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And so as the shadows grow longer, the back logs deplete, and another season comes to a close, you can almost feel the collective sighs of arborists who have navigated yet another year. Just as communities used to gather together for celebrations around the harvest, it makes me think of how, in many respects, arborists do the same.

As you and your colleagues will wend your way toward Detroit at the end of October for the world’s largest tree care show, TCI EXPO, it’s a symbolic gathering in of the harvest – the harvest of finding the right people to take care of our communities’ trees; the harvest of having invested in safety throughout the year so that all of us can participate together in the rewards of the harvest without anyone missing; the harvest of satisfaction that the planning we did in advance of this year has paid off, the harvest of the investment in equipment that runs well so that our productivity and safety are ensured; the harvest of having represented ourselves accurately to our customers, providing quality work, timely responses to their needs, and keeping our communities beautiful and safe; and the harvest of having set some time aside to contribute pro bono work to our greater community, perhaps through a school project, or an Arbor day or a day of service.

And so as you wend your way toward Detroit to celebrate the harvest of another good year of arboriculture, we look forward to the biggest part of that celebration – the TCIA Day of Service at Belle Isle. Many of you know the feeling that came with giving of yourself, your company and your expertise to Arlington Cemetery, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. When you describe the satisfaction and the excitement, yes, it is done with an arborist’s passion for what you do – but that is not what carries the deepest meaning that you convey. It’s the harvest of coming together; of giving of yourselves as one big community; of knowing that after you’ve left a community is going to have reaped the benefit of your special gifts; and that while a plaque may remain to attest to your work years afterward, it’s the spirit in which the gift is given that gives you the greatest rewards.

If you and your company have not considered staying the extra night to participate in this extraordinary time of fellowship in the arborist community, I urge you to do so. It cannot be understated. It is the most special time you can possibly experience as an arborist – coming together to give, to celebrate the harvest of your chosen work, and to rejoice in the choices you have made to give back to your community.

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TCI's mission is to engage and enlighten readers with the latest industry news and information on regulations, standards, practices, safety, innovations, products and equipment. We strive to serve as the definitive resource for commercial, residential, municipal and utility arborists, as well as for others involved in the care and maintenance of trees. The official publication of the non-profit Tree Care Industry Association, we vow to sustain the same uncompromising standards of excellence as our members in the field, who adhere to the highest professional practices worldwide.
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When is it safe to climb and safe to cut? It is a tough decision to make and only one person can make that final decision. I have often observed that there is some question as to who actually makes the final decision on a big tree removal or pruning job in a tree of questionable health or condition. Is it the boss? Is it the salesperson? Is it the customer? No. The climber should make the critical decision. The removal of a large tree is a decision making process and, obviously, it involves more than one decision. Many decisions are made during a job and if you are like me, you have certainly been up in a tree and found yourself wondering if you should really be up there making the cut.

Every person on the site is potentially at risk during a large tree operation. Struck-by is still statistically the likeliest way to get hurt on a job site and it is important to remember that. I have seen a person break three ribs standing 50 feet away from a tree. A chunk of wood hit a slippery crotch, shot at him as if out of a gun, and struck him.

Customers love to watch and sometimes they try to help. Do not allow this to happen. Remember that watching you do your work, which people find fascinating and thrilling, is putting them at risk.

Here is an interesting scenario. The sales person sells a job and the boss tells the crew that it is a removal, a no-brainer, a crash down – no lowering and no problems. Here are the keys to the truck – go get to it. The crew arrives on the site expecting an easy job. Instead, they find a really nasty tree. What would you do in this situation? This is a touchy question because there is always a hierarchy on the job site. The boss is the boss and he writes the paycheck. The crew follows orders. Remember though, it’s your life at stake.
When confronting a tree job, first identify—what is the job at hand? Is it pruning or removal? Are there notes on the work order? Some estimators are excellent evaluators of trees and if they sell a tough job there will be notes on the work order. Good companies have a system for describing the work that has been sold and there are many different systems that work. It may be that you have a verbal briefing in the morning or a bid sheet that is descriptive including notes. With a good system you should have no surprises when you get to the job site. You know what type of job you will be looking at.

There are some questions you should ask yourself when you approach a job. Is the tree dead or damaged? If the answer is “yes,” it should make the hair stand up at the back of your neck because there is potentially a big increase in risk working with a dead or damaged tree. What is the species of tree? You need to know the differences between the various species of trees. Some trees fall apart fast and some trees do not. Most people who work for a long time in a certain area get to know their trees. Dr. Alex Shigo has said that there are 10 trees that you have to know, wherever you live. Those are the 10 trees that you will work on 90 percent of the time. Know your trees to increase your safety.

If the job is to prune the tree, you should still inspect the base of the tree. This should be common knowledge for certified arborists, and everybody who has been to a tree climbing competition has watched the guys pretend to inspect the base of the tree before they head up into the tree. After you inspect the base, you should inspect the crown of the tree. I use binoculars a lot in my work as a consultant; when I have to, I climb trees to get a close look. A look with a cheap pair of binoculars can expose problems above, before you climb.

Other questions you might ask yourself about a tree include:

- Has the tree been topped in the past? In our area in Seattle, we have a lot of topped trees, which can be very tricky when you have to get up there and remove them.
- Do you see defects in the canopy?
- Is the tree obviously dying, with loose bark and broken branches?
- If you are pruning the tree, where will you set your rope? With a good knowledge of trees and a pair of binoculars, identify a safe place to get your rope crotched in. It is a common accident to tie into a poor crotch and have it break and take a spill in the tree.
- What is underneath the tree? If something does go wrong, if there are stakes or barbed wire beneath, you are in big trouble. I have known several people who have survived major falls from trees because they landed on something soft. It seems silly, but thinking about these things will raise your awareness when you are up in the tree.

There are a lot of risks when it comes to pruning trees and I think many of these are overlooked because the focus tends to be on the big, bad tree removal. You can get in big trouble with a small tree that has defects while pruning it. If the job is to remove the tree then all of the risks get ramped up. Arborists get all fired up when they approach a big tree removal. There is a tendency for that excitement to throw your judgment off.

Remember that it doesn’t matter what kind of tree or job, always inspect the base of the tree. Careful observation of the base of the tree is important; walk around the entire tree. I can’t stress enough how important this is. I have looked at trees where someone else has looked at the tree first. They told me that the tree looked fine. I walk around, look at the other side, and find the tree has a defect. I teach consultants, when they are learning their trade, to measure the tree. This way you must walk around it. It takes a little time, but it makes you look closer. Always clear away ivy or other plants so that you can see the base of the trunk.

What do you see? Do you see mush-

rooms, cracks or loose bark? What about insect debris? Do you see anatomical signs of movement? By this I mean; do you see signs in the anatomy of the tree that it has already partially failed. What don’t you see? Do you see the trunk flare? Do you see no green foliage? Is the tree weak looking? Trees that have grown with little vigor for a long time are weak and can be structurally weak as well.

Fruiting bodies of fungi are often a sign of severe decay in the roots of the tree and the trunk as well. When you have mushrooms or conks visible, you may have a serious problem. The fungi consume the wood of the tree. The wood loses strength. Every arborist should know to look out for trees with fungi growing out of the base of the tree.
Observation is the way to be safer in the world of trees. When trees grow, the outer bark has to give way for the ring of wood behind. You can learn to observe tree bark anatomy and understand what it reveals about a tree’s internal condition. The reaction wood that grows around tree defects can be very strong. Again, you have to know your species. It is a fact that the wood that grows around an injury can be many times stronger than wood that is produced in a part of the trunk where no defect is present.

Trees in poor condition can be easy to spot. Look closely at the bark. The bark anatomy of trees is very expressive of movement. When you see bark plates that are coming apart, overlapping, loose and falling off, it is often a sign that the tree has decay or defect. The bark surrounds a thin layer of what is essentially lubricant. The phloem and cambium allow the bark to slide. If a tree moves more than it should, very often the bark will move, too.

