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Survey Says …

W hat’s it to be for the second half of the year? A Democratic president or a Republican president? Higher gas prices or lower gas prices? Continued stock market upswings or moderate gains and losses? Terror attacks or peace? Higher interest rates regularly or one or two here and there? I wouldn’t want to bet on most of these with any kind of certainty.

However, Financial Executives International and Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business surveyed the nation’s CFOs and asked them what they expect to happen in the near future. Here is what the keepers of the financial coffers have to say. It could help you to develop your budget projections for 2005. (Executive Update, April 2004 from CFO Outlook Survey)

Our GDP is expected to grow about 3.2 percent. This is lower than earlier thought. Inflation will be up 2.8 percent.

Wages will go up by about 3.5 percent. Health care costs will see another double-digit increase at 10.2 percent.

Companies will continue to invest in technology, upping their investment by 4 percent.

Good news for small businesses. Sales revenues should be up 15 percent. Large firms are expected to do only half as well at 7 percent.

The outlook for mergers and acquisitions is a big 16 percent increase. We’ve seen it in tree care companies, so it looks like that trend will continue.

And the most interesting one of all – company optimism was posted at the highest ever – 73.6. Last year, it was only at 62.7.

There’s also good news for our companies who are conducting business abroad or are impacted by vendors who are doing business internationally to produce equipment. The dollar should make some serious gains on the euro by the close of 2004.

So, for tree care companies, as the times get better we need to remember that while the survey says things may continue to loosen up, we need to keep focused on the business practices that have allowed us to stay alive during tougher times. Great customer service, investing in training for our employees, keeping safety at the core of our focus, and committing to best tree care practices and best business practices allow our bottom lines to stay healthy.

We have a line of members who are stepping up to get accredited, acknowledging that best practices are a key to great business success. Make sure you’re one of those small businesses who is going to do 15 percent growth minimally this year – work with TCIA and put the fundamentals in place to ensure satisfied customers and business growth.

Then our survey can say that the tree care industry has 100 percent of its companies running safe, profitable ventures that serve customers with excellence.

Our survey says, it’s possible!

Cynthia Mills, CAE
Publisher

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**ON THE COVER:** A hydraulic stem-foliar herbicide application is used to control vegetation in a right of way. (Story, page 8.) Image courtesy of Christopher Nowak, associate professor at State University of New York College of Environmental Science & Forestry.
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There is no one solution that fits all when it comes to vegetation management in rights-of-way (ROW) management programs, which include mechanical, chemical or cultural means. However, there are trends that are emerging as desirable in the industry and one of the most pronounced is an approach that can perhaps be described as “minimalist.”

Any means a tree care professional can employ to meet the goals of an accessible and safe transmission line corridor in an economically, environmentally and socially acceptable manner while having the least negative impact on the surrounding flora and fauna is considered ideal. In a nutshell, that is the principle behind integrated vegetation management (IVM).

But it is difficult to reduce the principles of IVM to a nutshell, even though many have tried to do so. As widely touted as IVM is in the industry, it is still often loosely characterized and largely misunderstood.

“If you’re going to talk to me about integrated vegetation management, you’re going to first have to define what you mean by the term,” says Tom Wolf, president of Wolf Tree Experts in Knoxville, Tenn. “There are a lot of different interpretations out there. Some people say that they are practicing IVM when all they are really doing is throwing a couple of quick fixes at the problem. In my opinion, it’s a much more complex issue than that.”

Researchers who work intimately with the concept would agree. “IVM has become synonymous with the idea of using a couple of methods to manage vegetation,” says Benjamin Ballard, research scientist with State University of New York’s College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF). “In reality, it is a much more sophisticated approach.”

Ballard and Christopher Nowak, Ph.D and associate professor with SUNY-ESF, have developed a six-step cyclic program they feel provides the basic framework for...
IVM. The principles of the program are similar to those of other similar programs, such as integrated pest management (IPM). For the purposes of IVM in ROW management, the steps have been adapted to better describe the challenges unique to these systems. They are as follows:

- Understanding pest and ecosystem dynamics;
- Setting management objectives and tolerance levels;
- Compiling treatment options;
- Accounting for economic and environmental effects of treatments;
- Site-specific implementation of treatments; and
- Management and monitoring.

Although most tree care companies are not expected to provide in-depth consultation services when it comes to IVM, they are often expected to have at least a basic comprehension of the concepts it entails. That is particularly true when it comes to treatment options, the environmental effects of those options and site-specific implementation.

“I think it’s very important that tree care professionals be aware of the issues involved in IVM,” Ballard says. “Although IVM programs are usually designed by the utility’s forester or other professionals before the contract is put out to bid, there are still many site-specific decisions that must be made when the tree care service technicians are out in the field doing their jobs.”

One of the goals of IVM is to manage intrusive, unwanted vegetation while simultaneously minimizing the negative impact of those management practices on the environment. Controlling vegetation is primarily accomplished by mechanical means, chemical applications and/or cultural management. Ideally, it is a combination of all three, or at least the luxury of being able to pick and choose from all three depending upon the challenges of each specific situation.

“The ideal is to have as many options as possible to choose from when you’re making decisions,” Wolf says. “If you limit yourself to one or two, you’re probably not going to pick the best overall, long-term approach for the situation.”

Mechanical methods of removing unwanted vegetation, through the use of chain saws or mowers, are immediately effective and often the only avenue of choice at any given point. However, mechanical removal of vegetation can have a negative long-term chronic impact on the target area. Often, sole reliance on mechanical removal results in even denser re-growth within a few years due to excessive root suckering and sprout growth. Relying solely on this approach can become very expensive for managers of ROW jurisdictions because it usually requires readdressing the problem within just a few years.

Herbicides are almost indispensable when it comes to ROW management and, contrary to what some may believe, are not contrary to the principles of IVM. Herbicides are very effective in controlling vegetation, can be used selectively against invasive species (even in the case of non-selective materials) and often have long-term beneficial impacts on the propagation of desirable species. On the other hand, the downsides include public outcry against chemicals in general, unintended herbicide drift onto non-target species and the potential liability of dealing with such materials.

“Herbicides are a very important tool in ROW vegetation management,” Ballard says. “In many cases, herbicides are used as the most cost-effective approach as well as the least intrusive approach.”

The use of backpack sprayers to dispense low-volume herbicide applications has become increasingly popular as a preferred method of chemical control in many ROW management schemes. A crew using backpack sprayers is much less obtrusive than heavy equipment spraying high volumes of material, and the selectivity of spot treatments is almost always a plus in the overall environmental scheme.

In some cases, vegetation managers have little choice. If access is limited by steep terrain, an aerial herbicide application may be required. If site access is not restricted by topography, mechanical control may be the tool of choice due to proximity to roads or urban areas. Or, depending on the com-
position, density, maturity and average height of various plant species, a combination of mechanical and chemical approaches may be the preferred approach.

In situations where chemical control is deemed the best option, low-volume herbicide applications are often used because they can reduce the overall amount of active ingredient applied per acre and concentrate it only on the target. Low-volume herbicide applications reduce the amount of material placed into the environment, typically less than 50 gallons of mix per acre, while backpack applications can get as low as 5 gallons of mix per acre, depending on brush height and density.

Backpack sprayers are an equipment staple of Owen Specialty Services, a Fenton, Mich.-based company specializing in low-volume backpack herbicide spray applications. The company has ROW vegetation control contracts with electric utilities in 13 states.

“Backpacks are an easy, low-profile way to manage vegetation,” says Terry Jobson, operations manager for Owen Specialty Services. “And by ultra-low volume, we mean using the lowest possible amount and still have effective control. Application volumes are significantly reduced, because the goal is to only target tall-growing plant species instead of using a broadcast high-volume application.”

Jobson says a lot of advance planning is done before any vegetation control work is initiated. “Under a transmission line, for example, a planner will do a span-by-span audit by walking the line and recording plant species, terrain considerations, sensitive areas, access, sizes and density of stems and noting property owner information,” he says.

A similar process is done for distribution lines, except that even more effort is taken to inform property owners on the control methods that might be used. Once that is accomplished, a vegetation control plan is put into action.

Vegetation conditions vary widely under transmission lines, Jobson says. “In rural forested areas that were heavily mowed, we have had stem density counts as high as 15,000 to 20,000 per acre. In those situations, we can treat with backpacks and get very good results as long as we get to it soon after the rights of way have been mowed so that the vegetation does not get a chance to grow too tall,” Jobson says.

Typically in those areas, the ROW is mowed and, early in the second growing season, backpack sprayers are used to selectively control the necessary vegetation. A follow-up application is scheduled four to six years later. “We guarantee 90 percent control with backpacks, and in most settings we meet that goal,” he says.

Often, non-selective materials such as glyphosate and Arsenal are used so crews are carefully trained to treat only the vegetation that needs to be controlled.

“If you don’t train your people on species identification, they could wipe out desirable plants like redbud and dogwood. Our spray crews undergo an intensive training program, including plant identification,” reports Jobson. “When they are hired, they are given a training manual and are expected to know the material in it. We also give them a bi-weekly quiz on various subjects and those test results – along with other work-related factors like safety – determine their bonus opportunity.”

“With six-foot or shorter brush, we apply herbicide to the top half of the plant, making sure the apical meristem is treated. On taller trees, we treat two sides with a zig-zag pattern,” Jobson says.

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of a challenge to deal with. Brad Weidenfeller, transmission line coordinator for Xcel Energy, Northern States region, grapples with safety and budget challenges every day. Weidenfeller and his Monticello, Minn.-based vegetation management team oversee 7,000 miles of transmission lines spread throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota and Michigan totaling approximately 85,000 acres of land, including 25 million square feet of substation bare ground.

In the past, the Northern States region managed its ROWs using a “hot spot” approach – mechanically trimming trees only when they were close to causing a problem, rather than using more proactive long-term strategies. Hot spotting sometimes led to projects going over-budget.

This emergency-style strategy was ultimately more expensive per ROW mile for a number of reasons. Crews had to be hired and deployed on short notice, and there was a shorter interval between required maintenance cycles. Xcel also experienced a common problem seen with this approach. Mechanical trimming resulted in a number of complaints from customers when the utility had to exercise easement rights and repeatedly cut limbs from trees that were planted too close to the lines.

Much of the problem has now been solved due to a change in strategy. To date, Xcel Energy has placed 100 percent of its high voltage rights of way on regular IVM cycles. The lower voltage ROWs – those that are 115KV down to 23KV – are nearing 100 percent inclusion in the IVM cycle.

For the utility’s cut stubble, cut stump and foliar herbicide application projects, Weidenfeller contracts with Wright Tree Service. From May to October, the company uses a mixture of 6 ounces Arsenal, 1.0 quart picloram and 1.0 ounce Escort per acre for foliar applications, and 6.0 oz. Arsenal with 1.0 qt. picloram for cut stubble treatments. For cut stump treatments performed throughout the year, the mixture consists of 4 percent Arsenal, 33 percent BK800 and 63 percent Bark Oil Blue as a diluent. The proactive, IVM approach has proven much more efficient and has minimized many of the issues associated with the utility’s previous management approach.

“Anything we can do to help prevent conflicts between the utility and private property owners makes life easier for everyone in the community,” Weidenfeller says. “Once they recognize that the utility won’t have to make as many visits to their properties for tree trimming, they are pleased with the solution.”

That concern echoes throughout the industry, and is one of the primary reasons many tree care companies are increasingly working with IVM principles and leaning toward backpack spray programs whenever feasible.

“One of the nice things about it is that a lot of times you wouldn’t even notice one of my crews had been through the area,” says Chuck Cotton with Lucas Tree Expert Company Inc. in Portland, Maine. “If managed properly and addressed on a four- to five-year cycle, the targets tend to be small – usually less than 2 to 4 feet tall. The public can hardly even tell the difference after we’re done.”

One of the keys to using chemical control in an effective IVM program is choosing the right herbicide. The most valued are those that control the most troublesome species, prevent spring re-sprouting and allow flexibility of application timing with low volumes. Aesthetics also play an important role in herbicide choice. Some products achieve a rapid brownout of vegetation, resulting in unsightly withered leaves, while others act more slowly and mimic natural fall patterns.
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There are many choices, and much of the decision depends on the desired result. When used with triclopyr for basal bark and cut surface treatments, for example, an herbicide such as Stalker can control sassafras, black cherry, ailanthus and many other difficult woody brush species. Likewise, to mimic a fall “browntout,” Arsenal herbicide with fosamine is often applied late in the growing season. The slow-acting effects of low-volume herbicide application techniques are particularly desirable because they result in a gradual transition from a ROW dominated by tall-growing brush to one occupied by more compatible lower-growing forbs, grasses, flowers and brush species.

“One of the goals of IVM is to cultivate plant communities that are compatible with site-specific goals,” Ballard says. “If you can shift the balance over time toward the establishment of compatible plants without having to rely as much on chemical or mechanical control measures, the entire system begins to function more efficiently.”

Working with the natural processes and growth patterns of the environment is becoming an increasingly popular avenue of choice in managing ROWs. Promoting the growth of low-growing, desirable shrubs at the detriment of taller-growing species can greatly reduce maintenance requirements over a number of years and ultimately result in a vegetative easement that is virtually self-sufficient as well as aesthetically pleasing and environmentally sound.

Increasing competition and the demand for more knowledgeable tree care professionals may be a couple of very good reasons to consider going beyond the basics. IVM has become a popular catchphrase in the industry, but a true professional will take the time to study and understand the bigger picture.

