catch up with you. This sort of reputation clings like a bad stench.

• **Do some free stuff!** If an elderly person needs a pile of clippings hauled off, offer to take it away free of charge. That’s right. No charge. Instead, leave a business card. Even if this person’s property offers no direct prospects of future work, he will always remember your generosity and will likely spread the word to friends and relatives.

• **Don’t nickel-and-dime your customers to death.** If you whip out your calculator every time you crank up a chain saw above and beyond your original contract, you will probably not be called back again. Once in a while, a customer might take advantage of your good nature, and not everything you do for free will translate into future profits. However, such gestures on your part will never fail to enhance your reputation. Whenever you go that extra mile, expecting nothing in return, you demonstrate with your actions that your business is truly service-oriented and not just another fly-by-night outfit looking for a quick buck. The impression you leave on those you help will be a positive and enduring one.

L. Julian is co-owner of Competitive Tree Service of San Antonio, Texas

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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The arborist places unique demands on his lines: Climbing, lifting, lowering, running through crotches, over limbs and against bark calls for lines specifically engineered for abrasion resistance, load control, excellent grip and snag resistance.

Samson has a complete line of ropes specifically designed for the professional arborist. Ropes that can take all the punishment dished out in this abrasive environment and retain that critical margin of security and control.

**DEPENDABLE BULL ROPES**

Built to take the stresses of any job, Samson's bull ropes provide the strength, load control and service life demanded by the professional arborist.

- **Stable Braid**, our 100% polyester double braid, is the ultimate bull rope for today's ratchet/friction bollard rigging systems. Available with our Samthane coating, its strength, durability and abrasion resistance are unmatched in the industry.
- **Arbor-Plex** is a high strength, yet lightweight 12-strand bull rope combining polyester and polyolefin fibers for excellent wear and snag resistance. **Pro-Master** 3-strand combo bull rope is Samson's easy to handle, lightweight, high strength polyester over polyolefin fiber bull rope. For price and performance there isn't a better bull rope available.

**ACCESSORY CORDS**

Samson cords handle everything from throwing lines to tie downs and pruner pole cord. This all nylon braided cord is available in sizes from 2mm to 8mm and a wide variety of high visibility colors.

**YOU CAN RELY ON SAMSON**

When selecting rope, ask your professional arborist supplier about Samson. With over 100 years of experience you can trust your most demanding jobs to the strongest name in rope.

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