Movement of this kind is a critical sign that a tree is already in the process of failing. Many of the dangerous trees that you will work on are already falling down bit by bit when you approach them.

I commonly find that people forget that decay moves in trees following the CODIT model. CODIT is an acronym for compartmentalization of decay in trees. There are four walls in the CODIT model. The first wall is up and down the trunk. Joe the bulldozer driver breaks the trunk of the tree, the fungi come and the decay’s easiest attack is up and down the trunk. Wall two is inward toward the center of the tree. Remember, species by species this is a little bit different, but as far as we know today every species follows CODIT. Wall three is decay moving around the tree around the trunk and around the rings. Wall four is the outside, the new tree that grows around the wound. It is the wood rings that have formed since the injury occurred. It is
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the strongest wall. It is useful to know this because, if you are wrecking out a big tree and you know how decay moves in the tree, when you start to encounter it as you bring the tree down, you can anticipate what you will encounter below you. Analysis of tree structure is complicated. Trees can be decaying from the bottom and from the top so you have to be a good observer. If you’re chunking down a big tree and you watch your sawdust, you can tell a lot from it. You can smell, see and feel the bad wood. Remember CODIT.

Remember to inspect the canopy of the tree. Look for dead or decayed areas, co-dominant trunks and stems, hanging branches, and obstructions. It is amazing how often people working in a tree get so caught up in looking at the whole tree, that they don’t see the wire or the metal pole that was attached to the tree years ago. They are looking at the big picture and they miss details.

Observation will help you to think ahead. When approaching a hazardous tree, thinking ahead allows you to formulate a safe work plan. A safe work plan includes communication with your ground crew and with the crane operator and bucket operator – all of the people on the site.

Trees that have been dead for a while are often very dangerous. Everybody knows this, but it is amazing how little we consider this before putting on our spikes and heading up a tree that has been dead for several years. Know your species. Some trees stand dead for a very long time and they are strong and tough. Some trees die and immediately begin to deteriorate. Remember, short-lived trees decay readily; long-lived trees are very resistant to decay. Any tree stressed by disease, drought or other factors is likely to be less able to resist decay and will often have other problems that are an issue for the removal. If the bark is off the tree, that would tell something about how long the tree has been dead. Start to make decisions on how you are going to address the tree while you are on the ground.

Removals generate large loading forces as the work progresses. If you are loading a tree that is weak and already falling apart or has been dead for several years, it is a recipe for danger. The obvious decision would be not to remove big loads. Take smaller loads. The boss wants you to be done today and the temptation is to take a
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bigger piece. You are nervous and don’t want to go any higher to knock the top off so you make a mistake and take too big of a piece. Have you ever been in a tree working with a piece that came back that was a little too big to get over? This is the time that you will be having nervous thoughts about your initial inspection and decisions.

Be careful rigging in a questionable tree. The photo on page 9 shows a very dangerous removal of a large tree in a tight spot. The trunk was rotten, including the main stem that supported all the rigging. The climbers tied the top of the tree together to hold it, hoping that this would reduce the likelihood that the load on the zip line might pull the tree apart. Why were they there doing this job? First of all there was no crane access. They were very careful with this tree and had looked at it for a long time. They had some very good arborists look at the tree and they were as prepared as they could be, but they definitely did take a risk with this tree.

Roger Barnett the arborist in charge of taking the tree down told me that he was very nervous with the tree and he used all of his skill. He recruited helpers outside of his normal crew that he knew would back him up on the job. There are trees out there that you might be expected to work on. If you are a small company and your crew is not that experienced, but you have a friend or even a competitor who could help you, don’t be foolish enough to not ask for help. If you need a little help, it isn’t shameful; it just shows that you are a smart professional.

There are many ways to assess tree condition. Often, simply pushing something into the tree you can see if it is very hollow. This is a simple method. Before you buy a Resistograph drill or another tool, think about using simple tools. Learn to use your simple tools; learn the strength-loss formu-
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las; work your way up the learning curve and then purchase your fancy stuff. Don’t become so focused on gear to the point where you are not thinking.

An arborist called me concerned about a big old elm tree. He was nervous enough that he came down and called me to come take a look at it. He told me that the crew was there, but that he thought maybe he should walk away from the job. I was surprised, but I think he was probably correct. He should have gotten the help of a small crane or a bucket truck. Why put yourself at unnecessary risk?

In many cases, if there is no top to the tree, you can have a tree that has almost no sound wood but, since there is no load, the tree is still standing. When you see this sort of thing with a tree that has a very tall stem that is still intact you are looking at a tree that is very weak. Trees like this may do okay with a little breeze, wind and rain, but when Joe gets up there and they are blocking down the tree, the rigging forces can cause a buckling failure in a tree that is this decayed. This doesn’t happen that often, but there are a lot of amazing accidents in our profession that we don’t hear about.

If you are felling a hollow tree, remember that you are not going to have much hinge wood or control. If you are rigging the tree, remember that not only might it be hollow but it could also be ready to fall. Trees can stand looking massive and immobile and then, in a light breeze, fall over. There have been quite a few accidents involving trees that looked good but fell over because of root rot. Don’t be shy about doing a little digging and poking around.

It still surprises me, after 32 years, that there is always a tree crew out there that will take any job without careful evaluation. If you are in a situation where your customer is stubborn and they are going to take the yahoo’s bid that is one half of your bid, walk away. Don’t lose money on a dangerous removal. I think that is one of the most important points that I want to make. There is no loss of pride in backing off.

I worked on a grove of red cedar trees all more than 6 feet in diameter. They range from about 130 to 170 feet in height. This property has had 10 lightning strikes, three just before my visit. I decided that I would climb up and see how bad the damage to one tree was. While climbing up the tree I heard a funny noise and decided to back down. I did the rest of my inspection with binoculars from the ground. That night, the top 40 feet of that tree fell to the ground with just a light breeze blowing. I’m glad I was paying attention that day.

Every storm-damaged tree is a hazard tree for the crew. At the end of six or eight hours of hard work following a storm, it is hard to remember that fact because you just want to cut and run. This is the time to slow down and perhaps admit that you have had enough for the day and save some work for tomorrow.

Trees are amazing and wonderful. They are survivors and live much longer than us. If you learn to look closely at trees you will be a much safer climber and you will be a better arborist. You will be happier at the end of the day.

Scott D. Baker is a registered consulting arborist, certified arborist, and developer with more than 30 years experience in tree management, site development, construction and sustainable technologies. This article was taken from a presentation he made at TCI EXPO Spring earlier this year.
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Marketing Tactics to Increase Sales – Now!

By Mitch Goozé

The purpose of this article is to provide you with proven tactics that you can use tomorrow to increase sales. It is not theoretical; it is practical and it works. It doesn’t take a lot of money but it takes effort, which is the key. If you are willing to think and focus – and do something different tomorrow than you did yesterday – then we can make sales go up.

You probably ask yourself why you don’t have more sales at the end of the month (or at the beginning of the month if you are a good business person and you are trying to forecast sales). Your marketing and sales activities are designed to produce customers. That is the only reason why we spend money on marketing. If your marketing and sales system is not producing enough customers, then there is something wrong with your system. Even in the downturn there was plenty of business in your town.

If you have too few sales, there is a bottleneck in your system. If you have too much work, the bottleneck might be an inability to find workers. If you don’t have enough business, then something is stopping you from selling more.

Focus on your strengths

There are a few tactics that I have found that work for tree care. First is knowing what to sell. You might think that I am referring to tree removal, maintenance or routine trimming, but I’m not. I want you to match up your “who” with your “what,” and I am going to show you what that means.

Do customers really know what you do? Do you know what they want to buy? Start thinking like a customer instead of hoping the customer thinks like you. What is the customer buying? The more you focus on what you sell, the more your services become a commodity. The more you focus on what the customer is buying, the more you will be able to price differentially and win jobs differentially.