“I think a lot of the times we tend to lose sight of why we’re in business,” Wolf says. “We’re not here to cut down trees and keep cutting down more trees. We’re here to help the utilities provide continuity of service and help our customers meet their goals. That involves a lot more than a chainsaw and an herbicide.”

Truly understanding the complexities of IVM and how it applies to ROW maintenance can be a daunting challenge. Fortunately, resources are available for anyone wishing to expand their expertise in the area. One excellent source is available online at the SUNY-ESF Web site: www.esf.edu/ivm. The site includes a series of self-guided training materials and education modules on IVM authored by Nowak and Ballard.

“What we really want to do is challenge the industry to think about IVM as a more comprehensive and truly integrated management approach,” Ballard says. “Maximizing the benefits and services that ROWs can provide requires this more comprehensive approach to vegetative management. Ultimately, this will result in a much more efficient ROW that is easier and more economical to maintain.”

Brenda Carol is a freelance writer living in Carmel, Calif.

Some information for this article was provided by BASF Professional Vegetation Management.
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Doggett’s new generation of fertilizers

Doggett Corporation’s new generation of tree fertilizers are intended to allow more nutrients to get into a tree system with little or no leaching from the soil. Doggett’s formulations try to mimic more closely the natural nutrient recycling that occurs on the forest floor, with slow release nitrogen and the necessary macro and micro elements. Doggett added humates, natural zeolites and a specialty dispersant, plus an anti-volatilization agent. With their electrical charge, humates enhance the uptake of nutrients present and applied, and also add an organic component to the soil. A zeolite is a mineral that carries a negative charge balanced with a freely moving cation (positively charged ion). This provides an ideal trap for nitrogen and potash, which are then released when demanded by plants. Zeolites create a more porous soil, increasing oxygen levels. In addition, a urease inhibitor has been added to these formulations, decreasing the volatility of present and applied nitrogen. Lastly, a specialty dispersant called ufaryl increases the lateral movement of the soil nutrients. These additions have produced fertilizers that promote good color, vigor and health, without pushing growth. Contact Doggett via www.doggettcorp.com or at 1-800-448-1862.

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Rayco Updates C87FM Forestry Mower

Rayco Manufacturing Inc.’s enhanced C87FM compact crawler forestry mower includes a more powerful 4-cylinder, 87 HP Deutz turbo diesel engine coupled to a 41 gpm hydrostatic transmission, delivering up to 6,000 psi to the mowing head. Standard equipment includes heat and air-conditioned cab, sliding side windows and pilot-controlled joysticks. The C87FM can traverse even the most punishing terrain with its heavy-duty, dozer-style, undercarriage. The C87FM forestry mower is available for immediate delivery. Contact Rayco via www.raycomfg.com or at 1-800-392-2686.

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Doran Tire Pressure Monitoring System

The Doran PressurePro Tire Pressure Monitoring System continuously monitors pressure of up to 34 vehicle tires, and displays them in a digital readout in the vehicle’s cab, allowing the driver to monitor leaks and schedule repairs or replacement without breakdowns or downtime. Audible and visual alerts notify the driver of low-pressure conditions, addressing the most prevalent cause of tire problems – under-inflation. Doran PressurePro is easy to install, making it ideal for commercial trucks that travel thousands of miles annually. A new full-color brochure includes typical payback scenarios based on mileage driven. Copies of the brochure are available online at www.doran-mfg.com, or by calling (866) 816-7233.

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Grote Rear Obstacle Detection

By helping to reduce collisions while backing up, the new Grote Obstacle Detection System can help commercial vehicle fleets save on downtime and repair costs. The National Highway Traffic Administration estimates that an obstacle detection system could reduce rear collisions while backing up by 90 percent. With Grote Industries’ ultrasonic obstacle detection system, ultrasonic waves are sent out eight times per second to detect obstacles within a 150-degree horizontal “field of vision” behind the vehicle. Traditional radar detection systems rely on a single beam, which can miss objects due its narrow scope. The Grote system can pick up objects as small as 10 inches tall using a patented signal-processing algorithm within the microprocessor that filters out erroneous signals. A sensor unit mounts to the rear of the vehicle, and a control unit splices into the vehicle’s back-up lamp wiring, engaging it to the transmission. The control unit, mounted inside the vehicle within easy view of the driver, will alert the driver with a light and a volume-controlled audible beep when the vehicle is within approximately 7 feet of an object. As the vehicle backs closer to an object, additional LEDs light up, and the beeps get faster. For more information, call 1-800-457-9540 or visit www.grote.com.

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ALCA and PLCAA Announce Intent to Merge

The Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), pending ratification by their memberships, will consolidate into a new green industry association on Jan. 1, 2005. The result will be an organization that represents the entire range of lawn, landscape and interior plantscape services and products.

“We are very excited about this new association,” stated Kurt Kluznik, CCLP, ALCA president. “It brings together two powerful organizations that will now be able to provide even greater benefits and programs for our collective memberships.”

“PLCAA is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Twenty-five years ago a group of industry leaders recognized a need to form an association to protect the specialized industry of lawn spraying. PLCAA served that purpose well for 25 years,” Jim Campanella, PLCAA president, said in a letter to members in July. “But the industry has changed. Further consolidations by other associations will likely lead to declines in membership and activity for those who choose to ‘go it alone.’ For our association and members, this is great forward motion. More importantly, we will strengthen our voice on key issues that are important to you by adding over 2,800 members to our ranks.”

The two organizations have worked successfully in partnership over the years on a variety of projects and programs, including their annual trade show – the Green Industry Expo (GIE) – held each November. “We have benefited the memberships of both associations by working cooperatively on legislative issues and bringing members together for greater regulatory impact,” stated Campanella.

Final details on the new association are being developed, including a new governing body comprising ALCA and PLCAA leaders, unified membership and personnel, and a name for the new organization. The consolidation between PLCAA and ALCA is consistent with the strategic plans of both organizations.

ALCA represents approximately 2,800 members nationwide, including its core membership of professional exterior and interior landscape maintenance, installation, and design/build contracting firms and suppliers. For more information on ALCA, please visit www.alca.org.

PLCAA is a national association representing 1,200 residential and commercial lawn care professionals. For more information on PLCAA, visit www.plcaa.org.

Rayco Adds New York Dealer

Rayco Manufacturing Inc. in July added Denbsten Enterprise of Valatie, N.Y., to their worldwide dealer network. Territory for Denbesten will include parts of Eastern New York. Denbesten Enterprise will carry the full line of Rayco products, including the “Mini Work-Force” self-propelled and tow-behind stump cutters, compact crawlers and environmental equipment. Denbesten Enterprise will also provide parts and service for all Rayco equipment.

Sherrill adds Dan Collins as Sales Director

Sherrill Inc. recently named Dan Collins director of sales. In joining Sherrill, Collins will provide the sales leadership required to service a growing dealer and customer network. Collins will direct Sherrill’s five member sales team, including out-of-state representatives residing in the Midwest, South and Northeastern United States. Before joining Sherrill, Collins served as VP of sales for Mayo Knitting Mills, where he was responsible for servicing key accounts. Collins, a graduate of Appalachian State University, has also held key sales and management positions with Brown Wooten and Chipman-Union.

Petzl Launches Online PPE Inspection Site

Petzl, a manufacturer of climbing and rescue equipment, recently launched a new section on its Web site, Petzl.com, dedicated to providing consumers with quality inspection and recordkeeping tools for personal protection equipment, or PPE. Also available on CD-ROM, the online PPE inspection aid provides explanations of various methods used to check PPE, using video, photos and text. Examples are provided, with detailed images and indicators of deterioration to help the inspector evaluate equipment based on a scale of G (Good), TM (To Be Monitored), and R (To Be Rejected).

“Petzl is the first company to make this important information available on the Web,” says John Evans, marketing director for Petzl America. “Doing so demonstrates...
Petzl’s commitment to increasing the safety of climbers. This is a user-friendly interface that takes a lot of the guesswork out of replacing, retiring or continuing with the use of your gear.”

Hank Moon, Petzl America’s technical information manager, added that the online PPE inspection interface “provides a wealth of visual cues and record-keeping aids for PPE inspection and maintenance. It’s a great tool for anyone looking to fine-tune their program, especially schools and service institutions.”

The PPE inspection site includes a checklist for recording dates of purchase and first use, condition of gear, usage patterns and additional comments. This will be a valuable tool for rescue squads, those who work at height, and guide services as well as for climbers.

Petzl America is the Utah-based U.S. division of Petzl, headquartered in France.

Samson Unveils New Logo

Samson, manufacturer of high-performance rope, in July unveiled a new logo as part of a corporate branding campaign and company positioning strategy.

President Steve Swiackey states, “Our new logo is a symbol of our progress and goal of moving the business forward by developing advanced cordage products using innovative fibers, coatings and constructions combined with technical application engineering.”

The new logo is intended to convey Samson’s history with an implication of strength in product yet incorporates a modern look that reflects technical innovation. Samson’s new branding campaign will focus solely on the name Samson, eliminating the previously used “Rope Technologies” portion of the name.

Samson’s name was derived from the company’s trademark of Samson slaying the lion, and is currently the oldest active registered trademark in the United States, according to the company. Samson, a wholly owned subsidiary of The AMC Group, can be contacted via www.samsonrope.com.
Events & Seminars

August 7-11, 2004
ISA Annual Conference & Trade Show
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Contact: Jessica Marx, (217) 355-9411, ext. 24
jmarx@isa-arbor.com, www.isa-arbor.com

Sept. 15-17, 2004
Texans for Trees ISAT/TUFC Annual Convention
Round Rock, Texas
Contact: Mike Walterscheidt (512) 281-4833

September 22-23, 2004
Multi-State Plant Materials Conference
Stillwater, Okla.
Contact Mike Schnelle, (405) 744-7361 or mas@okstate.edu

September 24-26, 2004
International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo
Louisville, KY
Contact: expo.mow.org

September 25-28, 2004
ISA Pacific Northwest Annual Training Conference
Coeur d’Alene, Idaho
Contact: (503) 874-8263 or www.pnwisa.org

October 19-20, 2004
ISA Illinois Chapter Annual Conference
Holiday Inn
Tinley Park, IL
Contact: (877) 617-8887 or www.illinoisarborist.org

October 20-21, 2004
Garden Expo
Canada’s Fall Buying Show for the Green Industry
Toronto Congress Centre,
Toronto, Canada
Contact: Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trade Assoc.,
(905) 875-1805; fax: (905) 875-3942;
showinfo@landscapeontario.com

October 28-30, 2004
TCI EXPO 2004
Pre-conference workshops Oct. 27; EXPO Oct. 28-30
Tree Care Industry Association
COBO Conference/Exhibition Center
Detroit, Mich.
Contact: Carol Crossland, 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106;
crossland@treecareindustry.org
or www.treecareindustry.org

Oct. 29-31, 2004
New Jersey Shade Tree Fed. 79th Annual Meeting
Hilton Philadelphia/Cherry Hill
Cherry Hill, N.J.
Contact: Bill Porter (732) 246-3210,
njshadetreefederation@worldnet.att.net

Oct. 31, 2004
TCI National Day of Service
Belle Isle, Detroit, MI
Contact: Carol Crossland, 1-800-733-2622;
crossland@treecareindustry.org

November 3, 2004
Tree Care Issues Workshop
Stillwater, Okla.
Contact Mike Schnelle, (405) 744-7361 or mas@okstate.edu

January 11-13, 2005
Eastern Pennsylvania Turf Conference and Trade Show
Valley Forge Convention Center
King of Prussia, PA
Contact Georgene Thompson: home (717) 243-1349
or georgenethompson@comcast.net

January 19-21, 2005
Kansas Arborists Assoc. 50th Shade Tree Conference
Topeka, Kansas
Contact: Dr. Charles Long
clong@tcteleco.net or (785) 499-6670

January 27, 2005
Northeastern Pennsylvania Turf Conf. & Trade Show
The Woodlands Inn & Resort, Wilkes-Barre, PA
Contact Georgene Thompson: home (717) 243-1349
or georgenethompson@comcast.net

February 6-10, 2005
Winter Management Conference
Tree Care Industry Association
Los Cabos, Mexico
Contact: Carol Crossland, 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106;
crossland@treecareindustry.org or
www.treecareindustry.org

Send information on your event to:
Tree Care Industry, 3 Perimeter Road, Unit 1,
Manchester, NH 03103
E-mail: staruk@treecareindustry.org

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**Vermeer**

<table>
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<td>BC1000</td>
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<td>BC1220-BC1250</td>
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<td>10, 13, 17, 2050</td>
<td>KCH40001</td>
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<td>Double Edge 5-3/32&quot; x 4&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
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<td>Model 100XP-250XP</td>
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<td>Double Edge 7-1/4&quot; x 4-1/2&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>$21.56</td>
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<td>Model 1890 Intimidator</td>
<td>KCH20103</td>
<td>Double Edge 10&quot; x 5-1/2&quot; x 5/8&quot;</td>
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<td>Model 1290 Drum</td>
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<td>12&quot; Drum</td>
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<td>Single Edge 12&quot; x 3&quot; x 3/8&quot;</td>
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<td>16&quot; Drum</td>
<td>KCH30002</td>
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**Mitts & Merrill**

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<td>Double Edge 4-1/4&quot; x 2-3/8&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>$9.20</td>
</tr>
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EPA Issues Risk Assessments for 2,4-D Herbicide

By Peter Gerstenberger

The Environmental Protection Agency released draft health and environmental risk assessments this week that begin the public comment stage for the re-registration of the herbicide 2,4-D.

