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OUTLOOK

NAA National Day of Service

Like many other national trade associations the National Arborist Association (NAA) represents a diverse and widespread constituency. The NAA is constantly striving to develop ways to highlight the uniqueness and importance of the constituency it represents, promote its work among the consuming public and also provide a meaningful contribution to the nation in which our businesses have flourished. Equally as important is finding a program or project which provides the opportunity to engage the membership in manner that allows them to work with fellow members and feel justifiable pride in their profession.

Just such an opportunity will occur on October 17, 1998, when hundreds of NAA members will meet in the early dawn at Arlington National Cemetery to give to their nation a small measure of thanksgiving for all that America has given them. This day, designated our industry’s National Day of Service, will see tree care companies from across the country roll up their collective sleeves and together provide needed care and nurturing to many of the 14,000 trees on the sprawling grounds of this hallowed site.

What better place and time to continue a tradition of our industry, which goes back to the early years of this decade when the NAA sponsored similar events at Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty and Arlington National Cemetery. And, truth be told, what more appropriate way to begin the process of educating the American consumer on the importance and benefits of professional tree care services.

For it is hoped that this day of service concept can be expanded across the country on an annual basis to provide stewardship and environmentally responsible care to many of our national historic sites, from town halls to cemeteries, to parks and other significant landmarks. This would be a campaign which would see NAA members unite to work together on a local basis to highlight the traditions and culture in their own “backyards” in ways that will forge even closer bonds with their communities. And, in the process, this campaign will emphasize the great importance of trees to our environment and the need for their professional care.

Obviously, a program of this magnitude will require contributions of time and money if it is to succeed. So, part of our challenge, with the Arlington project and beyond, is finding the support to turn the dream into a reality. As you read this column, consider how such a national day of tree care at key historic landmarks might be of interest and benefit to your organization. Perhaps a partnership with the NAA in such an endeavor would advance your interests and those of the commercial arborist industry ... and, in the process, provide needed tree care to so many of our important landmarks which call attention to our history and accomplishments.

If so, please pick up the phone at call me at 800-733-2622. I’d love to talk to you about it.

Barry Cullen
Executive Director
National Arborist Association

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Dr. Shigo presents a new way to look at an old subject. Everyone is a chemist, even you! Learn to understand and appreciate the chemistry of nature, and why you should, without going back to school.

On the Cover

Wetwood in the heartwood of a *Eucalyptus sp.* Wetwood, water-logged soils and beans all have something in common—methane gas.

Photo courtesy Dr. Alex L. Shigo
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Tree Chemistry for Fun & Profit

By Dr. Alex L. Shigo

Introduction

The word “chemistry” sends chills down the spines of most people. Arborists say, “How dare he talk about that word. I got into the tree business so I could get out of chemistry class.”

I want to examine chemistry in several ways—not only the chemistry involved in water, food and fertilizer ... but chemistry in a different sense. You have heard about the chemistry of love or business, which refers to the makeup of a business or relationship. The makeup is what chemistry is all about.

Let me start with a definition: Chemistry is all about arrangements and rearrangements of matter and the changes in properties of products. The problem we have had with this subject is in the way chemistry has been presented. There is no such thing as a complex understanding. What we need is to find simple ways to give simple meaning to complex subjects.

I will try to convince you not to be afraid of chemistry. If I change the words, you’ll see that you use chemistry every day—every time you have a drink of water, you are drinking chemicals; every time you eat, you are eating chemicals. We have to remind people of that, because we will be in trouble as a profession if we do not start using chemistry.
you know, but how many things you know that are correct. You can start your chain saw, but if you don’t know which limb to cut you won’t accomplish much that is positive.

I believe very strongly in the power of words. The way you can suddenly become a bigger, more powerful, more profitable, more fun-loving person is to define yourself. If you can’t define who you are, that might be your first problem. And if you can’t do it in 25 words or less, you may have a serious problem. Otherwise, you may get up in the morning and start, but you aren’t going in the right direction.

I was on a plane recently and read an essay by the CEO of an airline about fertilizers as pollutants. The CEO wrote about how our oceans and drinking water are starting to reach the limits of their capacity. He outlined some of the potential targets ... He was getting awfully close to us.

Let me give you another reason why I get frightened at where we are headed. As part of a high school science project, a student decided to show how little people understand about chemistry. He got a petition signed by hundreds of people to outlaw di-hydrogen oxide. He described how di-hydrogen oxide has killed people: how people have been burned by di-hydrogen oxide: how cars have been known to slide off the road and people have been killed all because of di-hydrogen oxide. People signed the petition, figuring that anything that could be so bad that it could kill people should even though it may have hurt them. I hope I will not irritate you with this discussion, but if I do, it will be because I am pushing you to learn more about trees. If you are to be an engineer, you must learn about mathematics and rules; if you are to be a doctor, you must know the heart, the body; if you are to be a mechanic, you must understand motors. I believe if you are to be an arborist, you must understand trees.

Curiosity is another fine stimulator. The NAA has wonderful reading materials. ISA has wonderful journals. Are you using them? Are you reading? We all know that exercising is good for the body—thinking, through reading, is exercise of the mind. I don’t mean you have to read every word, but you should at least flip the pages and know what’s hot. One of the greatest fears I have is that something wonderful has happened and I don’t know about it.

Motivators and stimulators

I have found that there are three motivators in life—faith, fear and fun. Faith motivates because we think something good will happen through our efforts. Fear motivates because we are afraid something bad will happen if we don’t act. As for fun, we say, “Oh the heck with it all, let’s go fishing or hunting ... Let’s have some fun.”

There are also three major stimulators in life—pleasure, pain and curiosity. The reason I want to talk about the “S” word and the “M” word is because we get these words confused. The best I can hope to do is stimulate someone ... I cannot motivate anyone, however.

How can I stimulate you so that you will be motivated to pursue a greater understanding of chemistry? As I noted above, there are three possible ways I can stimulate you:

I can stimulate you through pleasure. I can tell you lots of nice things that will make you feel good.

I can irritate you and cause pain. Sometimes, pain is not a bad stimulator, because people repeat what you said

Photos courtesy Dr. Alex Shigo

Mite galls on a birch leaf. Many insects "inject" chemicals into living cells and the cells alter their chemistry in ways that benefit the insects.

Good things come in threes

There are three important parts of your life. (You will notice how many things come in threes.)

1) Get something started;
2) Keep it running once it’s started;
3) Do something productive once it’s started and running.

For instance, if you start something but are headed in the wrong direction, you will have serious problems. It’s not a matter of how fast you are going, but whether you are going in the right direction. It’s not a matter of how many things
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Some people have said that I am against fertilizer. I’m against pruning, too, when it’s done incorrectly. I’m against watering, when a tree is over-watered, but I’m not against di-hydrogen oxide being used correctly. No treatment or product is failsafe. You can’t go out and buy the very best hammers and screwdrivers and automatically make a nice house.

It’s important to know about the products we use and employ them expertly. We’d better start fighting back against ignorance. One way to do that is to let people know that we understand a little bit about chemicals, and that we understand what fertilizers are and how to use them correctly, because I believe in the use of fertilizers.

Fight back with knowledge

There are only six actors (C,H,O,N,P,S.) that make up 98 percent or more (by weight) of your body and of trees. I don’t think it’s asking too much for arborists to know just a little bit about those six. They can kill you, they can make you happy, they can give you lots of fun, and lots of profit, or they can make your life very miserable. There are only a few combinations of these we need to know.

We need to know what makes us run. Is it so difficult or irritating to know C₆H₁₂O₆?

We need to understand our fuel, our glucose. One test I often give in my talks is to ask participants to name 30 general similarities between people and trees. Then, show me (or tell me) how those 30 similarities are different in their specifics. Start with glucose. Both trees and people use glucose as fuel. What’s the specific difference? Trees make it, we get it ready made.

Let me give you another example. You are made up of bags of chemicals, and trees are made up of bags of chemicals. The difference is, our bags are in fatty little boundaries. Tree boundaries are made up of carbohydrates, mostly. People are primarily protein, whereas trees are primarily carbohydrates.