In a downturn we tend to broaden our services because we are terrified that there isn’t enough business. We start offering everything. In offering everything we commoditize what we are doing. We are no longer specialists or authorities. Focus and you will improve your business.

Focus on retention

What percentage of your customers are repeat? Do you know? If not, find out. Loyal customers buy more, spend more and refer more than anybody else. A study released last year looked at the relative growth rate of companies based on customer loyalty. The companies that had the highest loyalty rate had the fastest and most profitable growth rate. You can discover your relative loyalty rate by asking your customers one question: “On a scale of zero to 10, how likely are you to refer our company to a friend or colleague?”

People who rate you nine and 10 count as positive; people who rate you zero through six count as negative, and people who rate you seven and eight are counted as neutral. Calculate what is called a net recommender percentage. If you have 100 people who have responded and 50 of them rate you nine and 10 that is 50 percent. If 10 of them rate you zero through six that would be 10 percent. Subtract the negative percentage, 10, from the positive percentage, 50, leaving you with a net recommender of 40 percent.

Amazon.com and eBay have net recommender percentages of greater than 70 percent. If you don’t get rated nine or 10, ask this question: “What one thing can we do to raise your rating?”

Increasing customer retention by 5 percent will have a bottom line impact by as much as 25 percent. If you are making $100,000 and you could increase your customer repeat business rate by 5 percent, your income could become $125,000.

Satisfied customers and loyal customers are not the same thing. Satisfied customers do not leave. This is why we ask the question on a scale of zero to 10, “How likely are you to refer?” What the researchers had found is that people who rate you nine or 10, in terms of probability of telling a friend or colleague, are more likely to be loyal than a satisfied customer.

The number one way to create a loyal customer is to screw up and then fix it. The truth of the matter is that loyal customers are more likely to have been customers that you have failed once and then fixed rather than customers who have never had a bad experience with you. As odd as that seems, it is true. I am not recommending you to go out and make mistakes, but mistakes should be viewed as your best opportunity to create loyal customers.

The number one correlation between how happy a customer is when they have had a problem with you and what was done for them is one thing – speed. The faster you fix the problem, the happier the customer will be regardless of what you do to fix the problem.

Make sure your systems are in place to handle customer complaints quickly. If the customer complaint has to escalate to your desk before it gets solved, then it took too long. Teach your people to listen with inter-
est. You don’t want them to be sympathetic, you want them to be empathetic. What is the difference? Empathy means that you understand how they feel. Sympathy means I feel like you. I don’t want your people feeling bad; I just want them to understand how the customer feels. Teach them to do two things—listen with interest and then apologize. The first words out of your peoples’ mouths after the customer finishes their discussion should be to say, “I’m sorry.”

The customer wants an apology. Two types of customers complain:
1. Upset customers
2. Difficult customers.

Upset customers are your problem. Difficult customers are the people you want buying from the competition.

How do you tell the difference? A difficult customer will keep yelling at you after you apologize, and an upset customer will not. It is impossible for somebody who is legitimately upset to keep yelling at somebody who has apologized.

The other thing to teach your people to do is to have them ask what the company can do to make things right. Most of the time what the customer will ask for is less expensive than what you would have chosen to do. Let the customers tell you what they want.

Where are your lost customers going? Who are they buying from? Are they going to one company or are they just leaving you? If you don’t know the answer to these questions then you need to ask.

How are you staying in touch with customers? Do they hear from you when you have a special or do they hear from you seasonally? I don’t necessarily mean by phone—perhaps by mail. What about customers who don’t buy regularly—are they hearing from you? Are you tracking information so you know? If you are going to stay in touch, stay in touch via a way that is valuable so people think about you.

Landing new accounts

What attracts competitors’ customers to you? Do you ask? If not, you might make the same mistakes. Ask, listen and learn.

Where do your referrals come from and how do you get them? This is not hard to track. What keeps most people from getting more referrals is a failure to ask for them. People love to brag about the services they get that they love. Be somebody people brag about and then remind them to brag about you.

Do your Yellow Pages ads work? For what kind of business? You might try a separate phone number in your Yellow Pages ad, so you will know where the lead came from. If the separate phone never rings, then you’ll know that ads aren’t doing anything for you. Teach your people to ask how a potential customer heard about the company. If a customer referred them, then somebody needs to send Mrs. Jones a thank you note.

Most people don’t use enough direct marketing methods. They rely on the Yellow Pages, newspaper ads or radio and they forget about direct marketing. If you are going to spend money on something, figure out a way to tell if it is working. If you are going to have a Web site, find out how many people visit it.

Do you have an e-mail database? Your high-end customers certainly have e-mail addresses. Start building an e-mail database now, even if you don’t do anything with it other than store it.

Success with direct mail

If you use direct mail, it should be integrated with everything else you do. Make sure that it is tied to the other messaging that you do, whether it is billboard advertising, radio or Yellow Pages.

Direct marketing doesn’t always work. Most people sort their mail over the trash can. There are a lot of techniques to get them to open the envelope. Watch the direct mail you receive at home or in the office. See what causes you to open the mail.

Define success before you start. If you send a thousand pieces of mail out, what are you expecting as a result? You have to have a good list. If you mail to people in trailer parks or condominiums who don’t own the trees on the property, you will not have any luck.

WIIFM is everybody’s favorite radio station. It stands for “What’s In It For Me?” When your customers read advertising copy, they are trying to figure out what’s in it for them. The fact that you have 18 certified arborists and have been in business for 100 years and have won 73 gold awards, doesn’t tell them anything.
White space is a good thing. People don’t want to read a copy that looks as if it were from an encyclopedia. Include a specific call of action; what do you want the customer to do? Are you offering a free evaluation? Do you want the customer to go to your Web site? Use the coupon?

Also, the “p.s.” is the most read piece in a direct mail letter. Therefore the “p.s.” shouldn’t say things such as, “We look forward to taking care of your tree needs in the future.” Answer the “What’s in it for me?” question. What do you want the customer to do? What will the customer get if they do it?

When customers get a letter they scan it to try to figure out if they should read it. Use bold, underlined and italicized text. The items that you highlight are what they will see first. If Trees Are Us is highlighted in the letter, then the customer knows your name. Who cares? Those few phrases should tell customers what you want them to do and what’s in it for them if they do it.

It is just that simple.

Long copy sells but so does short copy. Write as much copy as necessary to get them interested in doing what you want them to do. Jay Peterman made a fortune with long copy catalog. Spiegel makes a fortune with short copy catalogs. Make sure that every piece in a direct mail package can stand alone. A customer might only keep one thing, maybe the coupon. Make sure the company phone number is on the coupon. Each piece should have your phone number, Web site and e-mail address.

Successful people in direct marketing test all the time. Once you have something that works you keep doing it or you test to see if something works better. Every time you send out direct mail make sure you test something new as part of the package. Take a small portion of the list and you test something new with a small portion of the list to see if it works better than what you are already profitable doing. Never stop testing and improving.

Setting prices

Selling at higher prices is the most profitable way to increase sales. If you could get one family to give you a lifetime contract of a million dollars a year to trim two trees, you wouldn’t need to prospect again.

The three most common ways that people set prices in all industries are:

➤ What the market will bear
➤ Cost plus
➤ SWAG (scientific wild ass guess) or OTA (outa the air)

If you set your prices based on the competition, your price will be set by the dumbest company in town. If you have a competitor who has no idea what it costs to be in business, he can price below cost. If you have somebody in your town whose parents left him the business and he has no idea how to run it, he will be out of business soon. If you follow his pricing structure, you will be out of business soon too.
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<td>96 VOLVO WG64: CAT 3306, 300 hp, 8 spd + 2 spd, 65,000 lb GVW, with 3½ ton BUilTRiTE material handler, picks 2,100 lb at 22 ft max reach, grapple, 22 ft steel flatbed, pole sides.</td>
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<td>99 INT 4900: DT466, 275 hp, 9 spd, 56,000 lb GVW, with 21 ton NATIONAL 800C crane, 120 ft hook ht, cap alert / shutdown, radio remote, pin-on steel platform, 18 ft wood flatbed.</td>
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*Please circle 38 on Reader Service Card*
Cost plus is better than the first way, because you at least have an understanding of the cost of your service (plus a percentage). But it is not the best way.