The preponderance of information from EPA and other sources supports what the industry has felt about 2,4-D all along: the herbicide is a safe, effective tool for controlling broadleaf weeds when used responsibly.

After 50 years of use, 2,4-D is still the third most widely used herbicide in the United States and Canada, and the most widely used worldwide. Its major non-agricultural uses are on rights of way, road sides, forestry, lawn and turf care, and on aquatic weeds. A recently published eight-year U.S. Department of Agriculture study (NAPIAP Report NO. 1-PA-96) concluded that, should 2,4-D no longer be available, the cost to growers and other users, in terms of higher weed control expenses, and to consumers, in the form of higher food and fiber prices, would total $1.68 billion annually in the U.S. alone. The study also reviewed the 2,4-D epidemiology and toxicology data packages and concluded that after 50 years of extensive use, “The phenoxy herbicides are low in toxicity to humans and animals. No scientifically documented health risks, either acute or chronic, exist from the approved uses of the phenoxy herbicides.”

After examining the combined risk from exposure through food, drinking water and residential uses, with certain assumptions, the EPA concluded that 2,4-D would “not exceed” the Agency’s level of concern. As well, the Agency concluded that short-term margins of exposure for homeowner applications of 2,4-D to lawns were “not of concern.”

The EPA also released a review of the recent epidemiology pertinent to 2,4-D. That review concluded by stating, “Based on the above reviews of the above studies, HED (Health Effects Division) concludes there is no additional evidence that would implicate 2,4-D as a cause of cancer.”

“The EPA’s draft assessment on the human and environmental scientific database reinforces a growing number of regulatory decisions and expert reviews that conclude the use of 2,4-D, while protecting food production and the environment, does not present a risk to human health,” said Donald Page, executive director of the Industry Task Force II on 2,4-D Research Data. “The EPA’s findings bolster the earlier decisions of authorities such as the World Health Organization and European Commission, and recent studies by the U.S. National Cancer Institute,” added Page.

Copies of the draft risk assessment documents and notice of the public comment period may be obtained under docket number OPP-2004-0167 at: http://docket.epa.gov/edkpub/index.jsp.

This concludes an 18-year process during which the Industry Task Force II on 2,4-D Research Data submitted some 300 Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) research studies. Much of this research has been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, discussed at a series of public seminars sponsored by the 2,4-D Task Force or posted on the 2,4-D Task Force Web site, www.24d.org.

Peter Gerstenberger is TCIA’s senior advisor for safety, compliance and standards.
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Is Your Pruning Ergonomically Correct?

By Bonnie Lee Appleton

When you prune, are you doing it correctly? Not from an arboricultural or horticultural standpoint – at the branch bark collar, at the most effective or least detrimental time of year and forgoing use of “wound dressings” – but from the standpoint of you, the pruner?

Are you aware of your body positions as you prune? Wrists held as close to the neutral (the slightly upward bent position where the least amount of strain is put on the wrist) position as possible. Hands not spread abnormally wide to grasp pruner or lopper handles, nor fingers wrapped too tightly around those same handles. Arms not extended over your head, straining to reach a branch.

Are you rotating your pruning tasks, being sure not to do the same thing for hours on end? If you’re in a tree, using a chain saw part of the time and a hand saw the rest, you’re probably OK. But if you’re pruning small trees on the ground, and you’ve spend two hours in the same approximate position using the same tool the whole time, though you may be pruning correctly from a technical standpoint and safeguarding the health of the trees, you may be hurting your own “arboricultural health.”

Repetitive motion injuries

In the case of pruning, if you’re not watching body positions, time doing the same task, and type of tools you’re using, you may be increasing your chance of developing a repetitive motion injury. Repetitive motion injuries (RMIs), repetitive strain injuries, or cumulative trauma or ergonomic disorders result from performing a task or doing some motion repeatedly without giving the body part or parts involved in the task or motion time to rest, recuperate or repair from the activity. These disorders or injuries may also be caused by awkward positions or postures, vibration, low temperatures, prolonged heavy lifting or exertion, using one’s hands to pound or push on things or, especially in the case of pruning, using the wrong or ill-fitting tools.

Various parts of the body, including muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments and nerves, can be involved and affected. I should know, having developed carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), the most common type of RMI in our industry, from repetitive wrist and finger movements – and using the wrong tools – for too much of my career.

With CTS, the injury occurs in the carpal tunnel – the area composed of small bones and an encircling ligament at the heel of the hand. The flexor tendons – the tendons that generate finger movement – and/or the synovium – the lining of the carpal tunnel – become swollen and inflamed. These
inflamed parts begin to press against other body parts in the carpal tunnel. When the tendons press against the median nerve – the nerve that passes through the carpal tunnel, conducting impulses from the brain down the arm to the thumb, forefinger, middle finger and half of the ring finger – numbness and tingling may occur. Blood flow through the carpal tunnel may also be reduced, in my case leading to very cold fingers.

There are other RMIs besides the highly publicized carpal tunnel syndrome. In the tree care industry, people also develop tendonitis (tennis elbow), flexor tenosynovitis (trigger finger or white knuckle), thoracic outlet syndrome, and muscle damage.

Why be concerned

I’m not trying to be an alarmist, to increase employee injury excuses or absences, or to cause an increase in workers’ compensation cases by bringing these problems to your attention. I’m hoping to spare others the pain with which I continue to live and to increase our industry’s awareness of these existing and potential problems so we can be proactive rather than reactive.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has been, is and will continue to look critically at tasks performed in our industry relative to worker safety. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that RMIs account for 60 percent of all workplace injuries, while OSHA estimates that more than one-third of all workers’ compensation costs now result from RMIs.

Injuries to the wrists and hands are the fastest growing and most widespread occupational hazards in the United States, according to FLA Orthopedics Inc. of Miami Lakes, Fla., a manufacturer of wrist supports. Employees in industries other than our own grabbed most of the initial attention regarding RMIs, including computer operators, meat cutters and poultry slaughterers, secretaries, athletes, musicians, beauticians, carpenters, assembly line workers, automated mail sorters, cashiers who use scanners, carpenters, plumbers and textile workers.

The science of ergonomics

Perhaps the best way to prevent RMIs that are work related is through improvement in workplace and work task comfort and safety. The science of modifying or designing work stations and environments, as well as tools and equipment, to suit the worker rather than forcing the worker to adapt to the design of the workplace or tools, is called ergonomics. Development and implementation of an ergonomic program for your company could result in a reduction or management of RMI symptoms before they lead to disabling injuries with permanent nerve and muscle damage. Such a program should also lead to a reduction in time lost to accidents, and money lost to medical costs.

In addition to items already mentioned that can improve comfort and safety, one of the best things you can do is be sure you’re using tools that are ergonomically designed. Most of the companies manufacturing tools used for pruning have designed new or modified or improved their tools to make them more ergonomic.

Ergonomic pruning tools

As you replace or shop for new pruning tools, look for tools with the following characteristics:
The common butterfly bush (Buddleia davidii) has a number of qualities that make it a useful plant to know. This was brought home to me last summer when I was hired to make improvements to an existing landscape. The client’s backyard consisted of a lawn bordering a down-slope planted with a large variety of perennial flowers. At the bottom of the slope was an unattractive chain link fence, and behind it the neighbor’s Thuja occidentalis ‘Pyramidalis’ hedge and house. But beyond that was a lovely view to the glistening waters of lake.

Tools that are as light weight as possible, yet can still help you accomplish the intended task (favor aluminum, plastic or composites vs. wood or steel).

Tools with handles that are larger, softer or padded to reduce hand strain when grasping them.

Tools that are balanced (weight evenly distributed) so they don’t pull the user forward.

Tools with handles bent so the wrist remains in the neutral position.

Tools with handles molded for individual fingers, and/or that have indentations that cradle the thumbs.

Loppers with bumpers or cushions between the handles to absorb some of the pruning impact.

Hand pruners and loppers that are gear driven or ratchet.

Pole pruners with heads that allow you to adjust the direction or angle of the blades.

Chain saws with angled handles to minimize wrist curling.

Power tools with anti-vibration systems that suspend hand held parts away from engine and moving part vibrations.

Tools that allow you to be ambidextrous, resting one hand while the other is working. While it is best to use either right or left handed pruners depending on which fits your dominant hand, pruners that can be used in either hand can help lessen fatigue.

Your awareness of “arboricultural health” is important not only for you and your fellow workers or employees, but also for others to whom you may teach pruning. Share information about ergonomics, and demonstrate ergonomic tools, to school and college/university students, Master Gardeners and Tree Stewards, service groups, volunteers doing community projects, garden club members, scouts, clients, etc. The people who care about the health of trees need to care about their own health as well.

Bonnie Lee Appleton is associate professor of horticulture at Virginia Tech University, and extension nursery specialist at the Hampton Roads Agricultural Research & Extension Center.

By Cass Turnbull
Washington and the snow capped Cascade Mountains. The water and mountains were visible from my customer’s house in all seasons, whereas the perennial bed (and fence below) would only be seen in nicer weather when standing outside at the top of the slope, looking down.

The perennials made a nice collection of flowers in the summer months but, design-wise, something was lacking. After much thought, I concluded that the perennial bed needed both a focal point (like a sculpture or other object d’art) and, at the bottom of the hill, a taller backdrop of woody plants. This would hide the fence and add needed height and structure. As most of the perennial flowers formed mounds and drifts, the shrubs would need to be architecturally strong and contrasting (not more round blobs).

To make matters difficult, there was no irrigation system at the bottom of the slope, and it had poor soil. And the customer didn’t like purple foliage or pink or white flowers. She liked blue and yellow. Furthermore, in her seventh decade of life, she naturally wanted something fast-growing, but never interfering with the water view.

Enter the butterfly bush – fast growing (eight to 10 feet), drought tolerant, arching-vase shaped habit, contrasting gray foliage, and summer-blooming blue (or violet, pink or white) flowers. Best of all, when this row of shrubs dared to grow over the allotted height, stealing from the precious water/mountain view, they could be pruned incredibly hard and be none the worse for it!

Stooling

The common butterfly bush can, and often is, annually cut to a low framework. By low, I mean between four and 18 inches above the ground. Even older shrubs, never-before-pruned buddleias, can be renovated this way with cuts that are one, two or even three inches in diameter! Because *B. davidii* blooms on the current year’s wood, pruning is done in early spring after all danger of frost is past, but before new growth commences. Around the Seattle area that means late February or early March. Through that spring and summer the new shoots (that become canes) rapidly grow to a height that is roughly two-thirds the size of the original shrub and, amazingly, the shrub blooms that same year in the late summer.

This sort of hard, annual pruning of shrubs to a low framework is called “stooling.” When done to trees, it is called “coppicing.” Current usage is to apply the term coppicing to both trees and shrubs. But it should be noted that this harsh treatment only works on some plants (others could be ruined or even die as a result) and is only done for very specific reasons. For example, on red-twig dogwoods, stooling works to constantly renew the shrub with bright red branches, which are, as the name implies, the main feature of the plant. For other plants, the object of stooling is to create ultra-large blossoms or giant leaves on relatively shorter (but much broader) shrubs.

The results

Unpruned, the butterfly bush makes a tall, arching fountain-shaped shrub or small tree with numerous cone-shaped flowers that are attractive to bees and butterflies. In many ways it is reminiscent of a lilac, except that it blooms in summer instead of spring. When a bush is stooled, it is likely to regrow with numerous, relatively thinner canes that fan out lower and broader than the unpruned plant. As a result, the blooms will be lower down, which may be the intent of such pruning. If the butterfly bush has become old and tired, its blooms, though still numerous, may have become smaller too. Then hard pruning, such as
stooling, can force it to produce fewer but larger flowers, if that is desired.

Be aware that in two years, or perhaps three, a stooled shrub will have re-attained its previous size. Therefore, if size reduction is the object, stooling will need to be an annual or bi-annual event. The actual size of the plant, pruned or unpruned, is mainly determined by genetics and the root mass (age) of the shrub. Put another way, you may be able to keep a butterfly bush 8 feet tall with pruning, (instead of 12 or 15), but you will not – trust me – be able to keep it down to 4 or 5 feet – not for long anyway.

There are some negative effects to stooling. In my experience, the new growth is weaker, and more apt to break in winds. The new canes are also straighter and thinner and therefore less attractive than older, thicker, pleasantly arching ones. In other words, one trades a taller shrub for a lower, broader one. And that could be problematic if the low canes crowd into desirable perennials or poke into the pathway.

And then there is all the labor involved in cutting an 8-foot shrub to the ground every year, not to mention disposing of the cut branches. Which leads me to suggest an alternate pruning strategy – one favored by lazy horticulturists everywhere.

**Tall and thin**

I have found that, with pruning advice (and a lot of other horticultural advice as well), something that “can be done” erroneously turns into “something that must be done.” In the case of buddleia pruning, just because it can be stooled, does not mean it should be stooled. Instead, one can gently thin, deadwood and perhaps lightly skirt a shrub to good effect. It will still bloom like crazy and look just fine. If flowers are wanted for a vase, one simply uses a pole pruner, instead of loppers. Altogether, it is also a lot less work, needing to be done only once every five years or, perhaps, never.

**The compromise**

As an apparent compromise, many pruners let the main portion or framework of the shrub be constituted by older, thicker, taller canes. They are headed back higher on the shrub (anywhere from 2 to 5 feet tall). Numerous shoots arise from those points, then grow out and bloom. The next
year they, too, are non-selectively headed-back hard, to two or three buds (1-3 inches) from the original framework. In a sense, the stoolsing procedure is now being performed higher on the plant. Hey, it’s an option.