There is a long list of these similarities and differences. One of my favorites...
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is that when any living organism has its survival threatened, it will do something to continue to live. You do something when your survival is threatened, and a tree does something when its survival is threatened.

When threatened, a tree responds in many ways—and it responds the same way you must respond, both as an organism and as a business person.

When your business is threatened, you need some ready cash. You can tap into some of your profits you have kept in reserve. It's the same with your body, which stores reserve energy and it's the same for a tree.

The tree converts its profits into starch. The reserve energy for the tree is in the form of starch most of the time, and when the tree’s profit begins to go down, bankruptcy comes in. The chemistry of the tree is no different than the chemistry of your business. The chemistry of business is called cash flow, and the chemistry of the tree is called energy flow. In your business, you call it money. In the chemistry tree business, we call it ATP.

In general, you better have some fuel when your survival is threatened. Those are the similarities. What about the specific differences?

Your chemistry is such that you have mobile units that will go to the injury. The way a tree responds is altogether different from the way an animal responds. A tree begins to form boundaries by walling off the injury. People are constantly dying and replacing the dying parts to stay alive. Trees can’t do that, but trees have a better system. A tree is not a regenerating organism, it is a constantly generating system.

If you are in business, you’d better understand money. ATP is a universal currency in nature. Why do you require phosphorous? Because phosphorus in ATP is the major “money mover” in all living things. I’m not saying you have to understand the detailed chemistry of all this, but all arborists need to be aware, at least, of what ATP and glucose are and what they do.

If someone calls and asks what is happening to a tree, you can tell him or her if you know chemistry. You can turn a customer into a client. People come to you as customers, they should leave as clients. Customers come and go, clients come and stay.

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I have looked through hundreds of chemistry textbooks and I am convinced that I know why you ran (and I ran, too) from chemistry. I made fair grades in chemistry because I could memorize easily. Memorizing does not equal understanding, however. It was not until I started to write and talk about chemistry that I realized how little I really understood. Let's not be afraid of chemistry ... Let's give chemistry a chance ... It can be fun.

The father of synthetic fertilizer

Anyone who fertilizes should know this little story. I am going to leave it up to you to decide whether it has a happy or unhappy ending.

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Natural composting "machines" at work. Many soil organisms, such as these small worms, break down leaves and wood to release a long list of chemicals essential for healthy growth in trees.

ist named Fritz Haber. He came up with a way to take nitrogen from the air and combine it with hydrogen at very high temperatures with a catalyst. In this way, he was able to synthesize ammonia. Once he was able to synthesize ammonia, they were able to make urea. Once they were able to make urea, they were off to the races, because urea is very high in nitrogen. Until this day, the Haber process is still the major process for making all your nitrogen-yielding fertilizers.

Was Haber a good man, or a bad man? To this day, our agricultural system has benefitted because of his research work. Hundreds of millions of people are living because of his wonderful work.

However, it wasn’t long before he had a second project on his desk—find a faster way to kill the other side. He came up with poison gas, and tens of thousands of people were killed because of his invention. The day it was first used, his wife committed suicide, because she could not bear the thought that her husband was going to be responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of young people. And he was.

After the war, he was declared a war criminal. A year later, he received the Nobel Prize for chemistry because of his work with ammonia. Was he a villain or one of the grandest people who helps you make profit? Every time an arborist earns a dollar with fertilizer, you owe something to Fritz Haber, because he was the one that was responsible for you getting the N in your NPK. Now, was he a bad guy or a good guy?

Bond with chemistry
You will see tens of thousands of com-
Anyone who has not touched the inside of a tree should not be allowed to talk about trees.

Nitrogen exists in the air with triple bonds. ("Oh no," you're thinking. "Why does he have to start talking about bonds?") All bonding means is that nitrogen is held in the air by two "magnets" that are 300 pounds each. In other words, if you hold them, you can pick up a 300-pound block of steel. Now, people and trees are held together by "magnets" that will pick up two pounds. Why is this important? Well, if we were held together by 300 pound "magnets," we wouldn't fall apart. (The force is really not a magnetic one, but electrostatic attraction. I use "magnets" here just to make a simple point.)

Fertilizers, on the other hand, are soluble salts that are essential for life. They are held together with weak "magnets." Without delving too deeply into bonding theory, all you need to know is that life is made up of a whole bunch of stuff held together by "magnets." Some of them are weak, some strong.

Most of the water and all of the fuel that will open up the buds next year is already bound in the trees. The water that is in the tree right now is not free water, it's bound water. It is attached to cellulose, of course, but it is there. Take a chunk of wood and try to squeeze the water out of it. You can run a D5 tractor over it and you won't run any water out. And yet, that piece of wood may be one-half water by weight. The water is bound to the cellulose.

Similarly, a tree has all of its glucose there for next year, but the glucose has been slightly altered so that it is not soluble in water. We call it starch. So, at the base of the bud, you have all the starch and all the glucose.

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Cover Story

Be a leader

In your area, be a leader in introducing and talking about the chemistry of trees. Don’t be afraid of chemistry. We have to bring this word into our vocabulary... We have to start learning... We have to have some fun with chemistry.

What is a leader? My definition, which you don’t have to accept, is this: “A leader is a person (or an animal) with a mission that is so important to them that they persevere in spite of constant attacks.” Most leaders get beaten up and most leaders are often wrong, but they persevere. Show me a person who bleeds and stops the first time he gets hurt, and I’ll show you a loser.

There’s nothing wrong with making an honest profit while you are having fun with chemistry. Isn’t that what our business is all about? The day it’s no longer fun is the time to find something else. I refuse to go through the biggest part of my life without having some fun.

Remember, however, no one can learn for you. Nobody can really teach you to learn. You have to learn for yourself. I don’t know how anyone can motivate you. I hope that I may be able to stimulate you, however, through pleasure, pain or curiosity.

What is a tree? What is a symplast? How does water really move up the tree? Why do we have certain declines? Why does this insect or fungus know a tree is very low in it’s defense system? Be curious about the answers to these questions.

I have a definition for education: It is a race toward higher degrees of ignorance. Keep learning more and more until you reach a point where you do not know. If you pursue any natural science question, it will come eventually to the answer, “I don’t know.” But the pursuit is the fun part. Just as is hunting, the real fun is (or should be) the pursuit.

Someone once said, “Anyone who has not touched the inside of a tree should not be allowed to talk about trees.” Boy, wouldn’t I like to have that as a rule. Would you go to a doctor for a kidney operation if he had never touched one? Would you be first?

If we don’t understand chemistry, I believe bad things will happen to our profession. Whether it be in the form of more regulations, laws or strings on everything we touch, it will happen. The message I am trying to communicate is that there is a whole new and wonderful layer coming to arboriculture, and this other layer is asking different questions. They are going to demand some different answers. There is faith, there is fear and there is fun. Let’s not be afraid of chemistry, and make more honest money, and have lots of fun!

This article was excerpted and adapted from the keynote address at TCI EXPO ’97. Dr. Alex Shigo is the owner of Shigo & Trees, Associates in Durham, N.H. TCI

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What Are the Cost of Cure Forms?

The Field Form Report for Cost of Cure is an important tool for use when appraising the loss of plants and other damage to a large area. These forms may be used as a whole or only for specific sections that might apply to the loss. The forms have had several revisions as time has progressed to make them more user friendly.

On the first page is a section for information regarding the address of the site and owner, as well as the inspection date and other information covering the visit.

Next is a section to summarize the contents of the inner pages of the form. By having all of this information on the first page, it is very readable for anyone to garner all of the information necessary. The following pages have space for the breakdown of how all of the information was obtained.

On the second page is space to allow for a sketch of the site. There is a line or two for a brief explanation of what the sketch is about. It is assumed that you will probably take photographs, so at the bottom of page two are lines to list the specific locations of these photographs.