SWAG or OTA is little more than “my gut feeling is that these people will pay this much for the work I will do.” What it costs and what the work is worth to the customer have no correlation.

The best way to set your price is to base it upon the value received by the customer. Think like a customer. Teach your estimator to talk to the customer and listen long enough to understand how important the work will be to the customer and find out what the customer is worried about. Focus not on what you are selling but on what the customer is buying.

Making the close

How can you get customers to buy right now? You can’t. Customers buy when they buy and not one minute before. Customers who keep coming back buy when they are ready to buy from the company they want to buy from because that company offers what they want to buy. Don’t think transaction, rather think relationship.

Once you are sure you understand a customer’s needs, ask “What would you like to have happen next?” They will tell you where they are in the buying process.

Often, a prospect will tell you a price is too high. That could mean many things:
- I have a lower bid
- I want to see if the price is negotiable
- I don’t want everything in the package you priced
- I can’t afford this right now

Ask what they mean. Your end prices and your sales will go up.

Some final thoughts

Increasing sales isn’t about what you sell it is about what the customer buys. You will make a huge change in your business by simply changing your mindset to focusing on what the customer is buying and not what you are selling. Insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result. If you want to get different results from your marketing and sales activities, you have to do different things. Figure out what tactics are working for you and do more of those and stop doing things if you can’t tell whether or not they work. Keep testing new approaches to improve. Continuous improvement in your operations as well as your marketing and sales will make you more profitable. This is not rocket science, but that doesn’t mean it is easy. You do not need a big difference to win, you just need a difference, and you need to know what it is so you can leverage the heck out of it.

Mitch Gozé is president and founder of Customer Manufacturing Group.
DOT & Cal/OSHA Updates

Hours of Service: FMCSA asks stay of court decision

On August 30, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) filed a motion with the DC Circuit Court of Appeals seeking to stay further action on the hours-of-service (HOS) lawsuit filed by Public Citizen, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways, and Parents Against Tired Truckers. If the stay is granted, the new HOS rules would remain in effect for the time being. The compliance date for the new rules was January 4 of this year.

After consultations with federal and state officials, the FMCSA believes a stay is necessary to avoid substantial disruption in the enforcement of HOS requirements. Staying the court’s decision would allow the agency time to address and to correct the concerns expressed by the court about the new HOS rules. FMCSA is asking for a stay of at least 6 months.

In a unanimous July 16, 2004, decision, a three-judge panel said the new federal HOS rules, as issued in April 2003, are “arbitrary and capricious” because the agency failed to consider the impact of the rules on driver health, as it was required to do by Congress.

The FMCSA was given until August 30 to determine how to respond; by requesting a rehearing, appealing the decision, or initiating a new rule-making process. A decision from the court is expected soon.

TCIA has fought for an exemption to HOS requirements on behalf of its line clearance contractor members who, like utility companies, must regularly dispatch crews to far off locations, or work unusual hours, in the aftermath of a major storm.

Cal/OSHA’s tree work rule

California’s occupational safety and health agency, Cal/OSHA recently issued a final rule governing tree work, maintenance or removal. We expect its impact on arborists working in the state to be mixed, but for the most part positive.

In comments concerning §3427. Safe Work Procedures, filed in July 2003, the Tree Care Industry Associated asserted, “... to mandate that every tree shall be visually inspected by a ‘qualified person’ prior to entering the tree for any purpose, is a responsible and sensible addition to California’s present law.”

TCIA’s comments went on to caution Cal/OSHA that, “... the mandate that the qualified person shall determine and ‘ensure the use of the safest method of entry’ into the tree is highly confusing, and needs to be clarified ... the way this phrase is currently written, it could easily be construed to mandate that only aerial lift units can be used to conduct tree work, and that climbing is only an option if the tree is inaccessible by aerial lift. One is led to this interpretation because it can be argued that entering a tree with an aerial lift unit is almost always safer than entering the tree with rope and saddle.”

When Cal/OSHA issued its final rule, we were pleased to see, in section (a) Climbing and Access, the following language adopted: “Prior to climbing the tree, the tree shall be visually inspected by a qualified person who shall determine and ensure a safe method of entry into the tree.”

A little further in the document – (b) Pruning and Trimming – is a statement that has given the industry problems in the past and probably will continue to do so:

(4) With the exception of minor tree trimming, at operations involving tree maintenance or removal, a second employee shall be used at each work location to render immediate assistance.

The problem is not with the statement itself, but with its interpretation by certain parties in California. TCIA does not feel that those who drafted the standard intended to add an attendant to every subject work crew – an additional person whose job consists entirely of being on hand to render immediate assistance. Our members’ viewpoint, unfortunately, is not shared by all stakeholders in this regulation.

Peter Gerstenberger is TCIA’s Senior Advisor for Safety, Compliance & Standards.
Marshall Tree Saw

The Marshall Tree Saw, a product of Hill Manufacturing, has a 10:1 clearing ratio versus conventional methods. Because it attaches to a skid steer, the Marshall Tree Saw safely clears, moves and stacks up to 400 trees an hour with little or no damage to the environment, no stumps to grind, no additional equipment, and no human interaction with the blade. It attaches to a skid steer with an operating capacity of 1,700 to 3,500 pounds, and allows horizontal and vertical blade settings. Its rotating blade cuts left to right or right to left. The saw increases the mileage/acreage cleared and is rewriting the benchmarks set for right-of-way maintenance and reclamation. Add these features up and it equals lower vegetation management costs and more reliable electricity while managing your right of ways more safely. The Marshall Tree Saw is a product of Weather Machine Inc., a division of Hill Manufacturing Inc. Call 1-888-251-1164 or visit marshalltreesaw.com.

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RedMax’s Clean-Air Backpack Blower

RedMax’s new EBZ8000 backpack blower is the most powerful in the industry, yet meets EPA Phase 2 and CARB Tier II standards without a catalytic converter. The EBZ8000 is powered by a 4.6 hp, 72 cc Strato-Charged two-cycle engine that moves a maximum of 943 cfm of air at speeds of up to 203 mph. RedMax’s FreeFlow system protects the blower’s mechanics from leaves and other debris; its two stage air cleaner protects the engine from dust and dirt, preventing overheating and piston seizure. The 24.9-pound EBZ8000 is ergonomically designed for operator comfort and maximum productivity. It features air cooling and lumbar support for the operator, as well extra wide straps and a left- or right-hand throttle. A waist belt is also included. Contact RedMax, Komatsu Zenoah American Inc. at 1-800-291-8251, ext 214, or visit www.redmax.com.

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Haultz Lowering Device

The Haultz Lowering Device for lowering limbs uses technology that generates friction without rope-twist kinking the tail of the lowering line, allowing crews to work safer and faster, and increasing productivity and profits. Designed by Carl Halas, certified arborist, the Haultz offers greater than 180 degrees of movement from the mounting plate without binding the rope and allows rigging with two ropes on one lowering. This reduces the load at the rigging point by up to 50 percent, allowing the lowering line operator better control of the load. The Haultz uses two winches for even strap tension and a secondary strap for worry-free pruning. Attach a block and fiddle to lift limbs when even more precise control is needed. Contact Haultz at www.haultz.com or 1-866-GO HAULT(464-2858).