Other buddleias

*B. davidii* is the most common buddleia found in gardens, but not the only one. Occasionally, we run across *B. globosa* and *B. alternifolia*. Like their kin, they can both withstand huge amounts of pruning and hard heading if it is wanted for some reason. But unlike davidii they cannot be stoolsed in the spring with the expectation of blooms in the summer. They bloom on “old wood.”

Therefore, as a general rule, these two are pruned differently. They can, like most shrubs, be left relatively unpruned. Some improvement might be had by deadwooding, a little light thinning, or with the removal of a few annoying canes (cut out at ground level). For those who want to prune more (and my observation is that once pruning has begun, many people do) the longest part of any given cane (with the largest spent blossom) can be cut off. Unlike pruning the *davidii*, the longest cane is selectively headed back to an outs-facing lateral beneath it, or perhaps to an even lower one below that. And in contrast to *davidii* pruning, the tips of those side branches are left un-headed.

If you don’t know which type of butterfly bush you have, they can be identified by their characteristic branching patterns. *B. davidii* has side branches arranged in pairs that are opposite each other located all along the stems. As the species name suggests, *B. alternifolia* has alternating side branches, as does *B. globosa*.

No one has ever asserted that a butterfly bush is a “choice” plant, but it is nevertheless gaining in popularity. It is easy to see why. Buddleia is tough as nails, easy to grow, and as you can tell, incredibly tolerant of pruning.

*Cass Turnbull is a lecturer, author and founder of PlantAmnesty in Seattle, Wash. She will speak on shrub and ornamental pruning at TCI EXPO in October. For details, see brochure on page 45.*

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Please circle 48 on Reader Service Card
Taking the interests of tree care to Capitol Hill

The Voice for Trees Political Action Committee has shifted to high gear and is making tree care legislative issues a priority on Capitol Hill. As a result of successful fundraising events at TCI EXPO and Winter Management Conference, VFT-PAC is now able to make direct donations to government officials who have influence over issues that affect the industry.

Your colleague, Bernie Spigt, president of Northern Virginia Tree Experts, recently delivered the first $1,000 check personally to Congressman Chris Cannon, R-Utah. Congressman Cannon is a champion for the green industry in supporting a raise in the H2-B visas allowed in each year.

“I told him that many Americans don’t want to do some of the work that my crews do,” Reports Spigt. “We need an immigrant work force to complete our work.”

Spigt went on to explain to the other attendees what a “tree expert” actually does. “Many think we are loggers or foresters,” he notes. Spigt was able to explain to Cannon that commercial and residential arboriculture is entirely different from logging. Spigt was pleased at the access he was able to achieve and in getting a member of Congress to take the time to listen to his important points.

Spigt has never considered himself a political person — except for serving as president of his homeowners’ association. He willingly volunteered, however, to serve on the VFT-PAC advisory board and deliver its first check.

VFT-PAC has more opportunities for other TCIA members to attend events and take our important message to our nation’s leaders. If you have a personal contact in a congressional office or would like to volunteer to deliver a check in your state, please let us know. Call 1-800-733-2622 and ask for Erin Hass, or e-mail hass@treecareindustry.org

Here is a list of the other congressional members the VFT-PAC would like to make contributions to this year.

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-1-WS)
Rep. Charlie Norwood (R-6-GA)
Rep. Sam Johnson (R-3-TX)
Rep. John Boehner (R-8-OH)
Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-12-NY)
Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH)
Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY)
Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA)
Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT)
Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-CA)
Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX)

Spigt, owner and president of Northern Virginia Tree Care Experts in Chantilly, Va., has been a member of TCIA since 1984.

Job Fair back by popular demand!

The Job and Internship Fair is back at TCI EXPO 2004 in Detroit, Mich. Student Career Days attracts vocational and collegiate students in arboriculture, urban forestry, tree technology, and ornamental horticulture.

The fair will be held Thursday, October 28, 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is the only employee recruitment opportunity allowed at TCI EXPO, so sign up today. To reserve a booth at the Job and Internship Fair, contact Deb Cyr at (603) 314-5380 or cyr@treecareindustry.org!
### G & A Equipment, Inc. Knoxville, TN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Make</th>
<th>Fuel Type</th>
<th>Mileage</th>
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What Have Been Your Best and Worst Business Decisions?

By Thomas G. Dolan

Have you ever wondered what were the really good business decisions some of your fellow tree care providers have made? Might they help guide you in some of your own decisions? By the same token, have you wondered about their dumb mistakes as well? Could you also learn from those?

Here are the responses from six tree care professionals around the country, all TCIA members, who were generous enough to share the best and worst of their business decisions.

Ron and Doreen Orist

Ron and Doreen Orist, partners

Doreen Orist reports that she and her husband are now involved in consulting and related activities, but ran their arborist business from 1983 until selling it in 2000.

“When we started out we had $500, a 3-month-old baby and a backpack, and the best decision we made was to start with a business plan. We decided we would not move forward in debt.”

Doreen Orist, Urban Environmental Enterprises

“...the best decision we made was to start with a business plan. We decided we would not move forward in debt. Everything we bought we would pay in full or only on short term credit. So we were able to grow our business. In 1989 we were able to offer employees health benefits, sick days and paid vacations, ahead of the industry. And all the money we made we put back into the business. So when we walked away we owned all our trucks and equipment and had no debt. The business had $1.8 million in revenues when we sold it.”

Another good initial decision, Orist says, “was early on we joined NAA (now TCIA) and ISA, and were very active in educating and promoting proper tree care. We were involved in local tree care associations and were mentors for several small businesses. Some people in the area thought we were crazy for mentoring and helping others. But we felt we would ultimately benefit from promoting good tree care – and we did.”

On the downside, Orist says, “The worst decisions we made were not to fire employees for wrongdoing, for not showing up at work on time, not being prepared, and damaging both the customers’ and our property. We lived with the fear that we would not be able to find another qualified person to do that job.”

One of the worst experiences, Orist relates, “came in 1998. Ron and I had lost three parents between us and were at the point of stress and burnout in both life and work. So we handed over much of the running of the business to a trusted employee, who was our vice president and director of operations. We didn’t pay enough attention, and he took advantage of us, because we let go of the structures and procedures we had put in place.”

The bad times lasted for about 18 months, until one of the employees brought to their attention that things were not going quite right. “We found out our trusted employee was embezzling money and had also corrupted some other employees to do what was unethical.”

Did this experience lead to the sale?

“No, he stole from us, but didn’t really hurt the business, and we already had our business proposal for selling in place.”

Henry Frischknecht

Henry Frischknecht

Henry Frischknecht, owner
Empire Tree And Turf, Augusta, Ga.

“My best decision was to take on Hispanic workers,” Frischknecht says. “I was having trouble with my employees – too many drug and alcohol problems. It’s hard to get good quality. The Hispanics I hired didn’t know anything about the business when I hired them, but they’re very intelligent, learn quickly, and are hard workers. They bring no problems to work with them.”

Now Frischknecht has about 10 Hispanics, about half his crew. “With these
good people on the crew I have more leverage with the others," Frischknecht says. "The whiners leave, and those who stay know they have to shape up or someone else will be there to take their place."

Frischknecht’s worst decision, he says, "was over-expansion. At one time I had three divisions, one eight hours and the other three hours away from my main office. I was overextended. You have to be incredibly organized to keep a good work flow in a situation like that. And, with so many people out there, it’s harder to discipline through a branch manager. I had to basically start over again and stay with just a single division. This way I can stay on top of everything that goes on.”

Steve Houser, president Arborlogical Services Inc., Wylie, Texas:

“Perhaps our best decision came at the very beginning of our company; we wanted to offer the very best service possible, and to do that, to attract and acquire the best personnel in the industry. We spend a great deal of time finding people with the right chemistry to fit into the rest of the team.”

Houser, who has been actively involved in numerous tree-related organizations, says that the same recruiting process he began 25 years ago he keeps in place today. "Being one of the top companies in town, we’re able to offer our employees a greater number of benefits than the average tree care company," Houser says.

Always striving for the best has other manifestations as well. “We always buy the best equipment money can buy,” Houser says. “It saves time and is much more efficient.”

Houser continues, “We also have a formal safety program, which has resulted in six of our employees representing the state in champion tree climbing international competition 12 different years. And that can probably sum up my final point here – training pays off.”

In terms of bad decisions, Houser says, "Well that’s an open book. One has been the ‘windshield estimate.’ You drive buy and estimate what the job will cost. That comes back and bites you.”

“Another bad decision has been that we decided on ‘organic pest control.’ Well, we found out it was not as popular as we projected. It ultimately caused a severe financial burden on the company. We warehoused a lot of it, thinking it would sell. It didn’t. And, we were making extra trips for application, which wasn’t the best use of our client’s money.”

---

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Jason Cates, owner
Arborscape Tree Care, Princeton, Mass.

“I’d say the best decision I’ve made was joining a business networking group,” Cates says. “That way I get referrals and spend much less time doing estimates. People come to you knowing you will do a good job, so you can just quote a fair price. It’s also allowed me to cut way back on advertising.”

The group, Cates explains, is called Business Network International (www.bni.com). A group of 25 to 40 business owners meet once a week. There is one to a profession: a lawyer, plumber, painter, and so on. “Each one of us carries a little portfolio of business cards,” Cates says. “So if I hear someone has the need of a plumber, I’ll have someone to recommend. When any of the others hear of a need for an arborist, then I’ll be recommended.”

Cates is in two such groups in different cities. The first one, which he’s belonged to for awhile, averages five to six referrals a week. In the other he’s just getting started and says he’ll need time to build relationships.

Is it something you have devote a lot of time to, getting referrals for others so they’ll do the same for you?

“No, you don’t have to promote it,” Cates replies. “It’s just something you keep your eyes and ears open about every day. Sometimes people ask you if you know somebody who can do a certain kind of work. Other times you see a need then make a suggestion. Once you start making referrals for others, they become motivated to do it for you. That way the relationships build.”

Cates’ worst decisions, he says, “have been buying used equipment. I’ve never had good luck with used equipment. There’s always down time, a royal pain in the neck. It’s much cheaper in the long run to just buy new equipment, and keep your customers and crews satisfied.”

Bill Jacobsen, operating manager
Jacobsen Tree Services, Granite Falls, Minn.:

“My best and worst decisions were one and the same,” says Jacobsen. “I sold the business to an electric company about five years ago.”

Jacobsen’s dad started the company in 1961. Jacobsen took over in 1991 and ran it until Jan 1, 2000, when he sold it, staying on, however, to manage the company.

The main negative, Jacobsen says, is “You lose a lot of freedom in doing things your own way. But there was a time when the electric companies were buying up all the tree care companies in the area, and we felt the pressure.”

When asked whether he ever thought about going out and starting up a new business on his own, he says, “The thought runs through my mind two to three times a year, especially after a board meeting,” says Jacobsen. “I never had to go to those before.”

Yet, overall, Jacobsen believes he made the right decision. “My dad saw the writing on the wall, and said it was the way to go,” Jacobsen says. “It was probably a good thing. There’s total security. We still do sales and marketing, but a lot of the business comes automatically through the electric company. And they’re a good banker. If we need equipment we just go to them. Now the employees have good health insurance and 401(k) plans, which we couldn’t afford before.”

Jacobsen adds that his work day has gone...
down from 16 hours to 10, while the num-
ber of crews have gone from four to 12. “It’s
increased the value of the company, and
since I’ve retained 10 percent of it, I’ll have
a good nest egg when I retire.”

Nathaniel and Teresa Damron, owners
Sperry Tree Care Company,
Eugene, Ore.:

“As a very general statement, we market
relationships. I think this is one of the best
things we do, as opposed to doing regular
ads,” says Teresa Damron. “I decided not to
try to distinguish ourselves by buying a full
yellow page ad. I think print is a waste of
time. Instead I chose to support our public radio
classical music sta-
tion.”

Damron says
that it took six
months before she
got any responses,
but says, “I think
there’s a lag time in
that type of market,
and besides, at that
time we just had a
meager little marketing budget and could do
just two spots a week. But then the respons-
eses started coming and steadily increased.
The people who listen to that station are
incredibly loyal and will seek you out.”

That marketing effort worked in conjunc-
tion with another. “There’s a home and
garden show in our community, one in the
spring and one in the fall. We started 10
years ago and there still are no competitors
there. Maybe it’s the cost of the $500 for a
booth, I don’t know. But we get a chance to
meet people and talk one-on-one. I bank
$5,000 to $10,000 plus within a month of
each home show, and that doesn’t count
what comes in later. One gentleman bom-
barred us with questions, which we
answered. In the next two years he bought
$30,000 worth of tree care for his private
residence. Now at the shows we spend a lot
of time saying hello to our old customers as
well as our new ones.”

Some of the worst decisions, Damron
says, have had to do with hiring. “I once
hired a woman who was to work in the office
with me, so I thought I could handle that,”
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**Arborwear, LLC**
The original tree climbers’ gear: Arborwear clothing designed by tree climbers, for tree climbers. Pants, shirts and belts combine comfort and function.

**Asplundh Tree Expert Co.**
Our company provides a full range of safe, cost-effective line clearance and vegetation management services to the utility industry.