On page three is a section for Debris Removal and Hardscape Restoration Cost. This page is useful if more than plants have been damaged, such as hardscape (stone-walls, walks or driveways). If the form is only for plants, it is useful for listing the costs to remove debris from damaged plants and restore the area. It contains blanks to list the source of estimates for these repairs, and, at the bottom, a blank to list the total for all costs for this section.

On pages four and five, the centerfold, is the section for Plant Replacement Cost. These pages have an area to determine plot size dimensions for off-site locations when an area has been damaged to such an extent that most vegetation has been removed. These are used to compare surrounding untouched areas to the damaged area. Examples are given to help the appraiser through the process. There is a list to fill out for damaged plants in the area and how to estimate their installed cost (as well as future maintenance costs) and to compound these figures. Again, there are examples to assist the appraiser through the process.

On pages six and seven are suggestions and forms for preparing Plant Restoration and Establishment Cost. All these sections may be used if applicable. They cover Pre-planting, Plant Removal to Re-establish Species, Pruning to Improve Restoration of Damaged Plants, Clear Cut to Regenerate Lost Plants and other means of reforestation.

On pages eight and nine is a summary for Plant Restoration Establishment Categories. A table of interest rates helps with compounding the cost of plants or operations to parity.

Since the cover of this publication is in the form of a file folder, it fits conveniently in your file cabinet. These forms may be obtained either from the American Society of Consulting Arborists or the International Society of Arboriculture.

Ellis Allen is CTLA representative for the National Arborist Association.
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Recruiting and Interviewing
Strategies to Land the
Best Employees

By Susan A. Friedmann

You are reading this article hoping for a panacea, a quick fix, a way to do everything right when interviewing and hiring new employees. I hate to disappoint you, but there is no foolproof way. You can, however, make sure you hire the best possible person. How?

Always remember past behavior predicts performance. The best single way to judge performance is a candidate's past jobs. Interviewers who probe past behavior have been found to be more reliable predictors of success than ones that focus on personality traits, such as "I'm dependable," "You can count on me," or "I'm hard-working." Hiring decisions based on acts of behavior are far more accurate than those based on gut feeling.

Have you ever hired someone based on a "gut feeling?" Did it work out? While this method can sometimes work for us, it can work against us, too. It's not the most accurate method to use. So, use it, but only as a last resort. Instead, learn some other techniques that will give you more of what I call "measurable information," or quality information about somebody. That's going to give you a better gauge for hiring people who will stay with you.

Have you ever had an employee accept a position with another tree care company at the busiest time of the year, leaving you high and dry to pick up the pieces? It happens all the time.

The success of any organization depends on its people. Hiring and keeping good employees is a challenge almost all tree care companies face. While there's no foolproof system for selecting people, there are several techniques for identifying employees who are more likely to stay with your business.

People succeed at what they enjoy doing. Someone who is successful in your organization will enjoy the industry and be a team player who is self-motivated and willing to learn.

In his "Selecting Winners Workshop," Barry Shamis of Redmond, Wash., outlines the following six-step procedure:

**Step One: Developing a profile**

Before you can make any kind of hiring decisions, you need to develop a precise profile of the ideal candidate. This profile needs to be broken down into two parts—what you expect the person to do and the skills, qualities or characteristics needed to achieve those requirements. For example, as well as having good customer skills, a manager needs to be well-organized, self-directed and have good people skills.

To avoid the "I'll know it when I see it" syndrome, this profile should be written down clearly and concisely. List all the desired expectations, qualities and characteristics of an ideal candidate.

You now have a clear picture, so that you understand what success means for the particular position. Ask yourself, "Who is the ideal person for this position? What kind of attributes, characteristics and work experience would this person need?"

You should be looking for people 365 days a year. You don't necessarily have to hire them all, but rest assured you are going to come across a gem, and you want to keep developing a pool of possibilities so that you don't get desperate. Don't just step up re-
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recruiting when you are in need, because when you’re desperate, you do all the wrong things and hire all the wrong people. Get into a mindset of constantly looking for people to fill vacant and not-yet-vacant positions.

Now that you have a picture of the ideal employees in your mind, it’s possible you already have one working for you. Work backward to determine what that person looks like—not physically, although appearance is important—but in terms of attitudes, work ethic, “trainability,” self-motivation, team player, etc.

Let’s paint a picture of someone you wish to hire and train to climb and prune trees. What are your expectations and what qualities should a new employee have?

---

**Expectations:**
- Practices at home
- Learns new skills each week
- Retains information learned
- Seeks out information on his own
- Safety Oriented

**Qualities:**
- Ability to think on feet
- Open mind to training
- Gets along with customers
- Gets along with the “team”
- Enthusiasm/love for job
- Able to take orders
- Valid Drivers License/Able to retain it

You need to do this exercise for all the people you are thinking of hiring, so you know the type of person who will perform best. If you do this, you will be less likely to rely too much on “gut feelings.”

How do you measure these characteristics? The best predictor of a candidate’s future job performance is prior job behavior: Have they done it before?

In the case of a first-time tree climber, we can’t necessarily tell because they’ve never climbed trees before. However, you can measure whether or not a person has been able to do certain things in an other environment. Have they been able to think on their feet? Have they been enthusiastic? Have they been able to take orders? Have they been open-minded to training? You can use these answers in any environment, it doesn’t have to be climbing trees.

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**Step Two: Recruiting**

This step may be the toughest in the whole selection process. There is a shortage of qualified arborists today and there are even fewer with true expertise in the industry. As a result, innovative approaches are necessary to generate a qualified candidate pool. Today, you need to be both creative and proactive.

Start by determining where the people are that you want to attract and what they are doing. Think about searching for candidates where other organizations are not looking. If you want to place an ad, consider specific technical or professional publications.

Even with all this searching, your best source of candidates is still likely to be
readily accessible “internal” and “external” resources—employees, customers, suppliers, industry colleagues, etc. Get the word out!

Recruiting should be an on-going activity. Always be on the lookout for new and exciting candidates to add to your pool of possible recruits. Waiting until you have a position open to begin the process can be extremely disconcerting and stressful.

Step Three: Screening

By the time you get to this stage, you already have a pile of resumes to evaluate. When screening, remember to look for trends and patterns of accomplishment, a progression of activity. Look for results and behavior that you think will be effective in the position you are seeking to fill.

Has a candidate improved him or herself over the last ten years or have they been at exactly the same position? Which would you prefer? Someone who has been in the same position for all 10 years, or someone who has shown progress throughout 10 years? Of course, there may be certain types of positions where the longevity at the same position might be exactly what you need. It depends on your profile, which you have already prepared.

Some employers shy away from anyone with a gap in their work history. What’s important, however, is the reason for that gap. Someone who is 30 with kids probably didn’t want time away from work.

A gap in someone’s history might not be because they did anything wrong. They probably did work here and there during that time, but he didn’t have one particular job. That doesn’t look too good on a resume, but lots of people, unfortunately, have been laid off and are looking for jobs.

Others may have medical issues, such as an accident or long hospitalization, for a long period of time. Maybe they were on disability, which could make them afraid you won’t hire them. Take a look at it. Don’t necessarily disregard someone because there is a gap in work history. Instead, find out the reason for the absence.

Cover letters and resumes alone are not enough in your screening process. How many times have you arranged an interview with someone face-to-face, and within the first few minutes knew you were wasting your time? Telephone interviews are a critical tool, as well. Barry Shamis’ cardinal rule is “Never meet anyone face-to-face until you have spoken to them on the phone.”

The purpose of the phone interview is to avoid the expense and time commitment of useless interviews. You can cut a phone call short, but it’s harder to end a face-to-face interview, even if you know that this person is not right for you or your company.

The telephone phone screening process should be conducted as a mini-interview. Seek more information about one particular period in the applicant’s life. For instance, ask about a critical requirement of the position. The real purpose of the phone interview is to get away from the “gut feeling” and base hiring on measurable information.

Now, it’s tough to interview over the phone. It’s easier face-to-face, because the body never lies. If an applicant is
saying one thing and the body is saying another, you can tell if you are observant.