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Bandit’s New Megabyte Takes A Mega Bite

Bandit Industry’s new Megabyte excavator attachment is specially designed to break down stumps and oversized logs into manageable pieces that can be more efficiently processed through waste reduction equipment. As an added bonus, the Megabyte also acts as a stump puller that will split stumps while still in the ground, eliminating the need to dig around the stump for removal as is the case when using a conventional backhoe bucket with a finger. Megabyte’s pivoting shear puts equal and full pressure directly opposite the shear and the claw. Full splitting and cutting power is present throughout the cut, compared to a scissors type shear, which has most of its power two-thirds through the cut. The 9-foot 2-inch opening enables the machine to split logs of almost any length both horizontally and perpendicular. The Megabyte has been found to be twice as productive as a conventional scissors-type shear, producing 35-60 percent more in stumping and splitting applications versus a conventional shear and backhoe with a bucket. It has a replaceable shear knife tip, replaceable front knife surfaces and teeth. Contact Bandit at 1-800-952-0178 or via www.banditchippers.com.

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Shaver has Bobcat-Compatible StumpBuster

Engineered for Bobcat owners looking for a professional-grade stump grinder, the new Shaver SC-25-HU StumpBuster features a standard universal bracket fully compatible with popular Bobcat skid-steer loaders. The powerful StumpBuster offers excellent maneuverability, power and durability. Featuring a powerful hydraulic motor, the unit can easily grind a 45-inch swath through even tough hardwood stumps. The big 24-inch-diameter cutting wheel and 23 carbide-steel teeth can chew an averaged-sized stump into a 10-inch hole in less than two minutes. A single-directional cutting system significantly reduces stress on the cylinder, bearings and gear box. The SC-25-HU features a heavy-duty, ¾-inch cutting wheel, a professional-grade 2½-inch swing cylinder and premium-grade bearings that ride in an oil bath, virtually eliminating friction wear, and it is backed by a one-year manufacturer’s warranty. Call (712) 859-3293, e-mail sales@shavermfg.com, or visit www.shavermfg.com.

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Jarraff Introduces Amphibious Tree Trimmer

Jarraff Industries’ new Amphibious Jarraff All-Terrain Tree Trimmer is able to operate in water as well as swamps, bayous and marshy terrain. The unit’s design incorporates amphibious tracks equipped with pontoon floats. The floats are compartmentalized for added safety. The Jarraff’s 24-inch carbide tip blade operates at 3,200 rpm, providing top-of-the-line cutting power. The non-conductive boom extends up to 75 feet, providing unmatched cutting height and comes equipped with limb deflectors for greater operator protection. Its high tensile fiberglass construction provides shock resistance, strength and safety. Contact Jarraff at 1-800-767-7112, jarraff@jarraff.com or via www.jarraff.com.

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TREEmE AIEEE – OCTOBER 2004 25
Municipal Arborist Exchange Program 2005

The Society of Municipal Arborists (SMA) is sponsoring an exchange program for municipal arborists located around the world. SMA and contributing sponsors, including Altec Industries, Inc., will fund airfare and basic expenses for professional exchanges within the next year, which will take place in spring or summer of 2005.

Each participant will spend at least one week visiting and working with another city’s forestry department. An “exchange” may be “two-way,” meaning that paired participants take turns hosting the other, or “one-way,” where a selected participant only visits a willing host city identified and approved by SMA.

The purpose is to create a way for municipal arborists to exchange urban forestry expertise, management ideas and technology through “in-person” contact and on-site experience. Not only will the program facilitate the transfer of knowledge, it will help foster an international community of municipal arborists.

A candidate must be a member of SMA. One can apply immediately upon joining. A candidate must be employed within the urban forestry profession, preferably as a municipal arborist, for at least two years. Knowledge of a second language is helpful but not essential, although the application must be submitted in English. For a two-way exchange, a chosen participant (or the host municipality) must be able to provide lodging for the visiting participant (private homes are encouraged). The willingness to host a visiting municipal arborist increases the chance of being selected.

The number of participants will depend on available funding. Selected participants will most likely be from cities of similar size and climate, and speak a shared language. Ideally, each forestry program will have or do something that the other can learn from – a unique or exemplary program, site condition, problem, etc. Each participant will be required to write an article for the SMA journal, “City Trees,” about the experience.

Applications must be received by September 17, 2004. Awardees will be notified by December 1, 2004. The timeframe for the exchanges will be determined by the participants with the assistance of the SMA program coordinators. Obtain the application on-line at www.urban-forestry.com. Questions can also be sent to douglas.still@parks.nyc.gov.

Tom Dunlap joins Swingle Tree and Lawn Care

Swingle Tree & Lawn Care has recently hired Tom Dunlap as manager of training and education. Tom will be responsible for developing training procedures, instructional material, education program management, and crew development. His focus will be on Swingle’s Shade and Ornamental Tree Pruning departments and other Enhancement services. He will report to Jeff Oxley, director of operations for enhancement services.

Dunlap, a native Minnesotan, has an extensive background in tree care and teaching, bringing more than 25 years of experience in the arboriculture profession to Swingle. Dunlap owned and operated a tree care company that handled residential and commercial accounts, and taught production and safety training for the industry through trade shows and conferences. Dunlap taught arboriculture at Hennepin Technical College in Minnesota and presented seminars for regional and international arboriculture organizations. In addition, he conducts workshops on tree climbing for practicing arborists and guides recreational tree climbing for non-professionals.

Swingle Tree & Lawn Care has been in business since 1947 and is considered Denver’s leader in the tree and landscape care industry.

Cooperation with town leads to new facility location

In May of this year, 60-year TCIA member Total Tree Care (formerly known as Cheshire Tree Service), and its affiliated company Arbor Oil, moved into new facilities in Cheshire, Conn.

Total Tree Care, founded in 1957 by Tom and Harriane Williams, had been housed for 34 years at its previous location, at 382 South Main St., in Cheshire. Four years ago, land and equipment, storage inadequacies and traffic obstacles motivated the business’s owners, brothers Luke and TJ Williams, to begin a search for a new location. The town of Cheshire worked with the Williams brothers by granting tax abatements for the new facility, enabling the company to remain in Cheshire. The new School House Road facility, a 16,000-square-foot building located on a 5.8 acre parcel of land, will allow the company to operate more efficiently and to continue to expand well into the foreseeable future, according to its owners. The town of Cheshire will benefit by having a bigger future tax base.

FMC’s Specialty Products Business makes changes

FMC Corporation, makers of high-performance insecticides, miticides and herbicides for use by pest management and tree, lawn care and golf course profession-
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als, recently made several key appointments for the company’s Specialty Products Business, Agricultural Products Group. Appointments include Nancy Schwartz as product manager, Michele Imel as communications specialist and Jay Rhyu as business development analyst.

Schwartz began her 5-year career with the company as communications manager where she directed insecticide communications and contributed to marketing efforts for a wide variety of the group’s products. In her new role, Schwartz will be responsible for leading the company’s product launch activities for Aria – a new insecticide/aphicide for use against aphids. Schwartz received her bachelor of science from Temple University, Philadelphia, and is in the process of completing her MBA.

Michel Imel will serve as Schwartz’s communications replacement. Imel has been a senior sales representative for FMC’s Specialty Product Business in the Phoenix area. Prior to joining FMC, she also served in a sales capacity for Whitmore Micro-Gen and Target Specialty Products. Imel received her bachelor of science in Environmental Horticulture from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and is currently completing her MBA.

Rhyu joins FMC with more than 10 years’ experience across the United States and Korea in financial modeling & forecasting, planning & analysis, overall project management, and business development. In his new role, Rhyu will provide strategic and financial feasibility analyses for key new business development projects within Specialty Products Business’ existing chemistries, programs, and market channel access. Rhyu is an MBA graduate of the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Rhyu is fluent in Korean, Cantonese, and French.