**ATRIA Group, Inc.**
Atria Group develops technology for the tree industry to simplify work on the job site.

**Bandit Industries, Inc.**
Bandit is the industry’s leading supplier of hand- and loader-fed chippers, stump grinders and waste reduction machines. We offer 14 hydraulic-feed, disc- and drum-style hand-fed chippers; five stump grinders, towable and self-propelled; and four distinct models of towable and self-propelled whole tree chippers. We also offer a complete line of Beast Recycler waste reduction machines, four of which range in horsepower from 300 to 1,000 – three that are available self-propelled. All Beasts convert unwanted tree waste into valuable mulch. The Color Critter Colorizer can also be added to one of our Beasts to increase the value of mulch.

**Bartlett Arborist Supply & Mfg. Company**
Bartlett provides tools, climbing, rigging, safety and cabling supplies for the professional arborist. Come see what’s new at Bartlett!

**The F. A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company**
Bartlett Tree Experts is the world’s leading scientific tree and shrub care company. It has offices in 27 states, Canada, Ireland and Great Britain. Services include pruning, integrated pest and disease management, soil analysis, cabling and bracing, tree lightning protection systems and tree inventories. Guided by the scientists at the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories in Charlotte, N.C.

**BBA Fiberweb**
Biobarrier Root Control and Biobarrier II Premergence Weed Control. Long-term, slow release technology incorporating a proven herbicide with a geosynthetic fabric.
BCL Glove, Ltd.
BCL Glove, Ltd. strives to be a North American leader in the design, manufacture and marketing of specialized gloves for industrial workers.

Beaver Squeezer Grapple, LLC
Grapple with winch for skid steer loader.

Buccaneer Rope Co.
Manufacturer of premium climbing and lowering ropes.

Buckingham Manufacturing Co., Inc.
Buckingham Manufacturing is the leading manufacturer of climbing equipment and related accessories for the professional arborist. Stop by our booth to see many new innovative products to make your job safer and easier.

Corona Clipper
Since 1920 we have manufactured the finest quality tools including hand pruners, hedge shears, loppers, saws, shovels, rakes, brooms, striking tools and specialty utility tools. This is why we have been “First choice for generations.”

Creative Sales, Inc.
ACECAP and MEDICAP Systemic Implants for trees. A “closed system” for delivering fertilizers, micronutrients or systemic pesticides directly to the tree being treated.

Cummins Bridgeway, LLC

Cutter’s Choice
Professional’s catalog of arborist supplies – chain saw parts and climbing gear – mail order direct business.

Davey Tree Expert Co.
ArborGreen Tree and Shrub Fertilizer, tree industry consulting and software services.

Deutz Corporation
Manufacturer of air and liquid-cooled diesel and gas engines in the 6-10,000 hp range.

DIACA Marketing Co.
Outrigger pads, ground cover mats and wheel chocks.

Doggett Corporation
Manufacturer of specialty tree fertilizers, soil amendments and supplements. Slow release specialty formulations, trace elements for specific deficiencies, Ph correctors, organics for soil injection and vertical mulch. Doggett is also a clearing house for information and research dealing with tree health and nutrition.

Dubbsmark LLC
Stump Cutting Machines.

Dynamic Manufacturing Corp.
Cone-Head wood chippers; Stumpro self-propelled riding stump grinders.

Easy Use Air Tools, Inc.
Sales of Supersonic Air Knife for damage-free excavation of roots and treatment.

Echo Incorporated
Hand held power equipment manufacturer of chain saws, power pruners, trimmers, blowers, shred-n-vac and other arborist equipment.

Elk River, Inc.
Manufacturer of personal fall protection products including tree saddles and other arborist accessories.

Enginaire
Enginaire precleaners save on engine maintenance, lower cost, extend air filter life; full line of air pre-cleaners to meet full line of engines.

Envirometrics Systems, Inc.
BugBarrier Tree Protection System – New non-pesticide method of protecting trees against insect infestation. Operates against a variety of insect species.

FAE-USA, Inc.
FAE Forestry Mowers for the commercial residential tree care company, municipality, landscape contractor and property management.

Fanno Saw Works
Manufacturers of the world famous Fanno Pruning Saws since 1921. Made in the USA. Also featuring Fanno International ‘Tri-Edge’ saws. Quality and unique saws for the professional. Help us celebrate over 81 years in the tree care industry.

Fecon, Inc.
Fecon is a leading manufacturer of wood waste processing equipment and systems, including shredding, grinding, coloring and turning. Fecon can help turn your wood waste into profit.

Fehr Bros. Industries, Inc.
Forged eyebolts, J lag hooks, turnbuckles, thimbles, cable and cable clips, chain, hooks, shackles, load binders, blocks, tree grips and guy strand, slings and rigging hardware, all available in galvanized or stainless steel.

First Call Flagging, Inc.
Automated flagging machine. Saves lives and money.

Florian Ratchet-Cut
Inventor and manufacturer of the Original Florian Ratchet-Cut Pruning Tools since 1965. Our high quality product line includes hand pruners, loppers, pole pruners, saws, and accessories to make all of your pruning jobs easier. The unique ratchet-cut design increases your power by up to 700 percent, stop by our booth and see for yourself.

Foley Enterprises
Non-immigrant labor certification for H2B work permits.

Forestry Equipment of Virginia
Seller of forestry equipment such as bucket trucks, chip dump trucks, wood chippers etc.

Forestry Suppliers, Inc.
Climbing and rigging equipment and supplies, clinometers, tree corers, soil penetrometers, diameter tapes, pH meters, sprayers, GPS, laser-pointers, soil testing suppliers, tree/log scale sticks. Free 648-page catalog.
Fred Marvin Associates
Manufacturers of pole pruners and pole saws since 1943.

Fresco Arborist Supplies
Supplier of high quality arborist supplies for the modern arborist including a wide variety of climbing equipment and rigging supplies. Shop online at www.frescoarborist.com.

Future Forestry Products Inc.
Manufacturer of equipment for safe and ergonomic high pruning, selective forestry harvesting and virtually zero impact log moving.

G & A Equipment, Inc.
Used bucket trucks, cranes, chip trucks and chippers.

Giuffre Brothers Cranes
Giuffre Bros. Cranes is a leader in the boom truck industry with over 40 years of experience. We offer a wide range of boom trucks from 8-40 ton capacities and 50 ft.-165 ft. reach. These boom trucks can also be equipped with man baskets and remote controls. A unique tool for the professional.

Good Tree Care Company
Introducing a simple new tool for complex rigging. This device can be used with a winch or a rope break interchangeably.

Green Manufacturing, Inc.
Manufacturer: Greenteeth stump cutter teeth and pockets. For orders call 1-888-814-7336 or Greenteeth.net. Call (734) 753-5200 for technical information.

Growtech, Inc.
Featuring “Smooth Operators.” Easy-to-use, lightweight, professional pruning tools. Folding and arborist straight saws, pole saws, long reach pruners, loppers, hedge shears, horticultural and flower knives, scissors, accessories.

The Hartford
The Hartford provides business insurance solutions specifically for the tree care industry. With more than a decade of underwriting experience, our in-depth knowledge enables us to offer key coverages such as pesticide & herbicide application, tools & equipment, and workmanship error. To find out more, stop by our booth or visit mb.thehartford.com/arborists.

Hill Manufacturing

Husqvarna
Chain saws, safety apparel, trimmers and blowers.

IML - Instrument Mechanic Labor, Inc.
Featuring the Resistograph – a mechanical drilling instrument providing a true picture of the defect zones within a tree; Fractometer – measuring bending movement, angle of fracture and compressive strength.

Independent Protection Company
Lightning protection equipment and systems for trees. Also for golf-related structures, recreational areas and buildings.

International Society of Arboriculture
Brochures, publications, videos and services available through ISA, including membership and certification information. The latest books, manuals and videos on tree care will also be available for purchase at the show. Preview us at www.ag.uiuc.edu/nisa

J.J. Mauget Company
The time-proven micro-injection system that promotes tree health and protects the environment. Mauget’s Pharmacy of cures includes three fungicides, four insecticides, seven fertilizers, two combinations, and one antibiotic.

J.P. Carlton Company, Div. DAF, Inc.
Professional stump grinders – ranging from 25 hp self propelled to 125 hp turbo diesel – highest quality, most advanced machines available today.

Jameson, LLC
Tree Care Tools – Poles, Pruners, Pole Saws, Boom Mount Tool Holders.

Jarraff Industries, Inc.
For over 20 years Jarraff Industries has been manufacturing the tallest and fastest mechanical tree trimmer. Stop by and see what we are all about and check out the latest in brush mowers as well.

JRM Chemical
Soil Moist water management polymers and Mycorrhizal products. Increase plant growth and establishment with less watering and fertilization use.

Karl Kueemmerling, Inc.
Mitts & Merrill Brush Chippers, Bean Sprayers, Timberwolf Wood Splitters and Conveyors, Swinger Loaders, climbing ropes, safety saddles, tree trimming equipment and outdoor work clothing.

Kershaw
Kershaw has been involved in tree care related to the utility industry for over 25 years. Kershaw manufactures the SkyTrim Tree Trimmer and the Klearway 800 and 1200 Model Brushcutters as well as the Klipper Tree Trimmer for sale, lease, or rent. Demo units can be made available for serious inquiries.

King Kong Tools
High quality carbide teeth for woodgrinding machines (tub/horizontal grinder and stump cutters)

The Knifesource, LLC
Manufacturer of bush chipper knives.

Lemco Tool Corporation
Manufacturer of professional-grade tools.

Leonardi Manufacturing
Three new items: Tomahawk Teeth, Ultimate Pocket, Bolts with newly-designed head and threads. All built to give you the highest performance on the market.
Loader Div. of NMC-Wollard
NMC-Wollard, Inc. designs, manufacturers, and markets SWINGER articulated loaders/tool carriers. Swingers turn without creating ruts - ideal for work in yards, turf, and other sensitive surfaces. Our products carry a reputation of high quality, durability, versatility and dependability.

Loftness/US Attachments
Loftness Specialized Equipment, Inc. provides a full line of Tractor 3-point mounted or skidsteer mounted tree and brush shredders, orchard and vineyard shredders, flail mowers, rock pickers, sod roll-laying, snowblowers. The product line is know for state of the art design, durability and workmanship. The Loftness Web site includes complete listings of product pricing, product videos, literature, by state listing of dealers and sales representatives.

Logan Clutch Corp.

M-B Companies, Inc.
Trailer mounted disc style drum chippers. Sizes range from 6-inch to 12-inch capacity utilizing our 90 degree powersaver cut.

Magnum Systems, Inc.
Mechanical tree trimmers with a cutting height of 30 ft. and 90-550 hp. Fixed/flail tooth mulcher mowers on Cat carriers, from skid loaders on up.

MAT-3, Inc.
Manufacturer of aerial devices for the arborist industry, featuring the unique extendable upper boom for easy access to the work area.

Michigan Green Industry Association
Michigan Green Industry Association is a statewide organization that has been serving the green industry for almost 50 years. Our main purpose is to promote professionalism, certification and education to the green industry. Our diverse membership of more than 750 consists of landscape design, construction and maintenance firms, tree care professionals, irrigation, fertilizing and pesticide applicators, municipalities, hardscaping and snow removal contractors. Membership dues are $175 per year and include receiving the state’s premier green industry monthly full-color publication, the Landsculptor.

Midwest Arborist Supplies
Tree care equipment, micro-injection and fertilizer supplies.

Miller Machine Works
Powerful, proven, patented stump grinding and site preparation attachments for use on tractors from 30 to 150 horsepower, as well as skidsteer loaders.

Mills Truck Sales
Trucks for arborists – new and used equipment

Minnesota Wanner Company
Manufacturer/distributor for IPM/Plant Health Care sprayers, pumps and accessories.

Petzl America
Rope, climbing gear and everything needed for successful, safe operation in a tree.

Plant Health Care, Inc.
Plant Health Care, Inc. is the world technology leader in research and commercial development of products using beneficial mycorrhizal fungi and rhizosphere bacteria, and has developed over 30 proprietary products for improving plant, soil and water quality.

Plastic Composites Company
Replacement buckets, bucket liners, bucket and boom guards for most bucket trucks. Also saw scabbards, tool holders, hanging steps and fiberglass and vinyl bucket covers.

Practical Solutions, Inc.
The Service Solution – Software designed for the chemical lawn and tree care industry. Includes marketing, billing, routing, scheduling, service timing, estimates, work orders, statements, renewals and much more!

Preferred Processors Company, LLC
Log Splitters.

Preformed Line Products
Specialized cabling and bracing equipment for the tree care industry: Tree-Grip dead-end, Tree-Crotch Grip and Safety Guy-Wire Dispenser.

Rainbow Treecare Scientific Advancements
Scientifically proven treatments for Oak Wilt, Dutch Elm Disease and tree growth regulator Cambistat.
Rayco Manufacturing, Inc.
Rayco Manufacturing is dedicated to the design and production of the world’s most innovative and complete line of Stump Cutters, Compact Crawlers, and Environmental Equipment.

Redmax/Komatsu Zenoah America, Inc.
Komatsu Zenoah manufactures a complete line of RedMax trimmers, brushcutters, handheld and backpack blowers, edgers, short and long reach hedge trimmers, as well as top handle, rear handle and pole chain saws, and an exclusive gas powered scissors called a reciprocator. The quality, durability and workmanship of all RedMax products are field proven in the green industry, and are sold only through sales and servicing dealerships nationwide. Many RedMax products are equipped with lightweight RedMax Strato-Charged engines, which meet all CARB Tier II and EPA Phase II regulations without the need for a catalytic converter.