What should you during a telephone interview? Focus on one aspect or one

Step Four:
Information gathering

Most of the information needed to make the best decision will come from a face-to-face interview. However, the effectiveness of that interview is totally dependant on the type and quality of questions you ask.

It's nice to conduct the interview at the place where potential candidate will work. This way, you can show them around, introduce them to other people and get input and feedback from your employees. See how your employees react to them and how they react in return.

There are books written with examples of good interview questions. Remember, though, you don't want to play games with the interview process. You are not trying to outsmart people, you are trying to get information that will help you decide if they are good people to hire.

According to Shamis:

1. Questions should be focused and direct. This means no games. You want easy-to-answer questions.

2. Questions should have only one answer. For example, “What was your biggest challenge as a manager last year?” is a better question than “What are your biggest challenges as a manager?”

Think of this when you want to know what an applicant has accomplished. Ask only questions that will give you that information.

3. Questions should have a specific, planned purpose. For each question you ask, make sure you know what specific piece of information you are looking for.

I was speaking to someone who asks this question: “Have you heard of Alex
Shigo?" When I asked why he asked that question, I was told, "It gives a bit more background as to whether this person is interested or has studied the industry."

If an applicant has not heard of Shigo, that doesn't necessarily mean you won't hire him. It's just a way of getting more information. For this interviewer, that was his purpose.

4. All questions should be job-related. This will help prevent issues which may be taboo.

You can't ask straight out, "Are you married? How many kids do you have? What religious preference do you have? You can't ask those questions, but you might hear the answers if you listen carefully. During interviews, people talk a lot when they are nervous. Be very careful—there's a very fine line as to what is and is not acceptable. The last thing you want is a lawsuit on your hands.

In terms of which questions to ask, think of the following six question types:
1. **Factual questions**
   People will say they have skills. A factual question asks, "Ok, you say you are dependable. Give me one instance that you are proud of, in your last position, of your dependability."

   Remember, you want a very focused question that will yield only one answer.

2. **Action questions**
   "In your last position, how did you work together with your team? How did you motivate your team to achieve?"

3. **Candidate-specific questions**
   You are only interested in what that specific applicant did. Focus on the last or most relevant position, so that you have something specific to ask a reference. People are so cautious about giving references now that if you ask general questions you are likely to get non-specific answers.

4. **Constantly probing questions**
   Probe for information. What will happen is the "iceberg syndrome." Like the Titanic, what you see on a resume is only a very small percentage of what is really underneath. When you ask very focused questions, such as "Give me an example of how you did this," that's when you are going to get beneath the surface.

5. **Example questions**
   The more examples of skills or...
achievements you get, the better you will understand and know this person. And, most are not prepared. They’ve been prepped to tell you “I manage time well,” or “I’m dependable.”

Fine, ask for an example. Usually they are reciting off their resumes. Examples will help you get below the surface. It’s hard for people to start making things up on the spot.

6. More example questions

The rationale is the same as above. You are looking for lots of examples, constantly trying to get below the surface.

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**Step Five: Verifying information**

In this stage of the process, it is crucial to verify information on your most promising candidates. Seek references from people who can tell you about the quality and quantity of an applicant’s work. Since getting references these days is often tricky, put the burden on the candidate. Have them suggest people who can and will talk to you. Don’t make it your problem!

Avoid asking for opinions or judgements. Ask specific, quantifiable questions about your candidate’s abilities. Don’t ask “Is this person dependable?” Instead, phrase the question this way: “Give me an example of how Joe showed he was dependable in the position,” or, “Tell me how Joe organized his team in his last position, or, “How did he train people?”

If your candidate has a degree, you may also want to verify details with the university.

**Step Six: Evaluating information**

This is the time to take all the data you have on your serious candidates and make a qualified evaluation.

To do this objectively, you need to create a simple matrix. Along one axis list all the requirements from your profile: the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the position. Along the other axis list all the candidates. Then evaluate each candidate against the requirements.

Finally, make sure you substantiate your evaluation with the information gathered in the interview. Do a “gut check” to ensure that your evaluation is not based on biased feelings. The fact that someone is “nice” may be a plus, but is generally not a good enough reason to hire them. Hire people because you believe they are capable of being successful on the job. And remember: Successful people are not born ... they’re trained.

*This article was excerpted and adapted from a lecture at the National Arborist Association’s Winter Management Conference. For more information on the events and activities at Winter Management Conference, contact the NAA at 800-733-2622.*
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The National Arborist Association often asks its members to share OSHA stories, both positive and negative, so that a better working relationship can be forged with the agency. In the last few months, we've heard some doozies—none of them good. There's the one about the member who was issued a citation in 1996 under a 1973 version of a law that had been revised four times in that 23-year period. The enforcement officer didn't know the law had changed, and therefore, didn't know the arborist was in full compliance with the law. Then there's the one about a compliance officer who became so irate when he was asked to leave company property (he was there without cause and without a warrant) that police had to be called to remove him. Last but not least, an on-going but sad tale of an OSHA inspector spurned by the fact that his citation didn't hold up under the law. This gentleman, this representative of the Federal government, took it upon himself to call an arborist's largest clients and tell them not to do any more work with the company because they are "not safe."

Granted, there are two sides to every story, and OSHA has not had the opportunity to respond to any of these recollections. In fairness, allow for generous doses of exaggeration born out the frustration of the people telling the tales. Even so, these are appalling situations to say the least. Taken as a group, these stories are part of the evidence that has led to over a dozen OSHA reform bills in Congress. And not a moment too soon. NAA has plenty of its own OSHA stories, all of which indicate that OSHA's left and right hands have not been held together in a long, long time.

There was a time legislators wondered what all the fuss was about when grumbling about OSHA drifted up to the Hill from small business owners. It is safe to say it was mistakenly assumed businesses were concerned only with the bottom line and didn't want to spend money on employee safety. OSHA got powerful on the popular notion that protecting workers is a good thing. It is a good thing. It should be the first priority of every employer. Ideally, OSHA and business owners could come to terms with the fact that they are on the same side, working toward the same end. Unfortunately, OSHA's power did grow while small businesses' did not, and power unchecked and unbalanced grows reckless and wild. Grumbling from small businesses turned necessarily to shouting. There were so many horror stories coming from so many industries that legislators were forced to realize something was amiss. Finally, they took action and called for reform of the agency, which has been untouched since its inception in 1970.

At long last, progress has been made. Representative Cass Ballenger, (R-NC), has proposed eight separate OSHA reform bills, each of which focus on separate OSHA policies and procedures. Two of those, one that would codify OSHA's consultation program and another that would ban OSHA's use of citation quotas for performance evaluation, were recently approved in the House of Representatives. Democrats and Republicans alike agree that the proposed measures are good for workers and good for business, and we as an industry can see real relief on the horizon. The future doesn't look as good for Ballenger's other six proposals. These are more dramatic in nature and are attracting expected criticism from the AFL-CIO, which claims OSHA reform is bad for workers. Two out of six isn't bad though, when you consider that what we had before was complete opposition to OSHA reform. Two out of six is a start.

Amelia Reinert is deputy executive director of the National Arborist Association.
Grinding stumps is not the glamorous side of professional tree care. If arboriculture were a football team, stump grinders would be the offensive linemen—vitaly important, little noticed and smeared with mud.

"It's a dirty job," agrees Dan Clemenson, general manager of CEI in Osseo, Minn., which specializes in the manufacture of replacement teeth.