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Editor
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Events & Seminars

October 14, 2004
“The Desert Southwest Community Tree Guide” public presentation by Arizona Community Tree Council
The Glendale Civic Center, Glendale, AZ
Contact Ron Romatske (602) 542-2518; Doreen Orist (602) 909-9190

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

October 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, njshadetree federation@worldnet.att.net

October 31, 2004
TCIA 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 3-7, 2005
Advanced Landscape Plant IPM PHC Short Course
University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742
Contact: Debbie Wihoot, (301) 405-3913, debrar@umd.edu; or www.raupplab.umd.edu/Conferences/AdvLandscape/

January 11-13, 2005
Eastern Pennsylvania Turf Conference and Trade Show
Valley Forge Convention Center
King of Prussia, PA
Contact Georgene Thompson: hone (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@ctcelco.net or (785) 499-6670

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

February 1-3, 2005
New England Grows 2005 green industry conf & expo
Boston Convention & Exhibition Center
Boston, MA
Contact: (508) 653-3009; www.NEGrows.org

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

February 7-8, 2005
Pennsylvania-Delaware Chapter of ISA
Annual Shade Tree Symposium and Trade Show
Lancaster, PA
Contact: Elizabeth Wertz (215) 795-0411

March 2-4, 2005
The Work Truck Show 2005 and 41st Annual NTEA Convention (Convention March 1-4)
Indianapolis, IN
Contact: 1-800-441-NTEA, (248) 489-7090 or www.ntea.com.

March 3-4, 2005
Missouri Community Forestry Council Annual Conf
Lake Ozark, MO
Contact: Justine Gartner (573) 522-4115 ext. 3116 or www.mocommunitytrees.com

March 10-12, 2005
TCI EXPO Spring–Tree Care Industry Association
EXPO March 10-11; Outdoor Demo Day March 12
Long Beach, CA
Contact: Carol Crossland, 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106; crossland@treecareindustry.org or www.treecareindustry.org

Send your event information to:
Tree Care Industry,
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Accreditation Helps You Do Business Better

By David Rattigan

Think running a tree care business is easy? Not if you’ve actually done it.

If you’re the proprietor of a business in this industry, chances are you deal with a myriad of issues, from how to retain customers and reduce the number of call-backs, to how to find a good manager so you can take a vacation, or manage the length of your own day. Companies that are able to combine quality in the field with good business practices have been able to both survive and thrive during the latest economic downturn. Some owners have also been able to manage well enough to realize quality of life benefits, such as finding time to not only run a successful business but also attend a child’s Little League game, or other family event. Conversely, a business that can’t handle those challenges may struggle; in a competitive industry, that can gobble up your hours and add to your stress.

A new accreditation program developed and launched by the Tree Care Industry Association takes aim at solving business problems as it helps business owners become more professional, both in the field and in the office. Five companies recently became TCIA’s first accredited companies, and at TCI EXPO in Detroit in October, company owners and managers will be offered a free three-hour workshop detailing the accreditation process. (Interested companies may enroll by calling TCIA at 1-800-733-2622, or online at www.tcia.org. Space is limited.)

“We wanted to make sure it was a broad-based program that addressed the needs of tree care companies, but also didn’t include anything extra or unnecessary,” says Rouse. In designing the program, the council examined accreditation programs in other industries, such as insurance, auto glass, and the auto repair industry.

“We wanted an efficient program that had a broad base in tree care industry practices and general business ‘best practices,’ that any business follows,” adds Rouse. “A lot of times, the owner of a tree care company is a good arborist, but the business portion comes with more difficulty. Our industry, as a whole, hasn’t been quick to embrace the ideas of other businesses, and we wanted to be sure this program did that. We wanted to leave no stone unturned.”

Benefits of TCIA accreditation include:

- By requiring industry standards for safety and tree care maintenance operations be followed, it helps improve operations by streamlining communication between sales, office, crew and the client.
- The accreditation may be marketed as a “seal of quality,” positioning the company as one that provides higher quality service and adheres to professional standards.

“Accreditation helps you, as a company, to look in the mirror and find ways to improve,” says Chris Frank, owner of C.L. Frank and Company of Northampton, Mass. “With human nature as it is, you get busy and it’s easy to come up with a lot of excuses and to let some things slide. Accreditation gives you a real structure to pull all the random pieces of your business together and to find any pieces you might be missing. Also, since it is done by a third party (TCIA) you can get away from finger pointing and take personalities out of the equation. Everyone at our company is working as a team to get and stay accredited.”

Competitive advantage

In the tree care industry, competition is tough among qualified companies, but made tougher still by the freelancer who enters the business with a pickup truck and a chainsaw. That breed of “tree care company” may lack experience and skill, and is frequently underinsured, but may offer a better price.

“Just think, for a minute, about the tree care companies you compete with in your market,” says Jeff Berlin, manager of Owen Tree Service in Attica, Mich., whose company became certified in the pilot program. “How many of them have good reputations? How many of them treat trees and clients ethically? How many have good safety records? How many have neat, clean equipment and crews? We are competing with all of these companies and accreditation has given us a way to let our clients know that there is truly a difference.”

Accreditation offers consumer safeguards, because the process evaluates...
entire businesses to ensure that professional practices and standards are met by all employees, and requires businesses to provide documented proof in many areas that protect consumers. A potential client that hires a TCIA accredited tree care company can rest assured that the association has checked for proper insurance, applicable business and pesticide licenses, and that the company follows a customer service code that is ethical and reliable, following the Better Business Bureau advertising codes.

“This program gives the professional company a way to differentiate itself from a guy in a pickup truck with a chain saw, and gives clients a way to differentiate for themselves,” says Rouse. He also notes that, “Sometimes the next step is that the guy with the pickup puts his money into a bucket truck. Now he looks professional, and clients can’t tell, but he still hasn’t changed his business practices. Accreditation is a great way for a third party—who the consumer can trust—to come in and provide credentials.”

**Putting practices to use**

All of the companies that took part in the pilot accreditation program have reported that adjusting their systems for TCIA accreditation will save them time in the long run, according to Rouse. During the course of training, one company learned that one of its employees didn’t understand an important change in safety standards despite being trained about it. Another found that its state’s department of transportation plans to add more commercial motor vehicle requirements in 2005, and in that discovery realized that it would avoid costly tickets and loss of vehicle/work time later. In another state, a company learned that a change in department of transportation compliance would actually be less stringent for them, thereby saving them time and money, Rouse says.

The companies have been trained in the basic components of business, including business planning, which Rouse calls, “one of the huge holes in the industry.” With better planning, companies are better prepared to replace equipment as it wears out, and better able to handle cash flow. “Good business planning may not bring in more business, which Rouse calls, “one of the huge holes in the industry.” With better planning, companies are better prepared to replace equipment as it wears out, and better able to handle cash flow. “Good business planning may not bring in more money, but it can help you adjust your finances so you can plan for slow periods,” Rouse says.

Even improving a skill, such as writing an estimate, can benefit a company, Rouse notes. A well written estimate communicating the details of the job can be a selling point even if a company’s price is higher than that of a competitor.

Among companies involved in the pilot accreditation process, the response to the program has been overwhelming positive.

“TCIA accreditation provided incentive and assistance for the development of my company in pursuit of becoming a truly professionally run business,” concurs Robert Brudenell of The Natural Way, Inc., of Englewood, Colo. “TCIA accreditation provided a template for my office manager and I to model many areas of our business after. The template helped our company become organized in a way that I thought would not have happened unless we became a big business ... TCIA accreditation provided ideas, methods, forms and formats for structuring many aspects of our business.”

Brudenell says he recognized immediate changes for the better in many areas, including the handling of customer complaints, employee files, employee training, future planning, budgets, and documenting the many aspects of his business. “Most importantly, accreditation is a process that enabled me to become more intimately aware of areas of my business that I had neglected or was unfamiliar with,” Brudenell says. “I found gaps in my business that needed to be filled and, quite frankly, it was easy to fill those gaps. My focus for the future of my business is clearer now then ever. I see the future needs and demands of my business in a new way and am planning for that future. Accreditation is the process behind the saying ‘make your plan, follow your plan.’ ”

After becoming accredited, Brudenell’s company inserted an announcement about the accomplishment in its newsletter.

“We were pleasantly surprised at the reaction of our clients,” Brudenell says. “Many congratulated us on our accomplishment. New clients are informed of our status as an accredited tree care company and the ‘buy in’ we get from that is quite incredible. Accreditation is not a painless process, but it is definitely one of the best things I have done to improve my business.”