Rotochopper, Inc.
Rotochopper Inc. is an international manufacturer of wood waste grinders, mobile bagging systems and wood chip processor/colorizers. Rotochopper Inc. is unique in that it is the only U.S. company that markets a mobile bagging system and the only wood waste grinder that can grind and color mulch in one pass.

Salsco, Inc.
Manufacturer of 3-inch to 18-inch capacity, wood/brush chippers, 8 to 200 hp, gas, diesel, electric and PTO. Chipper/Shredder/Vacuum - 25 hp, gas.

Sandvik
Sandvik offers products for the Stump Grinding industry. The patented DURA Disk Cutting System is now available for a variety of Stump Grinder machines for the efficient and economical removal of stumps. Sandvik also offers innovative products for the Bio-Recycling and waste reduction industry. We develop tooling systems for Tub Grinders, Horizontal Recycle Machines and other equipment, processing a variety of materials.

SavATree
SavATree has been providing environmentally sensible tree, shrub and lawn care to residents, communities, businesses and historic properties for over 20 years. They currently operate in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia. SavATree specializes in Plant Health Care, General Tree Care and Lawn Care services that include artistic and maintenance pruning, historic tree preservation, construction damage prevention, storm damage prevention, organic lawn care and integrated lawn care. By cultivating a productive growing environment for your trees, shrubs and lawn, SavATree enhances their ability to tolerate stress and live a healthy, productive existence.

Schodorf Truck Body & Equipment Co.
Manufacturer of “Silver Knight” forestry body for over 50 years. Get the advantage of DRS (dust release system). Options include removable aluminum roofs, liftgates, cranes for all applications, and more. Complete packages with chassis and demo specials. Attractive lease/purchase programs and delivery available.

SDM Tools
Stumpgrinder teeth and pockets; chipper knives. 1-888-770-8140.

Sherrill Arborist Supply
A leader in arborist supplies, Sherrill delivers great, informative customer service and a warehouse stocked will all the gear today’s arborist needs. Our certified, in-house splicers can produce custom splices on demand, giving you yet another level of service that just can’t be beat. Sherrill Arborist Supply, 1-800-525-8873 or www.serrillinc.com.

Sierra Moreno Mercantile
Work proven tools for tree health professionals. Our company leads the industry in new product innovation.

Simonds International Corp.
Manufacturer of Limb-inator brand brush chipper knives for all types of machines.

Southco Industries, Inc.
Forestry chip trucks.

Spirit/Miller Driveaway
Provide driveaway service for commercial vehicles. We specialize in utility and construction vehicles.

Stihl Incorporated
Stihl is the number one selling brand of chain saws worldwide. See the new MS 361 and MS 361C chain saws, featuring low vibration and extreme durability. A full range of Stihl chain saws, outdoor power equipment and hand tools will also be displayed.

Stump Removal Inc./KAN-DU
Kan-Du Stump Grinder; fast, efficient, economical and proven reliability – hydraulically controlled, self-propelled, easy to operate, grinds 24” deep, 48” working width, yet pass through a 29” opening.

Terex Telelect, Inc.
Terex Telelect is a leading manufacturer of tree trimming equipment. We manufacture the Hi-Ranger XT Series aerial tree trimmers and the Hi-Ranger TL Backyard Aerial. We have an aerial device to meet all your tree trimming needs.

Tilton Equipment Company
Chainsaws/Trimmers/Pressure Washers

Timberwolf Manufacturing Corporation
Professional firewood processing equipment; splitters, conveyors, and processors.

Tree Care Industry Association
Established in 1938 as the National Arborist Association, today’s TCIA is a trade association of more than 2,000 commercial tree care firms and affiliated companies. TCIA develops safety and education programs, standards of tree care practice, and management information for arboriculture firms around the world. We provide continuing education, training, and publications to promote the safe and appropriate practice of tree care, including Tree Care Industry magazine, the most circulated and read publication in the industry, and TCI EXPO, the world’s largest tree care trade show.

Tree Management Systems, Inc.
Arbor Gold Software
Management software designed specifically for the tree care companies. Features include: phone center, proposals, scheduling, work orders, invoicing, directions, maps, built-in landscape CAD designer, and most importantly, a 100 percent synchronizable database for mobile offices. Also offers a QuickBooks posting option.

Trucks & Parts of Tampa
New and used grapple boom trucks and dump trucks always in stock. An excellent selection immediately available for both sale or rent. Visit us at www.trucks.com and see our entire inventory of trucks as well as our large selection of new, rebuilt and used truck parts.

U.S. Rigging Supply/Pelican Rope Works
U.S. Rigging Supply has been manufacturing wire rope assemblies and accessories for more than 29 years. Recently, U.S. Rigging was appointed the exclusive U.S. importer of Kong carabiners and accessories. Our sister company, Pelican Rope Works, has been manufacturing superior quality braided synthetic ropes for more than 23 years. Together, both companies provide the arborist and landscaping trades with an unbeatable combination of service, safety lanyards, flippies, carabiners, fittings and attachments.

Vermeer Manufacturing Company
Vermeer Manufacturing is scheduled to display several environmental innovations from our proven line of brush chippers, stump cutters, horizontal and tub grinders, and tree spades.

Wall Industries
Manufacturer of the most complete line of braided tree ropes. Plus safety lanyards, tree saddles, blocks, rope brakes, flippies, sewn bags, rigging and slideline kits.

Weaver Leather, Inc.
Arborist supplies including positioning saddles, climber pads, straps, guards, pruner pouches, sheaths, holsters, scabbards, axe guards, replacement pads and more.

Wood/Chuck Chipper Corporation
Superior chippers since 1969. Wood/Chuck combines years of manufacturing experience with the latest technology to produce quality equipment for the tree care industry.

Woodsman Chippers
Complete line of professional Woodsman Brush Chippers - whole tree and hand-fed; durable, safe and highly productive.

Zenith Cutter Co.
Chipper knives for all makes and models of brush chippers and other industrial knives.
A manufacturer of aerial devices is not rewriting industry safety standards, but its computer- and Web-based training program is delivering more thorough safety training to workers in the tree care industry.

“In terms of accident history, operator error is most often the primary cause of accident and injury,” says Joshua Chard, a safety engineer with Birmingham, Alabama-based Altec, a company that sells 20 to 25 percent of its aerial lift units to the tree care industry.

Citing OSHA reports, Chard notes that a majority of accidents occurred because the aerial device was not being operated as intended. That premise was also Altec’s starting point for creating a comprehensive training program that goes beyond instructions on how to operate the equipment to include a complete safety curriculum with a testing program; it also provides certification that an employee has completed his or her training.

Launched this past spring, “The Altec Sentry Program for Tree Care Aerial Devices” is a computer-based training aid designed to help employers train operators on the safe and proper operation of Altec aerial devices. A spin-off of the company’s programs for training workers in public utilities, the course caters to the needs of tree care workers, meeting the formal requirements of OSHA and ANSI A92.2 2001 and coming at a time when the industry is taking a close look at revising safety standards. A complete package, including a CD-ROM, paper manuals and a videotape comes with each truck the company delivers.

There are three good reasons for a company to focus on safety, all related to the potential fallout from accidents. An on-job accident may cause injury or death, in a worst-case scenario. An accident may also cost time and money, and, many safety officials believe, accidents can be prevented by following precautions in maintaining the equipment, surveying the worksite and working safely on the job. That is why this training zeros in on certain areas, such as how to work in and around power lines, and safe distances for different types of work.

All aerial device manufacturers or dealers offer some “familiarity” training to either train employees directly, or train those who will train the employees. The focus is generally limited to the safe operation of that piece of equipment (also a major focus of the Altec training). As an employee of one manufacturer noted, “Our training focuses on how to operate our equipment. Not how to do their job.”

Chard says he expects other aerial device manufacturers to release Web- or computer-based training programs, though none has done so yet. Altec has continued to develop its program.

“We started with a video program,” Chard explains. When customers then asked if the company could supply an exam, Altec complied, and developed it for the computer in two formats. Self-directed training kits – which include multiple-use programs installed on an individual computer – can guide operators through the program at their own pace using the computer training plus workbooks and evaluation sheets. The
company’s instructor-led program helps “train the trainer,” providing knowledge and materials to be used later in a classroom setting. As with the self-directed kit, the company provides workbooks, tests and evaluation sheets.

“We can put somebody in front of a computer and they can progress at their own pace,” Chard says, or the instructor-led workshops can run as half-day training sessions. Either way, the computer-based training aid contains Altec recommendations and OSHA requirements for proper operation of equipment, which pop up on the screen in some sections. There are also a series of quizzes culminating with a final exam.

The general industry standard allows only a trained person to operate the lift, according to Chard, but the question of what OSHA means by trained is what led to developing the classroom curriculum and hands-on training.

Dave Rattigan is a freelance writer living in Peabody, Mass.
The Best Machines For Disposing or Recycling Tree Waste

**Bandit’s Beasts**
Choose from 4 models 275 - 1000 HP
The most cost effective machines for converting green waste to mulch.

**Model 5680**
Absolutely the best machine for big logs and stumps

New coloring attachment!!
The Beast is now able to color mulch using a dry granulated, oxidizing colorant that covers extremely well while adding very little moisture. The mess common with liquid and powder colorants is eliminated. The colorant costs under $3 a cubic yard for most colors.

Complete line of hand-fed chippers
6”, 9”, 12”, 15”, and 18” capacity hydraulic feed disc and drum style.

Whole tree Chippers Designed for Urban Use
Practical machines with loaders to take labor costs out of tree disposal. 18", 19" and 24" diameter capacities, with or without loaders. Towable or self propelled.

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E-Mail: sales@banditchippers.com
Website: www.banditchippers.com

Please circle 9 on Reader Service Card
Whether your company operates five trucks or 50, vehicle accidents can be devastating to your tree care business. The good news is that a comprehensive fleet safety program can help manage the exposure associated with the operation of a fleet of vehicles.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which recently released its preliminary accident estimates for 2003, fatalities involving motorcycles and large trucks has increased. For trucks, the increase was relatively small – 0.9 percent increase for trucks versus an 11 percent increase for motorcycles – but it still represented an increase of 45 fatalities for a total of 4,942 large truck fatalities in 2003.

Vehicle accidents should be of particular concern to employers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, highway-related incidents topped the list of work-related fatalities between 1992 and 2002, ahead of both homicides and falls (See chart).

Beyond the obvious human toll of death and injury, vehicle collisions can result in both direct and indirect costs, which can have a significant negative impact on a company’s business operation.

While direct costs can include higher insurance costs due to poor accident experience, indirect costs can easily exceed the amount of direct costs and have a direct impact on a company’s bottom line. Examples of indirect costs include losing customers and future customer jobs due to negative publicity, additional overtime expenses to complete work, extra supervisory or clerical time spent on investigations, legal expenses, increased hiring and training costs, production delays and contract penalties, to name a few.

In developing a fleet safety program, it is important to begin with a well-defined policy statement that is endorsed by senior management. Fleet safety rules and enforcement procedures should be clearly defined and communicated to employees and supervisory personnel, particularly with regard to specific responsibilities and accountabilities.

Components of a fleet safety program

Below is a list of the major components of a Fleet Safety Program. Keep in mind that specific components of a fleet safety program should be tailored to the needs and characteristics of a particular business:

1. Fleet coordinator

Assigned by senior management, the fleet coordinator should be actively involved in monitoring the day-to-day implementation of the fleet safety program. Responsibilities may include participating in and/or monitoring driver training programs, auditing maintenance records, conducting co-travels (ride-alongs), analyzing loss trends, and reviewing accident investigations.

2. Driver selection criteria

It is important to establish qualification standards and determine minimum applicant standards. Using a written physical job description may help address regulatory standards, such as those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or the U.S. Department of Transportation. Factors to consider include: job knowledge, customer service skills, transferable work experience, vehicle operating skills, safe driving record, physical ability to do the job safely, and attitude as factors. Drug testing may also be considered if done in accordance with individual state laws.

3. Driver training

Drivers need to understand their responsibilities completely – not only the functional aspects of their job, but also safe driving procedures. Each employee should be given a copy of the fleet safety policy when they are hired. This policy should be clearly explained to the driver, and receipt of the fleet safety policy should be documented in the employee’s personnel file.

Defensive driver training should be conducted on an ongoing basis. Even though applying these techniques every day on the road is part of the foundation for reducing accidents and collisions, not all drivers utilize defensive driving techniques. There are three types of driver training. Plan to give initial training as soon as a new driver comes on board; refresher training on a
periodic basis to highlight or reinforce key
skills and techniques; and, conduct remedi-
al training as needed to address
substandard performance.

Training components can include com-
pany rules and policies; routes and
schedules; defensive driving techniques;
customer service procedures; and emer-
gency procedures.

4. Driver supervision

The inherent nature of a fleet operation
leaves drivers under their own supervision
for a substantial part of the workday, so it
is critical to establish specific guidelines
for job performance. These can include:

Evaluation criteria – Regardless of the
criteria you use, it is important to establish
and communicate clear objectives up front
to ensure that drivers know how their per-
formance will be measured.

Incentives can be effective motivators in
some cases, but programs should be
designed to address specific company needs.
For example, consider offering an incentive
for achieving an accident-free period.

Driver accountability with regard to fleet
safety can be integrated within the supervi-
sion protocols. Some companies find it
beneficial to hold their drivers financially
responsible for their involvement in a colli-
sion or accident, if it is determined that the
driver could have prevented it. Depending
on state-specific regulations, it may be pos-
sible to charge a financial surcharge or
require employees to pay a portion of their
insurance deductible – check the laws in
your particular state. Proper vehicle care
and maintenance can be another area of
focus, with periodic inspections by man-
agement strongly encouraged.