The two best things arborists can do for maintenance is to know what sort of material is around the stump and keep...
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- all are mounted on either Ford or GMC diesel chassis 33,000GVW
- Caterpillar 3116 or Ford FD 1060 210 hp diesel
- All have automatic transmissions (either MD3060 or MT653)
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Arriving Daily

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95-2144 1990 Ford F800 diesel, 5-speed, hydraulic brakes, with an Asplundh LR-50 (900490), 55' working height, behind the cab mount, single platform, flat bed body. $46,500.00

95-2205 1989 Ford diesel chassis, 5/2, AB, with a Hi Ranger 6H-55PBI (285785) 60' working height, two man platform, upper tool outlets, lower boom isolator, full line body. Aerial has been refurbished and is RTW status. $47,000.00

95-3261 1992 Ford diesel, 5/2, AB, with an Altec LB650 (02925044) 55' working height overcenter aerial lift, full dump body, lower boom isolator. Unit in process of refurbishment. PTBD

95-3108 Timberjack diesel skidder with a 1990 Altec LB650 (029650572), 55' working height, overcenter operation, lower boom insert, rear hydraulic winch. In process. PTBD

95-3187 1991 Ford F700 diesel, 5/2, with an Asplundh LR50 (900705) 55' working height, over-center operation, lower boom insert, mounted behind the cab, full line body. $52,500.00

95-3124 1985 GMC 7000, gas, manual 5/2, hydraulic brakes, with a Hi-Ranger 5F1-52PBI (28512886) 57' working height behind cab aerial lift, dump body, with one-man end mid. Platform $24,000.00

95-2177 1982 Ford gas, 5-speed, hydraulic brakes, with an Asplundh LR-50 (900780) 55' working height behind cab aerial lift, dump body, with single platform PTBD

95-2180 1988 Navistar 1754 diesel, T-243, air brakes, with an Altec AA600 (0987-J121), 56' working height, over rear axle, two man platform, flat bed body with through box. $50,000.00

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Keep track of the combinations you try by using a log book. Log the hours of operation and cutting conditions, type of teeth, and where they are located on the wheel, etc. If you are trying one piece or self-gauging teeth, mix them with teeth that can be adjusted. Set the adjustable teeth to the same gauge depths as the fixed teeth for a fair comparison. This will take time, but it is the comparison data that you need. You can mix square and regular carbide or regular and hard carbide. As downtime costs money, use a log book to show you which items you need on a regular basis. Keep extras of these items on hand: You will save time and the expense of air freight for an overnight delivery.

An impact wrench is recommended for changing teeth, as it also saves a great deal of time. Final torquing, however, should be done by hand to ensure accuracy.

When reinstalling teeth, coat the head and threads of the bolts with anti-seize or dry molly to prevent them from rusting in place. Tighten the bolts until the proper torque recommended by the manufacturer is reached. Do not exceed 280 ft. lbs, or you will stretch the bolts past the elastic range, where an impact from a foreign object is likely to cause the bolt to shear. To use a simple parallel: a nylon rope that is stretched within its working (elastic) range will stretch and come back. If it is overloaded, it will snap. Check the torque with a torque wrench.

When replacing teeth, be sure there is enough space between the pocket and wheel to slip a piece of paper through after tightening the pocket. If not, you are in danger of throwing the teeth, regardless of how tight the bolts are. To remedy this condition, replace the wheel or build up the worn area on the wheel with mild steel welding. Whether you do the welding yourself or have it done, it is extremely important that the ground wire from the welder be attached directly to the wheel. If the ground is attached to any other place on the machine, there is high potential for damaging the bearings. The current of the welder will be passing through the balls to the bearing race, and arcing is likely to occur, causing the bearings to fail.
is why many Levco machines have both installed. “Your stump grinder should be inspected the same way you check your truck,” says Clemenson. “Wash it and look for oil leaks. Every eight hours something should be greased, the oil should be checked.”

When it comes to stump grinders, “The tooth is the most important part of the machine,” stresses John Parenteau, president of Border City Tool & Supply in

♦ It is also a good idea to disconnect the battery to prevent damage to the electrical system. After building the wheel up by welding, grind the welding flush with the wheel. Inspect the wheel when you change teeth and/or pockets. Wheel wear can cause additional problems such as machine vibrations, throwing teeth, and elongating of holes, just to name a few. The use of a wheel saver can greatly reduce this. After final installation, check the bolt. The thread end should not extend out of the pocket where it can be mashed. This can destroy a threaded pocket. A bolt is measured from under the head to the end. When selecting a supplier, keep in mind price and quality. As an individual, you may not have the equipment or training to evaluate the quality of steel used in the shank, the quality of the silver solder joint, the heat treating of the steel, or whether the carbide is recycled or virgin. You have to rely on the reputation of the manufacturer and your own field experience. Here is where a log book can really help. Keep track of how products perform for you. Mark down the hour reading, the date, time, and any other notes—such as weather and stump conditions. Tailor it to fit your needs. Remember, a broken or disconnected hour meter only hurts you. This information can help you make the best buying decisions for your company.

♦ The wheel saver, a thin, flat disc approximately the size of a pocket that goes against the wheel, is held in place by the bolts that hold the pocket-tooth combination to the wheel. It is installed by removing the pockets from the wheel and sliding the wheel saver over on the bolts before they are put through the wheel. Another protector is then slid over the bolts before they are threaded into the other pocket. The result is that the protector is against the wheel and the tooth is clamped against the protector not the wheel. This prevents the tooth from digging into the wheel. Some of the damage is absorbed by the protector and some is eliminated by spreading the force over a larger surface area. The wheel protector is a throw-away wear item that, if used properly, should greatly reduce wheel damage under the pocket.

Levco’s all new Model HD46 Stump Grinder is all hydraulically operated. It fits through standard fence gates, has a very low profile for stability on slopes, and has a 25 HP Kohler Command engine.

This first-class machine features 16 carbide-tipped teeth that are all alike for simplicity, bolted on for easy replacement, and can be sharpened for longer life. Reversible teeth are optional.

The HD46 cuts stumps from 18 inches above grade to 20 inches below. The ground travel has two speeds: very fast for transporting and slower for cutting. Competitively priced and designed for the professional, you can even ride it! The HD46 is one of 10 models available from Levco. Call us at:

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The Corona RS 7130 Pruning Saw sinks its teeth more deeply into every pull stroke — for cleaner, smoother, faster cutting with far less effort. Each whetstone-ground tooth on the 13" replaceable blade is set deeper into the blade than competitive saws, and is precisely sharpened on 3 sides, giving it a razor sharp edge. Then, unique impulse hardening ensures that they hold their edge far longer. The Corona RS 7130. Cleaner, smoother, faster cuts. A serious pruning saw — for serious pruning professionals.

When a tooth gets rounded too far—to the point where it’s not cutting but beating and pounding the stump—you are literally beating and pounding every part of the machine to death. Teeth manufacturers note that too many users pay no attention to the state of the teeth. They run them until they are rounded and dull. Some run their machine until it is bucking and jumping so much that all they can do is take teeth off, throw them away and put on a new set.

Parenteau adds this advice to those who don’t practice regular maintenance: “When you are talking about a machine costing $7,000 or more, using a dull tooth only helps the people who make the machine, because it takes a pounding and needs spare parts more often. And, of course, it’s good for me if they run the teeth until they are round, because then they need to call me and order a new set. If they only knew what they were doing to their machines, though.”

Arborists with larger machines who do stump grinding as their main business tend to take good care of their machines. But so many tree care companies just do stump grinding as a sideline. They should check every time they send their machine out. If teeth are rounded too far, they need immediate sharpening or replacement.

“You can’t go by the hours of operation,” warns Parenteau. “Effective life will depend on the dirt, rocks, and kind of stump. I know some people up in Oregon and Connecticut who can’t even get in a full day. Others, depending on the type of wood, can go longer. Most will get a good day out of it. No matter what, no more than two days if you value your machine.”

Parenteau recommends buying a small pedestal grinder and doing the sharpening yourself. “There aren’t many people around who will do it for you,” he says. “The more it’s done, the faster and easier it is.”

“I’ve seen instances when people have been running stump cutters with lots of teeth missing,” adds Gary Kappel, project engineer for Vermeer’s line of stump cutters. “They have lost so many teeth that the drive belts actually slip on the machine. You can imagine how much vibration and stress is being encountered by that machine. I’ve seen teeth in absolutely terrible condition. It’s like trying to shave with a spoon.