**For more information or details on the TCIA Accreditation Program, call Bob Rouse at 1-800-733-2622 or visit the TCIA Web site: www.treecareindustry.org.**

Dave Rattigan is a freelance writer living in Peabody, Mass.
Care Needed to Protect Trees in Winter

By Dr. Lakshmi Sridharan

During an annual cycle, a tree goes through various phases – vegetative, reproductive or dormant. During a vegetative phase, the tree produces a number of new shoots with foliage that actively photosynthesizes, and actively carries out other physiological activities. Most seed-producing trees then enter the reproductive phase, when they produce flowers that – after pollination and fertilization – produce fruits, within which seeds develop. After a tree accomplishes its goal of reproduction, it goes through a dormant phase, when its physiological activities slow down. The dormant phase is more visible to the naked eye in deciduous trees than in evergreens.

Trees in different climatic zones tune themselves to seasonal changes according to the prevailing climatic conditions. Tropical, sub-tropical and temperate trees respond differently to seasonal fluctuations. In addition, when trees grown in a different climatic zone are transplanted elsewhere, seasonal fluctuations may affect them. Native or introduced, all trees may benefit from protection to a certain extent, from temperatures below freezing, frost, winter storms, winter drought or flooding due to excessive winter rains. Young and newly transplanted trees are most prone to winter damage.

Trees may appear to be inactive in winter but, in reality, their metabolism only slows down. As temperatures decrease, physiological activities of plants, especially photosynthesis and transpiration, slow down. This is the dormant phase for most trees, with no new branch shoots developing, although roots may continue to grow, if rather slowly, in unfrozen soils. Trees continue to respire and absorb water and nutrients from the soil, but at a much slower rate. Growing points and existing young buds often have protective jackets to withstand winter chills or frost.

Trees in dormancy need to remain healthy, free from pathogenic microorganisms and destructive insects. Invisible to the naked eye, the spores of microorganisms overwinter on trees and in the soil. Insects hibernate in tree crevices and on the ground. They all wait for the weather to warm up to continue with their destructive lifecycles. Hungry animals such as rodents, rabbits or deer may chew the dormant buds and the growing points. Trees, therefore, may benefit from protection from these other destructive elements in nature in addition to adverse climatic conditions.

Mulching

Young trees are more vulnerable to extreme fluctuations in temperature. Warm days and cold nights cause repeated thawing and freezing, which disturbs the root system and may eventually uproot a young transplant. To prevent this, maintain even soil temperatures by covering the soil around young trees with compost, bark mulch or wood chips. Spread two to three inches of mulch or chips a little way away from the trunk. Do not compact the mulch; heavy rains in winter can create water-logging that may result in root rot. In addition to moderating soil temperature, the covering helps in retaining nutrients and preventing soil erosion. Use nourishing mulches, such as leaf-compost, shredded cedar, pine or redwood bark that will add to the nutrient content of a soil on decomposition. Pine bark lowers the pH, making the soil acidic. As such, it is good for acid loving plants. Hardwood bark also offers suppression over soil-borne pathogenic microorganisms, such as Rhizoctonia,
Phytophthora, Pythium and Fusarium. Mulching, therefore, is good for all plants.

**Pruning**

Prune dead, diseased and overlapping branches in all climatic zones. In places where winter is mild, prune moderately in late fall prior to an application of a dormant spray. (Application of pesticides prior to pruning is a waste of pesticides, energy and time, since you are going to prune some of the branches or limbs.) Pruning during winter – even in climatic zones with freezing temperatures, snow storms and frost – appears to be good for shade trees, fruit trees or mature trees that suffer from fungal diseases. Dormant pruning reduces the number of buds to share the reserves stored in the roots, so each bud will grow more vigorously. Winter pruning is recommended for young deciduous trees and shrubs, and fruit trees to encourage them to grow more vigorously. Prune fruit trees – apples, peaches, plum, etc. – from early to mid-winter.

Overcrowding of branches, resulting in poor air circulation, is often responsible for infection. Winter pruning minimizes the chances of certain diseases, such as fire blight, in apple, pear, mountain ash, hawthorns and cotoneasters, and oak wilt in oaks.

Sell potential customers on the benefits of winter pruning. It is easier to prune a tree during the dormant season than in spring, when trees send out new branches. Devise a sales flyer that stresses that winter pruning:

- Lessens the chance of spreading fungal diseases, as the fungi also lie dormant at that time;
- Allows an arborist to see the entire tree’s architecture;
- Minimizes storm damage to trees – as well as to homes;
- Encourages strong new growth in spring.

**Dormant spray**

A dormant spray may be a good idea for deciduous trees, ornamentals, fruit trees and shrubs.

Choice of a spray is important. Dormant sprays that include lime (calcium carbonate), copper, sulfur, combinations of copper and sulfur (copper sulfate), and lime and sulfur, effectively kill hibernating microorganisms. Dormant oil controls overwintering insect eggs – such as those of aphids, mites and other pests on fruit trees and other trees and plants – through suffocation. A spray is designed to control certain...
Timing of applications and intervals between them is equally as important in the effective control of pests and pathogens. A timely application of a spray can help control devastating diseases such as leaf curl, shothole, brown rot and a host of other fungal diseases. Optimal timing depends on diagnosis, and involves treating at certain stages in the lifecycle of the plants or pests.

Be aware that dormant oil can kill beneficial insects; do not spray oil when the tree has already put forth new shoots. Spring is the peak season for the emergence of beneficial insects such as pollinators. Dormant sprays may harm sensitive species, such as Douglas fir, juniper, cedar, maples, redbud, smoke tree and spruce.

Avoid spraying in the hot sun, as the oil on plants parts may do more damage than frost

Trees can suffer from desiccation during winter for a number of reasons.

Low temperatures, below freezing, result in frost.

Evergreens as well as broad-leaved trees may lose water faster than the rate of water absorption by the roots. The ground may freeze to a depth beyond the root zone so that roots cannot absorb water even when it is present.

Bright sun with high daytime temperatures can accelerate transpiration. The heat of the sun can cause the stomata on the lower sides of the leaves to open, increasing transpiration. Discoloration and sun burns (sun scald) on leaves or trunks result from desiccation.

During bright, cold winter days, chlorophyll in the foliage is destroyed (photo-oxidized) and is not synthesized again when temperatures are below 28 F. This results in a bleaching of the foliage. Sun scald is characterized by elongated, sunken, dried, or cracked areas of dead bark, usually on the south or southwest side of a tree.

On cold winter days, the sun can heat up bark to the point where cambial activity is stimulated. When the sun is blocked by a cloud, hill or building, bark temperature drops rapidly, killing the active tissue. It is worst on the side facing the wind. This can be particularly serious if plants are near a white house where the sun's rays reflect off the side, causing extra damage.

Minimize water loss from transpiration by spraying anti-transpirants or anti-desiccant compounds.
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in a spray may burn dormant buds. Temperatures should be between 40 degrees and 70 degrees for a minimum of 24 hours. Cover trees and shrubs completely – to a point of dripping – making sure to penetrate cracks and crevices in the bark. Apply after all leaves have fallen from the targeted plant or plants. Use a tank sprayer for complete coverage.

Fertilizing

Fertilization should be based on soil or foliar analysis that, through testing, shows some deficiency. In the absence of a fertility test, a complete, balanced fertilizer should be selected. Do not fertilize heavily in winter, and not at all when soils are frozen. Top dressing over the mulch is the right way to fertilize during winter.

Watering

Dry spells in winter or hot daytime temperatures may lead to desiccation. If soils are not frozen, check the soil moisture levels during these adverse conditions and water whenever necessary.