Disciplinary procedures can take many
forms and have a series of action levels –
from verbal warnings to immediate termi-
nation – to address such behaviors as
incurring parking tickets, moving viola-
tions or operating under the influence of
drugs or alcohol.

5. Vehicle maintenance

A well-implemented vehicle mainte-
nance policy can have many benefits to
your business, including reduced opera-
tional costs and/or accidents from vehicle
defects, and improved company reputation.
The maintenance program should include
vehicle selection specifications, preventative
and demand maintenance, vehicle
inspections and maintenance records.

6. Accident reviews

Each accident or collision should be
promptly reported by the driver and inves-
tigated by management because every
accident has the potential to reduce or jeop-
ardize company assets.

Here are the procedures that should be
followed:

► Reporting – All drivers should be
trained in proper reporting procedures, and
all vehicles should be equipped with an
accident report packet for collecting
information.

► Investigation – Management should
be charged with the responsibility of inves-
tigating each and every accident to
determine the responsible conditions. This
could be done by the designated fleet coor-
dinator.

► Review – An accident review board
should review the circumstances of all
accidents. This would include obtaining
copies of police reports, internal accident
reports and supervisory statements, as well
as an updated motor vehicle report (MVR).

Once all information has been assembled,
the board should review the accident using
National Safety Council guidelines (See
sidebar) to determine whether it was pre-
ventable. “Preventability” should not be
confused with “Chargeable” or “At Fault”
accident classifications. The review board
would then assign disciplinary procedures
as defined in the company’s fleet safety
policy.

► Analysis – Annual analysis of all fleet
losses should identify emerging and occur-
ing loss trends. Evaluate and track fleet
performance by establishing a frequency
rate, which can be calculated by using the
formula below:

\[
\text{Frequency Rate} = \frac{\# \text{ of Accidents}}{100 \times \text{Vehicle Exposure}}
\]

Vehicle Exposure = Avg. Number of Vehicles x (Number of Months/12)

This formula would be used in a situa-
tion where a company does not track their
mileage but needs to use some form of
exposure base:

As an example: a company has 15 trucks
and they have had a total of four accidents,
and they are nine months into the year: 4 x
100 = 400. That figure is divided by the
exposure: 15 vehicles x 9/12 (number of
months that have been operated in the
exposure year) = 11.25. Thus, you would
Accident Preventability

The National Safety Council defines a preventable collision as one in which the driver failed to do everything that reasonably could have been done to avoid the collision.

The American Trucking Association uses the following rule to determine the preventability of a collision: “Was the vehicle driven in such a way that NO ERRORS were committed, and to control the vehicle by making due allowance for the conditions of the road, weather, and traffic and to also assure that the mistakes of other drivers did not involve the driver in a collision?”

In both cases, the issue relates to defensive driving rather than legal culpability. The fact that a driver becomes involved in a vehicle collision, but is not legally charged, does not mean that the collision was unavoidable. When an organization moves from reviewing only those collisions in which the driver has been charged to reviewing all collisions for preventability, it has made a significant step toward controlling its overall accident frequency.

Most states’ driver manuals contain a section that indicates the driver has a responsibility to avoid an accident—even if it means yielding the right-of-way to another driver that is not legally entitled to it.

An example might be a situation where vehicle A is in the left turn lane and has a green left turn arrow. However, vehicle B disregards a red light and proceeds into the path of vehicle A. If at all possible, the driver of vehicle A has a legal responsibility to avoid a collision with vehicle B. Because it was unavoidable, if vehicle A did, in fact, collide with vehicle B, most likely, the driver of vehicle B would be charged with failure to yield the right of way. Although legally “in the right,” the results of vehicle A’s collision with vehicle B could produce significant costs, including:

- Vehicle damage
- Personal injury
- Loss of revenue
- Administrative costs
- Police reports
- Cargo damage
- Possible effects on cost of vehicle insurance
- Possible effect on cost of Workers’ Comp. insurance
- Towing
- Storage of damaged vehicle
- Damage to customer relationships
- Legal fees

In reviewing collisions for preventability, it should be understood that there are very few situations that are non-preventable. Some non-preventable collisions include the following scenarios involving a driver’s being struck in the rear by another vehicle. Most sources indicate that this type of collision is non-preventable if:

1. Driver’s vehicle was legally and properly parked;
2. Driver was proceeding in his/her lane of traffic at a safe and lawful speed;
3. Driver was stopped in traffic due to existing conditions or was stopped in compliance with traffic sign or signal or the directions of a police officer or other person legitimately controlling traffic;
4. Driver was in proper lane waiting to make turn.
5. Vehicle is struck while parked, which is considered non-preventable if:
   - Driver was properly parked in a location where parking was permitted;
   - Vehicle was stopped, parked or left standing in accordance with Sections 392.21 and 392.22 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

Most other vehicle crashes are preventable. Driving mistakes such as failing to control speed so that the vehicle could be stopped within available sight distance, failing to maintain a safe following distance, failing to remain centered in the travel lane, failing to properly yield the right-of-way in order to avoid an accident, and failing to adjust speed to traffic, pedestrians, and road conditions, are examples of situations in which crashes could occur and would be determined to be preventable.

Regardless of legal culpability, once an accident is determined to be preventable, the organization should implement corrective action for the driver. This action could include refresher or remedial defensive driving training, and could also include some disciplinary action. When a crash is determined to be preventable, some companies require the driver to pay part or all of the insurance deductible on the vehicle or incur a financial penalty surcharge.

This process provides the fleet manager with a tool that literally drives home the idea of defensive driving. Organizations that embrace the idea of preventability generally realize improvement in accident frequency.

divide the 400 and divide this by the 11.25, which equals a frequency rate of 35.55. If a company were to evaluate their full year frequency rate (rather than their nine month rate), then the calculation would be 4 x 100 = 400 divided by 15, giving them a frequency rate of 26.66.

A company can use this method to compare their vehicle accident frequency from year to year or other time comparison period.

To further expand this example, if this same company increased to 22 vehicles the next year and had five accidents, then their full year frequency rate would be 22.72; even though they had both an increase in vehicles & accidents the second year, the frequency rate went down. This can give management a means to measure the effectiveness of their fleet safety program even though their may be changes in the vehicle exposure.

If vehicle mileage is tracked, the following formula could be used:

# of Accidents x 1,000,000/Miles Driven
This second formula is similar to the above, but is a more accurate means if a company already tracks the mileage of all trucks in their fleet. That is because you may have the same number of trucks but a significantly greater number of total miles driven (larger exposure) in a comparing year. If the number of total accidents stayed the same from year to year, but more miles were driven in total the second year, the actual frequency of vehicle accidents has decreased.

The frequency rate formula tool is best used by a company to measure the direction of their own fleet accident experience on a year-to-year basis.

By using either of these methods, you can track the direction of your fleet safety efforts. Periodic analysis can also help identify training needs. For example, if a review of accidents during the prior six months finds that 45 percent of vehicles involved are following too closely, then refresher training on proper space cushions and following distances may be necessary.

Each of the above criteria is important to consider when developing a total fleet safety program, and these components play a crucial role in the goal of accident and cost reduction.

Dennis E. Gardner is an executive loss control consultant with The Hartford Financial Services Group Inc., where he specializes in fleet safety and construction issues. He is a certified safety professional (CSP) and a member of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE).

The information provided in this article is of a general nature and cannot be regarded as advice that would be applicable to all businesses. Readers seeking resolution of specific safety issues or business concerns regarding fleet safety or other portions of this topic should consult their own professional safety consultant and establish their own individualized fleet safety program. The Hartford does not warrant that the implementation of any view or recommendation contained herein will result in the elimination of any unsafe conditions for your business. The Hartford assumes no responsibility for the control or correction of hazards, and the views and recommendations contained herein shall not constitute The Hartford’s undertaking to determine or warrant that your business locations or business operations are safe or healthful, or are in compliance with any law, rule or regulation.

References
Motor Vehicle Fleet management bulletin, from the loss control department of The Hartford – March 2004
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Asian Ambrosia Beetle proves Bitter Pest

By Lana Robinson

It may have a sweet-sounding name, but the Asian ambrosia beetle (AAB) is a bitter pest, especially to the ornamental tree industry. Populations have exploded this year, and the insect is wreaking havoc in the Southern United States, according to a Texas Cooperative Extension integrated pest management specialist.

Dr. Scott Ludwig and other IPM (Integrated Pest Management) specialists put their heads together to develop an economical and effective way to control the beetles, which seriously threatened part of the East Texas $225 million-a-year nursery industry. Some trees and plants susceptible to Asian ambrosia beetles include azalea, certain varieties of ornamental cherries, Chinese elm, crape myrtle, dogwood, fig, golden rain tree, Himalayan birch, Japanese maple, magnolia, Mexican buckeye, redbud, peach, pecan, persimmon, plum, Shumard oak, styrax, and sweetgum.

“We have some growers who have lost whole species of trees this year,” says Ludwig, noting that this is the first time in the three years he has been stationed in East Texas that growers have reported significant problems with this particular pest.

To combat the beetle, Ludwig launched a two-pronged emergency response – a U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded program that tests a new preventative trunk spray at two nurseries, and a trapping survey to measure the strength of the Asian ambrosia beetle’s foothold in the region. The survey also monitors when the adults emerge from the trees and detects what other species of ambrosia beetle are present.

“In Tennessee, they did studies collecting beetles coming out of trees, the main one being the Asian ambrosia beetle, and we’re doing something like that. If you look closely, Texas has a slightly different complex. You never hear of crape myrtles in Texas getting hit by the beetles, but you do in other states. Why? What beetles do we have here? They are all tiny brown bugs, but seem to have some differences,” Ludwig observes.

Ludwig says the reasons for the astounding number of beetles this year are not clear, but he has some ideas.

“I think they were an issue this year because we had a mild winter versus a real cold year. The adults overwinter in leaf litter,” he says. “Some growers spray every year. Others didn’t have a spray program and were hit really bad.”

These tiny, blackish brown beetles somewhat resemble the Southern Pine Beetle, but they are unusual in that they do...
not consume plant tissue. The female transports spores of a blue to black staining fungus (the ambrosia) into the core of the stem. This “ambrosia” grows as a food source for the larvae that emerge from the eggs she has deposited. The adult beetle consumes the fungus ambrosia as well as feeds it to the larvae, and stays with the larvae until they mature. Meanwhile, the fungus plugs up the tree’s vascular system.

“It’s really the ambrosia fungus that kills the tree, not the beetle,” Ludwig says.

At maturity, the beetles mate inside the tunnels, after which the females fly away in search of a new host. As many as six generations are produced annually.

Individual plants may host from one to more than 50 individual beetles.

Kris Braman, an entomologist with the University of Georgia’s College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, says the Asian ambrosia beetle is a problem for Georgians, both as a nursery pest and in the landscape.

“The severity of the problem varies from year to year, as do the tree species that fall victim to this beetle,” says Braman. “The host list is long. High-dollar plants like Japanese maple are often hit by the beetle. Shumard oaks, golden raintree, peach trees and trees that are rarely troubled by major pests in the landscape, such as crape myrtle and redbud, are affected. We have a constant source of beetles in fence rows and surrounding wooded areas. The beetle frequently attacks sweetgum, a common tree in Georgia. I have even seen it infest and kill a fig tree bush!”

Braman says evidence of infestation in the landscape often comes first as a failure to flush new growth at the appropriate time in the spring. Toothpick-like tubes of sawdust-like frass up and down the trunk or small branches indicate a heavy infestation of these beetles. Galleries into the sapwood may be observed by splitting a section of trunk or branch.

The AAB is active year-round during warm periods, but most adult activity occurs in March.

“Our most significant beetle flights seem to be in late winter and early spring, although we can have a few beetles active at almost any time of the year,” Braman says.

The tiny beetle is known to attack 124 plant species worldwide. Young, container-grown plants and plants recently installed in the landscape are particularly susceptible.

Serious attacks that result in tree death usually occur during leafing-out stage. The beetle can kill a tree in a few weeks. Infected nursery trees often die, while landscape plants frequently recover.

“Trees growing in a pot are more stressed than trees in the ground,” Scott Ludwig notes.

Dr. Peter Schultz, an entomologist with the Hampton Roads Agriculture Research and Extension Center (Virginia Tech) in Virginia Beach, Va., typically advises wholesale and retail nursery operators on various methods of insect control. Schultz reports having seen infestations in local
landscape settings. “I have visited two sites, both were infesting crape myrtle, but others are attacked as well,” says Schultz. “Landscape plants seem to survive the AAB attacks.”

The Asian ambrosia beetle was first detected in the U.S. when it infested peaches in Charleston, S.C., in 1974. Since that time it has spread into North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Virginia, Maryland and east Texas. It now occurs in 28 east Texas counties. In June 2003, Asian ambrosia beetles were reported in northeastern Ohio on smaller magnolias. The beetle spreads by natural distribution and shipment of contaminated plant material.

The ambrosia beetle is also present in the Pacific Northwest, where the highest levels of infestation are found in the coastal forests of British Columbia and southeast Alaska, although the coastal forests of Washington, Oregon and Northern California also have ambrosia beetle populations capable of damaging high value logs. In the Pacific Northwest, the beetles prefer Douglas-fir, hemlock, and spruce with diameters as small as 15 cm. They rarely kill trees, but even light ambrosia beetle infestations in such potentially high-value products can result in a severe downgrading of value. Some attack fresh-cut wood, as well.