“Cracked sheet metal and power train component failures can, in a large degree, be attributed to the state of the cutter system,” says Kappel. He stresses two things: “Check the site before you go to work. Also, make sure the teeth are sharp and tight. A lot of people don’t use torque wrenches, but it is vitally important. If people realize that only a few thousandths of an inch make the difference between a tight bolt and one that’s really loose, they might keep on top of this.”

Jake Stout, sales manager for Rayco Manufacturing, Inc in Wooster, Ohio, sums things up clearly: “The name of our product is a stump cutter. Like any other cutting device, the performance of the machine is tied to a good cutting edge. The sharper the tooth the less horsepower it takes to do the job. Arborists wouldn’t dream of going out with a dull chain saw. They should think of stump teeth in the same way. A full-time stump cutter should change and re-sharpen his leading teeth every day.”
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Stahl recently introduced the Ultrahoist, a new line of conversion hoists. The hoists fit bodies up to 16 feet long, with two more models following to fit almost any dump application. The Ultrahoist has the highest pump pressure in the industry, with 3800 psi pressure settings. Innovative features include: integral twin safety props with self-storing handle, fully enclosed control options, wide frames and close-fitting pivots, interchangeable cylinders, and a pedestal-type rear hinge. For more information, contact Stahl, 3201 West Old Lincoln Way, Wooster, OH 44691. Fax: 330-264-0891.

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The Model 7489 Angle Indicator from R & B Manufacturing, Inc. is useful in any situation requiring angle determination or accident prevention resulting from exceeding specified operating parameters. In 1996, there were an estimated 2500 roll-overs of 4-wheel-drive vehicles. Simple to use and easy to install. Anyone operating any type of equipment on a slope should have an approved R.O.P.S. (roll-over protection system) and a seat belt. However, ideally a roll-over will be prevented before it occurs. The cost of an indicator will be saved many times over, with the prevention of just one roll-over. For more information, contact R & B Manufacturing, Inc., 4948 N.W. High Dr., Riverside, MO 64151. Phone: 816-587-9814.

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The non-hydraulic skid loader backhoe from Lackender Fabrications is manufactured to quick-tach to your skid loader in place of the existing bucket. The backhoe can be operated without auxiliary hydraulics since 90 percent of the digging is done with the bucket in one position. If the unit has auxiliary hydraulics, a regular 8-inch stroke cylinder can be used on the bucket. The design allows it to be mounted to almost any make or model of skid loader. For more information, contact: Lackender Fabrications, 4645 Naples Ave. SW, Iowa City, IA 52240. Phone/Fax (319) 338-4114; or visit www.lackender-fab.com.

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Safety Storage, Inc. recently introduced a new Model 15 prefabricated, relocatable steel building to protect agricultural chemicals from theft, while satisfying federal, state, and local requirements for the storage of pesticides. Standard features include heavy-gauge, welded-steel construction, 560-gallon secondary containment sump, removable steel floor gratings, and chemical resistant coating inside and out. Options include ventilation, cooling, heating, interior/exterior lighting, partitioning, shelving, shower/eye wash unit, and loading ramp. For more information, call 800-344-6539; Web site: www.safetystorage.com; email: info@safetystorage.com.

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Plant Pro-Tec (Garlic) Units keep deer and rabbits from destroying your lawn and garden. The repellents take advantage of the natural aversion some animals have for the smell of garlic. The invention of Dr. Jerry Walters, a former research scientist with the U.S. Forest Service, the garlic odor is potent because the formulation contains garlic oil, a concentrated form of garlic. Once the barrier is broken, the garlic odor is evident for between six and eight months. For more information, contact: Plant Pro-Tec, LLC, PO Box 902, Palo Cedro, CA 96073 USA. Phone/Fax: (530) 547-5450, (800) 572-0055; or visit their web site at www.hoyle.com/plantprotec.

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Corona Clipper recently introduced its new AH 6900 Professional Series of aluminum-handled hedge shears. Made in America, the AH 6900 Series is available in three models: a 10.5 inch Tapered Shear; an 8.5 inch Serrated Shear; and an 8.5 inch Serrated Shear with extra-long handles. Enhancements include a larger bearing surface for increased strength and stability under heavy loads and forged-in bumper cups with Alcryn ShockStop bumpers. For more information, please contact Corona at (909) 737-6515 or visit their web site at www.coronaclipper.com.

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Vermeer Manufacturing company recently introduced the BC 2000 brush chipper with heavy-duty loader for tackling high-volume organic chipping projects. The BC 2000's loader is a new, labor-saving feature that can help operators chip a higher volume of trees faster and more efficiently. The drum-style chipper, powered by a 200 hp, 6-cylinder Cummins 6BTA5.9 engine, has an enormous lifting capacity - up to 3,000 pounds. At full reach, its steel loader can lift a 7-1/2 foot log that's up to 20 inches in diameter. It also enables operators to place materials on the infeed table.

For more information, contact National Sales Manager, Doug Hundt or International Sales Manager, Daryl Bouwkamp at Vermeer at 1-888-VERMEER (837-6337).

Engineered and fabricated with extra mass in critical areas, the Morbark PT737 Portable Trommel Screen is designed to withstand the abusive treatment found in soils, compost, green waste, wood grinding and land-clearing projects. The tube is constructed of 3/8-inch thick steel plate, which holds its shape even when processing bulky, heavy material. The trommel is supported by six 7-inch diameter, self-centering steel wheels, each supported by two high-performance pillow block bearings. For further information, please contact: Dan Brandon, Corporate Communications, Morbark, 8507 S. Winn Road, Winn, MI 48896. Phone: (800) 233-6065; Fax (517) 866-2280.

The STIHL 088 Magnum is a 21.8 pound, high-performance heavy duty professional saw with a 7.4 cubic inch (121.6 cc) engine. It features a streamlined housing, angled front handle, flat chain sprocket cover, and anti-vibration system. The STIHL IntellliCarb cuts maintenance time and allows longer intervals between filter cleanings. It also keeps the fuel/air mixture constant, saves fuel, and keeps emissions low. The Ematic system allows the user to reduce chain oil consumption by up to 50 percent. For more information, contact: STIHL Incorporated, PO Box 2015, Virginia Beach, VA 23450-2015 (757) 486-9100.
INDUSTRY NEWS

Oral Ivy Acquired by Boericke & Tafel.

Boericke & Tafel, Inc., a Santa Rosa, Calif.-based manufacturer of homeopathic remedies since 1835, recently acquired Oral Ivy from Oral Ivy, Inc. of Bloomsburg, Penn. Oral Ivy, a product for the prevention and treatment of poison ivy, oak, and sumac, will complement Boericke & Tafel’s full line of homeopathic remedies. Oral Ivy, Inc. has changed its name to selfHEAL, Inc. and will distribute Oral Ivy and other Boericke & Tafel products. Bob Miller, president of Oral Ivy, Inc., will continue as president of the renamed company.

Arborists Donate Tree Services

Friends of the Whitman-Walker Clinic of Northern Virginia have come together to develop a Healing/Memorial Garden. Local Arborists have united with many other professional landscape businesses and individuals in this cooperative effort. The Garden will offer a retreat to those living with AIDS and a place of remembrance for families of those who have lost their lives from this illness. It is hoped the Garden will also provide a bridge to the community to foster understanding and compassion.

The clinic would like to extend special thanks to the following participants: Richard C. Murray, Consulting Arborist/Project Coordinator, Silver Springs, MD; Shannon Tree and Landscaping, Inc., Silver Springs, MD; Pogo Tree Experts, Olney, MD; Ross Tree Expert Company, Falls Church, VA; The Care of Trees, Gaithersburg, MD; Stump Jumper, New Market, MD; A T & T Arlington, VA, VEPCO, Northern Virginia.

New VP at OmniQuip

As OmniQuip International continues to expand its presence the corporation has undertaken an organizational restructuring. P. Enoch Stiff, president and CEO, recently announced that Tom Stachurski has joined Compact Technologies as Division Vice President and General Manager. He is responsible for sales, marketing, service and product development for the skid steer loaders, mini-excavators and small material handling equipment within this OmniQuip division. He brings with him more than 20 years of experience holding several senior positions in manufacturing and distribution.

Tom Stachurski

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Dependable. Easy to maintain. Built to work hard and never take a day off. Altec’s complete line of tree care equipment provides you with superior performance and maximum productivity. Our LR Series and LB Series aerial devices combine smooth, efficient maneuverability with working heights to 60 feet, making them the tree care industry’s preferred choice. Altec’s line of Whisper Chippers are designed with a commitment to excellence and have a proven record of durability and performance. And all Altec equipment is backed by an unsurpassed warranty.

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Disability Protection

Can you afford to have one of your employees take a long vacation? What about an extended disability? Donald F. Hadley, president of Fidelity Financial Group, Inc., in Raleigh, N.C., offers a number of suggestions on how tree care company owners can protect themselves.

The permanent loss of a key employee to disability or death is something for which you must prepare. There is a 54 percent chance that an employee (age 30) will become disabled for three months or longer. There’s a 29 percent chance that one of your employees will die before age 65.

One problem in the case of disability is the issue of when to quit paying employees if they cannot work. What if this employee is only partially disabled? Especially if this is a key employee whom you desire to help, when should the paycheck stop? At three months? At nine months? In addition, if you pay these employees for a period of time while they are unable to work, what precedent do you set with other employees? Who makes the judgement call that an employee is actually and truly unable to work?

This issue can be handled by offering a sick pay plan. Employees will be paid anywhere from one week to three months, depending on the type of business. In this way, you have a written record of what you would do should the situation arise. In addition, the business should purchase either individual disability coverage or group disability coverage, or give employees the opportunity to purchase coverage through payroll deductions. This approach sets out a specific commitment that you will make to the employee, and then will transfer the balance of the risk to an insurance company or, at the very least, allow the employee an opportunity to do so. This prevents you and your company from being placed in an unreasonable position.

The other problem with disability is that it is usually necessary to find another skilled person to take the disabled employee’s place. Getting the cash flow cost of a disabled employee off of you and onto an insurance company can make it easier to hire and train a new employee. This is also a good reason for your company to have written procedures and at least a basic in-house employee-training program.

The death of a key employee will also incur the cost of hiring and training a replacement. Having a life insurance policy of which the company is both the owner and beneficiary of death benefit is one way of “reimbursing” the corporation tax free at death for having to hire and train a replacement. In some cases, the business will provide some of the death benefit to the surviving family as an employee benefit. The cash value buildup of these policies can also be used later to fund a special retirement program for this key employee.

Because key employees may be of great value to your business, it is best to be prepared should you lose them. While it is not feasible to protect for each and every possibility, there are several ways in which to protect your business and yourself from the uncontrollables. After all, the success of your business may depend on it.
Choosing the Right Personal Climbing Equipment

By Jeffrey Lee

Sponsored by The Bishop Company for the advancement of our industry.

Big Al Fontaine and his number-one climber, Max Bunyan, spoke with the widow Carter at her front door to get final approval for pruning the colossal Eucalyptus overhanging her tiny house. The weekend before Max had purchased a climbing belt and rope at a swap meet in his town. He got both for $10, and he felt pretty darn good about it.

Max donned the belt, and flinging the rope over the highest crotch of the tree, he tied himself in. Max leaned out as far as he could, working on the ends of a horizontal branch, so exhilarated by the task that he completely ignored the stench of gasoline and oil wafting from the tattered climbing belt. Just then, disaster struck! A sickening ripping sound indicated that the D-rings had divorced themselves from the saddle. Max plummeted toward the earth.

Fortunately, during his fall the rope somehow entwined itself around his ankle, stopping his descent. Unfortunately, the same rope (which, like the saddle, was also a product of the swap meet) was of undetermined age and application. Under stress the rope bungeed and then snapped. Max careened into the tree. After reaching terminal velocity, his nearly lifeless form plummeted toward the earth.

Pre-Climb Inspection

You must inspect your equipment to be sure that it will perform according to the manufacturer's specifications before you leave the ground and at periodic intervals throughout the trimming process. Ropes should be inspected for hour-glassing, frayed ends, cuts or missing or loose rivets. Also inspect the stitching and D-rings for attachment to the saddle to be sure they are secure. Double-locking snaps should be checked for rust to be sure they are operable, the spring is working properly and they return to the closed, locked position automatically.

Lastly, avoid storing climbing equipment and ropes with hot objects, such as chain saws or blowers, or with gasoline, oil or other damaging materials or substances.

Inspect Your Climbing Gear

Inspect and replace your climbing gear that has become worn or hazardous. Getting one more climb out of that climbing line or saddle could result in serious injury.
HELP WANTED

Climber Wanted: We are an established tree company in Western Maine looking for climbers as good as me, if not better! I am the owner. I've been climbing over 18 yrs. I can't do it all, so you must have 5 yrs. exp. in pruning, take downs, and have C.D.L. Arborist license, foremen skills, good driving record, run bucket truck. Pay based on experience. Good communication skills. Benefits include: medical insurance, paid vacation, some paid holidays, 3 family days, daycare. Most of all you're in control of your own destiny with this company. Must pass field test in tree climbing and rigging. 207-647-0989. Send resume with employment references to: Timber Tree Service, RR2 Box 2582, Harrison, ME 04040.

Safety & Training Director. One of the Northeast's most dynamic tree, lawn and shrub care companies is seeking an individual to manage all aspects of training and safety program. Successful candidate will be an accomplished climber, knowledgeable in plant health care, have a B.S. in Plant Science, Forestry or Horticulture, high level of computer literacy, and working knowledge of ANSI, EHAP, CPR, EPA, DOT & OSHA. Some travel necessary. Effective communication skills required, and ISA Certified Arborist status is preferred. Salary & bonus depending on experience, benefits package, 401(k) retirement plan and vehicle. Send resume: SavATree, 205 Adams St., Bedford Hills, NY 10507, Attn: Recruiting, or fax (914) 666-5843.

DAVEY TREE requires Sales Representatives, ISA Certified Arborists, Apprentice Arborists, and Spray Technicians for Western Canada. Excellent compensation package. Call (250) 755-1288 or fax resume to (250) 755-1175.

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As arborists, we often deal with wood that is too big to chip. Typical options for removing this wood are cutting it in to fireplace length and throwing it into your truck or quartering it into pieces small enough to chip. Undoubtedly there are other time consuming, back breaking ways of doing this while creating large amounts of sawdust to clean-up.

For those of us who don’t have the capital to justify grapple loaders mounted on skid steers, log trucks, or other expensive equipment, here is a potential solution. Many tree companies include planting as a service and may already have this equipment available.

First use a ball cart/nursery truck to pick-up and move pieces of log. Most ball carts have capacities between 1000-1500 pounds which is a lot of wood. With the large tires, small obstacles in lawns are not a problem; add a few ramps and stairs (not too many), curbs, etc are easy.

Two people can easily move wood as large as you can put on the cart or the cart can handle. Bigger pieces can be strapped to the cart if needed. With this method there should be no damage to lawns. Tight spaces with little access is another good spot for this method.

Secondly, use a landscape trailer with folding ramps on the back. Two people can put the largest pieces onto the trailer with minimal physical stress. If you have any slope to your trailer site use gravity to your advantage to make it even easier.

For unloading, wood can be rolled off or taken off with the cart. Be careful not to exceed the G.V.W. of your trailer.

Although this method isn’t as cool as expensive, high maintenance, potentially landscape damaging equipment, it works well and saves a lot of backaches. This system rarely breaks down, and if done properly there should be no heavy lifting. So pull out the trailer that’s sitting in the back of the yard and give it a try.

Eric Engstrom is the owner of Engstrom Tree & Landscape in Milford, Penn.
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What You Need to Know About Sapsuckers

By Richard King

The call came from a homeowner who was very concerned about a birch tree.