According to Ludwig, the few products labeled for use as preventative trunk sprays are not all that effective or require multiple applications during the growing season, which is costly and labor intensive. More effective controls were once available, but as their labels expired, they were not re-licensed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This was because either the chemicals were considered hazardous, or the chemicals’ manufacturers lost interest because of the cost of re-licensing. The product Ludwig is testing is less hazardous, more environmentally friendly and allegedly lasts for as long as two months, he says.

Once a tree is infested, no chemical controls will save it. Mature trees are more likely to survive the infestation, but may serve as a staging base for the beetle to attack nearby younger trees. That’s why the general control strategy is to cut down and destroy any infested trees immediately. If local ordinances permit, burning the tree is the best way to ensure the beetles are destroyed as well. If open burning isn’t permitted, and the tree is small enough, it can be ground up and composted, says Ludwig. “The quandary comes when a favorite mature tree is infested,” he says. “No one wants to cut down and burn an otherwise healthy tree, but not doing so could endanger new trees in the area.”

Peter Schultz, however, does not recommend removing trees infested with AAB until they are dead.

“Borer treatments containing permethrin are effective. Spraying immediately after attack would help, but only if the insect was still near the surface,” says Schultz.

Conventional wisdom suggests using protective sprays of Astro (permethrin) as soon as beetle activity starts. Spray at the first sign of infestation – two to three times until plants are fully leafed out, as the Asian ambrosia beetle prefers dormant plants. Recent studies in Virginia indicate that applications of the highest labeled rate of Astro (5.35 qt/100 gal) caused beetles to back out of galleries. Still, pathogens may
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have been introduced. Arborists may also try Pyrellin or Pyrenone, but may have to treat weekly while beetles are active. Check trees frequently beginning early March and treat accordingly. Susceptible trees that have not been attacked need to be protected with either dursban or lindane. Approximate spray dates are November, February and May.

AAB activity can be monitored using simple water traps in order to make more timely spray applications. Also, Asian ambrosia beetles are attracted to ethyl alcohol (not rubbing alcohol) vapors. A simple way to lure them is to cut two-inch holes in a plastic cup and make an alcohol dispenser to place inside by putting wick in a film canister. Keep water in the bottom of the cup at all times. Traps can be homemade soda bottle traps, Lindgren funnel traps, or modified Japanese beetle traps also work. The ethanol release strip purchased for use with the funnel trap should provide the most consistent lure release.

Place the trap, or traps, in the area where beetles are expected to occur, not necessarily near trees or host plants. Position it where it is in the shade part of the day. Remove, count and record the number of beetles caught each time it is checked (AABs are two-tone with a dark brown head and black abdomen, and are fat rather than slender in shape). Check traps twice a week. AABs can be trapped in all months except perhaps December and January.

Obviously, maintaining healthy trees and shrubs is the first line of defense against the ambrosia beetles attacking weak hosts. This includes proper fertility, maintaining proper soil pH, and adequate soil moisture.

Lana Robinson is field editor in the Information and Public Relations Division of the Texas Farm Bureau, based in Waco, Texas. She regularly covers agricultural issues for Texas Gardener, Texas Agriculture, The Growing Edge and Texas Neighbors, and frequently contributes horticulture features to other green industry publications.
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Victor Maisano and Joe Aiken, Chas. F. Irish Company, Inc., Michigan, Ron Howell, Howell’s Tree and Landscape, Inc., Ohio injecting on Lake Shore Road, Grosse Pointe Shores in Detroit, MI for EAB with Arborjet Hydraulic devices

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Simply characterized, the H-2B visa enables nonagricultural foreign workers the opportunity to enter the United States and work for a U.S. company for, generally, no more than 10 months at a stretch, provided the company has proven to the Department of Labor that local employees are not available. To qualify, the job(s) must be temporary, which the government further defines as seasonal, peak load, one time or based on intermittent need. Many times the companies are asked to open-up their payroll records to substantiate the temporary need criteria. Industries such as tree care, landscape and grounds maintenance are perfect examples of naturally qualifying H-2B candidates, since seasonal weather conditions are a major determining factor in their business cycle.

As we understand President Bush’s recently announced immigration reform recommendations, the U.S. Government’s existing H-2B visa program could be a precursor to a portion of the yet-to-be-structured reform. In substance, his idea for term employment of illegal aliens as temporary authorized visiting workers has been in existence since the early 1990s, when H-2B visas were first introduced.

The legally authorized H-2B program has worked well, and it should be the blueprint for the president’s reform and transition for millions of illegal aliens that presently occupy jobs in our economy that Americans no longer want. Americans need to face up to this fact, we need these workers and they need us. They are not stealing jobs from U.S. citizens but are merely helping employers in times of severe labor shortages. Amnesty for illegal aliens is a separate issue we won’t attempt to analyze here.

To some Americans, any time foreign labor is mentioned they think of jobs being stolen from their fellow countrymen. Although this attitude appears logical on the surface, the H-2B program was specifically designed to avoid this by requiring companies to prove they are not taking jobs away from Americans. The Department of Labor requires that each applicant perform a labor market test to validate the need for foreign help. This process is both time-consuming and costly to the employer, but is essential in maintaining the integrity of the program. Under any future reform, this element of validation must be retained.

You might hear someone say, “Yep, I know this is a minimum wage program and that’s the reason no Americans want the jobs.” Let me say it loud and clear – H-2B...
is not a minimum wage program. In fact, wage rate protection was built into the program and employers must pay at least the prevailing wage rate in their local community. As a result, foreign workers are willing to spend months away from their families to earn wages that will significantly improve their family’s standard of living. Foreign laborers find this attractive since the wages they can earn in the United States are considerably higher than the wages in their home country. To the contrary, American workers have sought other job opportunities that pay more or provide easier, less physically demanding work.

For a successful H-2B experience, employers must be willing to pay a competitive market wage rate, provide sufficient work (generally 50 to 60 hours per week), make arrangements for affordable housing, provide transportation to/from work as well as access to banks, grocery stores, and laundry facilities once a week and treat the workers with respect. Doing this, companies can yield big dividends through increased productivity, worker continuity and workforce stability. In other words, fewer sleepless nights worrying about labor problems and how you are going to service your customers.

As an employer, you can tackle H-2B yourself or you can engage a processing agent such as Amigos Labor Solutions Inc. (www.amigos-inc.com). Processing agents know the governmental ropes.

“This year alone,” says Bob Wingfield with Amigos Labor Solutions, “we faced major issues regarding seasonal date determination, seasonal qualification, annual visa cap and increasing worker rejections at the borders, just to name a few obstacles. At least for me, it has been a full time job.”

Well, is it H-2B or not to be for you?

Carlton Vickery is with Amigos Labor Solutions, Inc., and can be reached at 1-877-326-4467.

Mauricio Velasquez, is president and CEO of the Diversity Training Group in Herndon, Va., and its sister firm, Spanish Translations Services, LLC. He can be reached at www.diversitydtg.com.

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**H-2B Qualifying Criteria**

- The job and the employer’s need must be one time, seasonal, peak load or intermittent;
- The job must be for less than one year; and;
- There must be no qualified and willing U.S. workers available for the job.

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Workers’ comp costs soar in California

California workers’ compensation costs per claim in California continue to grow rapidly, increasing 15 percent from 2000 through 2001 (as of 2002) and are accelerating, according to a new study from the Cambridge, Mass.-based Workers Compensation Research Institute. California has more cost drivers and more persistent cost growth than any other state in the study of 12 large states.

The study noted that in California the average cost of a workers’ compensation claim with more than seven days of lost time is $29,745 – 28 percent higher than the median of the study states (1999 claims as of 2002, with 36 months of experience).

Significant cost drivers in California include:

- Medical costs per claim that were 20 to 52 percent higher than the 12-state median, resulting primarily from higher use of services, not higher prices.
- Duration of periods of temporary disability for injured workers that were three to eight weeks longer than typical of the study states.
- A higher percentage of claims with more than seven days of lost-time (24 percent versus the study median of 21 percent).

The recent rate of growth in California’s workers’ compensation cost per claim was driven by 17 percent growth in average medical costs per claim; 12.5 percent in indemnity benefits per claim (wage replacement payments for lost-time injuries) and 18 percent growth in allocated costs to manage claims, known as benefit delivery expenses.

Factors behind the growth in indemnity benefits per claim were a higher percentage of claims with more than seven days of lost time, longer duration of temporary disability and higher percentage of permanent partial disability (PPD)/lump-sum claims.

PPD claims represent the more serious and costly injuries. Lump-sum settlements are agreements that typically close out a workers’ compensation claim and result in a single payment to the worker.

The study of 12 states, which represent about 60 percent of workers’ compensation benefits paid nationally, also reported that expenses to manage claims in California for 1999 as of 2002 accounted for 12 percent of total claim costs, among the highest of the 12-state study.

These benefit delivery expenses per claim surged nearly 20 percent between 2000 and 2001 as of 2002, after moderating between 1998 and 2000 as the result of higher medical cost containment expenses per claim, rising expenses of medical-legal exams and higher defense attorney payments per claim.

Other states in the WCRI study are Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin.
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From the Field

Stay Focused When You are Up a Tree

By Edward Kennedy

I had become backlogged with work, as most operators in this business usually become in the busy season, and decided to gain a bit by taking another climber and doing a few small lakefront jobs to an area north of my usual operating territory, on a statutory holiday. The first job went well; we finished in record time, left in short order and focused on the next job.

We traveled back-wood roads and enjoyed the panorama of lakes and forests that this area afforded, in high spirits and thinking about what we would do after this job was complete.

It was a removal of a white oak, declined due to root damage from a recent addition to the waterfront home. The climber quickly decided that he would go up the tree and section some branches over the house, before reducing the main trunk in lengths for lowering by rope. This was necessitated by the potential for damage to property below, but there was a clear target area a short distance from the tree where I would stack the debris.

All that remained was the main trunk and I watched as he descended on his line a distance of 20 feet, fastened his lanyard, and set himself to release and refasten his climbing line to the lower location. He would then make the directional cut, which would swing the top-heavy member to the far side of the tree, off a lesser co-dominant, to be lowered to the ground away from the high target area.

I had secured the lowering rope to the anchor and turned my gaze to the waterfront area and a passing motorboat, as I waited for him to relocate his climbing line and start the directional cut.

At the sound of the saw, I turned and watched him make the notch and then start the back-cut. As I grasped the lowering rope in my hands, I took a cursory glance at the set up and in horror noticed that he, in fact, had not relocated his climbing line and that it was still hanging from the main trunk that he was cutting. I yelled immediately and started gesturing but the noise from the saw and the blocking effect of his earplugs precluded him hearing my frantic warnings to stop.

At the last moment, just before the trunk member would separate, as usual, he glanced at me to check my readiness and looking up at my frantic gesturing, turned quite pale, shut the saw off, and quickly disconnected his line from his harness. More embarrassed than scared, he did not meet my glance but dutifully retrieved his line, refastened it, and completed the cut. The final free fall of the smaller co-dominant completed the necessary “in tree” work and he descended to the ground.

I confronted him immediately and asked him where his focus had been to neglect such an important task as relocating his line, from the member targeted for lowering to the lower section. His silence brought another comment from me, delivered quietly, about the most important and essential piece of safety equipment in this line of work being a clear mind focused on the task at hand.

I did not press him for an answer but stated that one must block out all other cares, concerns and mental distractions, focusing on the job in detail until completed. Without another word, I felled the remaining trunk to the target area, packed up and left.

I did not need an answer to my question. I knew where his mind was. It was focused on his recent girlfriend, who he planned to spend the rest of the day and the night with.

Lest you think this was a stupid shortcoming on his part, it can happen to anyone. I vividly recall a more experienced climber almost do the same thing years ago. That particular climber had been in a disagreement with his wife the same morning and the pattern had followed the same course. I happen to know that person was focused on the disagreement and was engrossed in thinking about what he would say when the day was over. The day could have been over for him prematurely but, again, the ground man had looked up and noticed the danger. The gestures had again been noticed when the climber had visually checked to see if the ground man was ready for the load. The climber then had been me.

We need to understand as employers that no climber, no matter how skilled and experienced, should ever be allowed in the tree – or on the job in any capacity – when anything in his or her personal life has occurred that will preoccupy the person to the point of that person becoming a danger to himself or other workers on the job. We need to be honest enough to admit that we are a danger to ourselves and others and remove ourselves if we are troubled by something that focuses our thoughts on anything other than the job at hand. Just as important as keeping ourselves physically conditioned, it is our duty to report to work in a fit and alert mental state.

I have always said that the most important piece of safety equipment we can use is a clear mind, a healthy body, and attentiveness to our work. It is also significant to note the role the ground worker plays in capacity of ensuring safety and the observance of a strict “modus operandi” in certain removal/trimming operations. In each of the actual situations, it was the groundworker who prevented the mishap, coupled with the final sight communication of climber/groundworker before the member was released.

Always make it a practice to check the whole scene one final time before starting the sequence of events that will terminate in another branch/trunk section being lowered to the ground safely – or the injury/death of another tree care worker. There can be no complacency in an industry that is more dangerous and has more fatalities than firefighting or police work. Second chances are few and far between.

Edward Kennedy is owner/operator of Meadow Green Tree Experts & Certified Arborists in Harrowsmith, Ontario, Can., and writes about issues affecting the tree care industry.
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