"The tree is bleeding, and there are lots of holes in it," she said. "The insects are swarming around it in droves. What's wrong?"

I drove out the next morning to see the birch for myself. The owner’s description was pretty accurate. Standing by itself off to the side of the front yard was a handsome white paper birch.

Insects were flying all about the fermenting sap. Some were becoming trapped in the thickening liquid. The vital fluid was pouring from numerous holes arranged in a ring around the tree about eight feet from the ground. This ring of drill-holes is the trademark of the sapsucker. No other trees in the immediate area were affected. This is also fairly common with the sapsucker. The birds tend to work on a single tree they favor, returning to it repeatedly to peck holes in it after the manner of their other cousins in the woodpecker family.

Instead of searching for insects in dead wood like the woodpecker, the sapsucker is seeking sap from the live wood beneath the bark. Since sapsuckers attack living and healthy trees, they are usually of more concern to arborists than other woodpeckers.

To treat the tree, I washed the injured area to remove the resin that was attracting insects. The sap that remained in the holes was already starting to harden so I did not apply any type of dressing to the exterior.

The most common sapsucker is the yellow-bellied sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*), which is found throughout most of North America. About 8 to 10 inches long, it resembles the slightly smaller hairy woodpecker. A red-breasted sub-species is found in western parts of North America.

### Varieties of Sapsuckers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yellow-bellied sapsucker (<em>Sphyrapicus varius</em>)</td>
<td>most of North America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red-bellied (same Genus/species)</td>
<td>western North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamson’s sapsucker (<em>Sphyrapicus thyroideus</em>)</td>
<td>west of the Rocky Mountains</td>
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America, and the Williamson’s sapsucker (Sphyrapicus thyroideus) is primarily found west of the Rocky Mountains. It is easily distinguished from the yellow and red-bellied sapsuckers in that it has more black in its plumage.

The sapsucker pecks a hole in the side of the tree and later returns for the sap that has oozed out and for any insects that have collected near the opening. The “drill holes” of the sapsuckers tend to be in parallel bands forming rings around the tree. The 1/4-inch drill holes are generally close together, so that over time the small openings have a girdling effect on a tree. These rings can kill or seriously weaken portions of the tree above the circle.

In my experience I have found, while sapsuckers can kill entire trees, they tend to disfigure instead. Usually, the tree survives with the marks from the drill holes remaining as permanent scars. I’ve seen damage from sapsuckers in a wide variety of trees including birch, maple, linden, willow, apple, cherry and various evergreens—especially hemlock.

One gentleman called me after having shown his damaged trees to several local foresters, who had informed him that he had a bad case of borers. They told him the trees were declining and that nothing could be done for them. For two years he did not address the problem of the sapsuckers, because the malady had been mistakenly diagnosed.

Apparently more people are aware of borers than sapsuckers. Borers tend to dig into the tree randomly, often near the junction where branches attach to the main trunk. They rarely form the rings of parallel lines that are the sapsuckers’ trademark, however.

Walter Franklin, an officer for the Allegany (NY) County Bird Club, is something of an expert on yellow-bellied sapsuckers. He notes that although the species does migrate, they don’t migrate far. As a result, here in Pennsylvania we have sapsuckers all year, though they are not as numerous in winter as in summer and the birds in Pennsylvania in winter probably migrated from further north.

Our northern sapsucker population tends to increase again in the spring, about the same time as the maple trees start producing syrup.

Franklin also says that sapsuckers nest in decayed trees, much as the other woodpeckers do.

What are some possible cures for sapsucker problem? Franklin recounts a story of one homeowner who had a problem with sapsuckers hammering on his house. The impatient individual shot the bird, believing that it would ruin the house’s exterior. This “solution” displays an ignorance of the bird’s habits and the law. Sapsuckers are considered a song bird and cannot be hunted legally.
The best way to address the problem of sapsuckers in and around your customers' properties is to encourage the birds to feed elsewhere. Sapsucker damage in a dense forest setting is not as noticeable as in and around the homes and buildings where trees are fewer and each one is valued aesthetically as part of the landscape.

Placing an imitation predator nearby is one option. Plastic owls or even pictures of owls discourage sapsuckers from coming near. Birds are also afraid of snakes. I know of one arborist in Ohio who hung pieces of rope in a tree to frighten off starlings. While his method worked, I usually leave rubber snakes tied into a tree to ward off sapsuckers, which tend to be very difficult to discourage from returning to their favorite sap tree.

Others have tried, with varying degrees of success, attaching foil pie pans that bump together in the wind and reflect sunlight in flashing arrays. Hanging wind chimes nearby may help. Also, putting sticky substances on the bark sometimes dissuades the culprit. (You must be certain that the substances you put on the tree will not harm the tree.)

The simple act of removing dead and dying trees that provide nesting sites nearby would encourage them to look elsewhere, too.

Pest management of sapsuckers starts with accurately identifying the problem. Look for the bird itself or the telltale drill-hole patterns encircling the trunk or upright branches. Repair damage if necessary. And finally, encourage the sapsuckers to move on if the situation seems to be affecting the trees negatively.

Richard King is an arborist in Blossburg, Penn.
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TREE CARE INDUSTRY - MAY 1998
It rained that day ... the mother of all rainy days.

Seven weeks previously, I’d made arrangements to take down a massive elm in the yard of a customer. The small residential street, near Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., was home to several professors and younger yuppie types. The condemned tree had witnessed many residents come and go in the neighborhood over the years, and possibly even seen Paul Revere streak by in its sapling days, but, despite the owner’s procrastination, execution day had finally dawned.

All my homework was done with extra care and caution. I obtained the required work permit; hired a crane and operator for the day; and ground and sharpened all my blades and saws to lethal efficiency. I alerted my crew for an extra early start to check and double check the conditions, which can change from day to day in this business.

Saturday dawned as grey and miserable a day as I’d ever seen. But, I’d passed the point of no return in my plans, and so all systems had to be “go.”

We arrived at the execution site at 6:30 a.m., far too early to begin the noisy procedure. The operation itself was not my concern. I was more worried about the potential attitude of the residents. This was a close-knit community known for a fierce Yankee pride. The idea of having their thoroughfare littered with branches, their Saturday peace shattered by chain saws, cranes, log splitters and chippers, was, I realized, not one they would embrace. Nonetheless, the old tree was partially diseased and dangerous. It needed attention, and the sooner the better.

When we began the operation, at 7:00 a.m., the first resident to pass was a professor walking his poodle. Sure enough, he did not look happy. He glared at us briefly as he stepped over the first of the felled branches. Thirty minutes later a young mother with two tots passed by. The youngsters tried to drag their feet to watch “the man up the tree” but mom was adamant and rushed them around the accumulating greenery.

The poodle and his master reappeared later and watched us for 15 minutes. The tots and their mom reappeared, too, hurrying down the street, but this time mom allowed them to stop at their gate to watch for a minute or two. Then there was a discussion and directions from mom. The youngsters went into the house and reappeared, each carrying a huge umbrella with the logo of the local public TV station and smiles from ear to ear.

As the day and our soggy task went on, most of the street’s residents made two, three or more appearances. The professor’s wife came out with steaming cups of hot chocolate and cookies. The tots’ mom offered a selection of sandwiches. The tots extended sticky pops in the image of the Cookie Monster to us.

At each passing hour the initial grudging glances became smiles of admiration. About six hours into the operation, the “audience” had swelled to about 20. Brightly colored umbrellas dotted the perimeter of our work area as their owners peeked from them to watch as I was hoisted up over the rooftops into the topmost greenery of the elm. As I sawed, cut, and cut some more, hoisted up and down, left and right, then up and down again, a small trickle of applause became, at times, a crescendo of appreciation.

A job that I had not looked forward to in the first place had turned into a rewarding and enriching experience. Throughout the seven hours of the operation, we received admiration, encouragement and even applause, sprinkled with warm drinks and goodies. Sometimes you just never know how a job will turn out.

David Nicol is owner of Nicol Woodworks in Dunstable, Mass.
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