Wraps

The general use of tree wraps is discouraged, but wraps can prevent injuries from chewing animals and harsh weather to young transplants that have not developed woody barks. Use burlap; tie it around the tree using a string. Use commercially available cold frames for young transplants. Do not use plastic as a wrap, as it will inhibit proper air circulation and respiration. Avoid black plastic as a material for wrapping plants. During the day heat builds up inside, increasing the extreme fluctuation between day and night temperatures and speeding up growth of buds in the spring, making them more susceptible to damage from a late frost. A chicken-wire wrap, when firmly anchored to the soil, will keep rodents and deer away from a tree.

Place container-grown plants in protected areas to make sure that the soil does not freeze. Protect the roots by wrapping the container. When covering the tree, make sure that the wrap does not touch the plant parts. It is better to give room between the wrap and the aerial parts of the tree – stem, leaves, buds, etc. Air is a bad conductor of high or low temperatures. When a wrap touches the leaf or any other part of the tree, the wrap does not protect the tree from frost.

Trees do not demand much attention during winter. As long as a gardener follows simple preventive measures to minimize the winter damage, the trees will remain healthy for decades, with good yields during the rest of the year.

Lakshmi Sridharan is a scientist with a Ph.D. in molecular biology, botany and microbiology.
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Electrical hazards training is imperative for workers approaching within ten feet of any energized conductor. 95% of all electrocution incidents involving tree workers are the result of unsafe acts. Unsafe acts usually occur amongst workers who have not been trained or given inadequate training.

Electricity is a serious and widespread hazard to the arborist. Electricity causes about 30 percent of the fatalities in the tree care industry, making electricity one of the most unforgiving and often the most unfamiliar hazards facing any tree worker.

Meet Legal Requirements

OSHA's General Duty clause, Section 5, reads, "each employer under the (OSHA) Act has the general duty to furnish each of his employees a place of employment free from recognized hazards that are causing, or are likely to cause, death or serious physical harm." EHAP certification is a confirmation that the employer has adequately furnished such a place of employment.
The program opens with a narrated slide presentation based on leading research into the phenomena of tree failures. Using fifty-two narrated slides with embedded movies and animations, risk assessment techniques are introduced and explored.

**Risk Communication and Mitigation - Part Two**

This section is a video-based, case study documenting the removal of a dead, lightning struck white pine. You’ll see approaches presented earlier incorporated into a model job briefing. Then watch advanced rigging and risk mitigations techniques as best management practices are demonstrated. You’ll learn unusual, innovative and practical approaches used to tame what could have been a killer tree.

**TCIA Training Room**

Part Three presents a video-based look into TCIA’s training room. A range of assessment tools every tree crew should have available is shown and explained. This section progresses up to advanced methods that qualify and quantify hidden defects while providing an objective record for documentation and forensic purposes. The approaches presented will help your firm and its employees operate more safely and professionally. This product also provides a strong foundation for firms wishing to offer tree risk assessments as a professional for-fee service.

Learn what tree crews can not afford to overlook. Hazard Tree -- *Risk Assessment and Mitigation for Tree Workers* is designed and optimized as an interactive DVD.

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**Certification**

- 2+ ISA CEUs.

**Three Sections**

- Narrated Slide Presentation (Risk Assessment)
- Case Study (Risk Communication / Mitigation)
- TCIA’s Training Room (Tools of Risk Assessment)

---

**for Professional Arborists.**

Communicated and trained employees about such hazards.

**Industry Requirements**

ANSI Z133.1 is the tree care industry’s consensus safety standard. It recognizes electrical hazards among the major safety concerns during arboricultural operations. The safety standards provided by ANSI Z133.1 are based on the collective experience of the tree care industry, it would be foolhardy to ignore this collected wisdom. OSHA inspectors will often recognize a violation of the ANSI Z133.1 Safety Standard as equivalent to a violation of OSHA’s General Duty clause.

**Course Requirements**

TCIA issues a certificate of course completion after candidates:

- Review manual and pass 6 chapter exams
- View two videos (not included)
- Perform successful aerial rescue
- Achieve CPR Certification
- Achieve 1st Aid Certification

**Recognition Upon Completion**

- Certificate of completion
- Wallet-size ID card
- Helmet Decal

**Training Documentation**

An important step in administering training sessions is documentation. TCIA will grade exams and keep documentation of all course requirements so you always have a backup for compliance audits and accident investigations.

**Memorable Illustrations**

Includes more than 50 photographs as well as 55 illustrations from industry artist Brian Kotwica. EHAP depicts learning points informally, with detailed line drawings that entertain and educate.

### Ordering Information

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**Manual**

- 116 pages, Y-row bind in English or Spanish with test forms and Z133.1 standard.

**6 Chapters (42 Sections)**

- Each contains:
  - Training Content
  - 5 Study Questions
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Model Company Safety Program comes with an all-inclusive, organizational checklist to help companies of all sizes implement a comprehensive safety program. Quickly evaluate your current program or build one from scratch. Helpful background, policy language, forms, and easy-to-follow instructions in the manual and accompanying CD to guide you.

- Prevent injuries, accidents and damage
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- Motivate employees
- Finish jobs on time and within budget
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Tailgate Safety Program provides companies of all sizes an easy and effective plan for presenting tree care safety to workers. Periodic, on-the-job meetings can be used in a classroom or in the field. Seventy carefully chosen topic areas that can be reviewed in as little as 15 minutes each. Flexible format, simple props for brief, informative lessons. Highly effective and endorsed by safety experts, this form of on-the-job training is required by OSHA.

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- Comprehensive, with 70 different sessions
- Ensure federal OSHA compliance
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Step by Step Checklist
Without the checklist approach, the time and resources required for most companies to assemble all the information needed to research, document and implement a comprehensive safety program would be extensive and costly. To organize the sheer volume of information, the TCIA Safety Committee compiled a checklist containing 48 different items. Using the checklist, you can select the items that pertain to your company. The checklist is provided on the accompanying CD in a printable version for easy updating when you add new equipment, employees, or services. The checklist is organized into four important topical areas, including; General Policy & Procedure, OSHA Compliance, Vehicles & Equipment, Training & Certifications, as well as a Miscellaneous category that may be used for other requirements.

Prioritization
The Model Company Safety Program makes specific recommendations to guide companies in implementation timelines. Priorities are cross-referenced to the items on the checklist.

Seventy Sessions
Tailgate safety training is an important part of any company’s safety program, and TCIA’s Tailgate Safety Manual for Safety Meetings makes training flexible and comprehensive. The seventy sessions presented can be used in the classroom or in the field, and each is an encapsulated safety lesson, complete with handouts, quiz and answer keys. Sessions may be presented in any order, so employers may demonstrate safety topics that address potential hazards crews might face on any given work day.

Easy Implementation
Each session follows a step-by-step methodology designed to make training fast and effective. Steps in any session plan include:
- Presenting the topic, job steps and potential hazard involved in each job function.
- Giving each employee a copy of the handout for that session.
- Reading the “How Could This Incident/Collision/Injury Have Been Prevented?” section of the Trainer’s Instructions and encourag-
Guidance
The Employer Guidance Section helps you develop a company-wide safety culture. Section 1 addresses policy and procedure items such as: Accident Investigations & Reports, ANSI Z133 compliance, Back Injury, DOT compliant work zone setup, drug policy, return-to-work policy, hazard assessment for PPE, and more. Section 2 takes a detailed look at OSHA compliance. Section 3 covers vehicle & equipment safety, inspection, and documentation, and Section 4 gives an overview of training & certification. Under each topic, references to specific pages in the Policy Section, and forms in the Forms Section save time.

Written Company Policy
The Policy Section takes you through the process of creating written company safety guidelines. Samples of assigned safety responsibilities for managers, supervisors and employees can be customized. Emergency action plans detail measures to be taken in the event of an emergency. A hazards assessment table is provided which cross references tasks, potential hazards, information sources and PPE requirements. Specific procedures and safety guidelines are detailed for stump grinders, trucks, chippers, aerial lifts, splitters and ladders.

All Forms on CDs
It would take weeks to prepare the twenty comprehensive forms that are ready for customization and printing on the accompanying CDs. Forms and Policy Section materials are translated into Spanish on the accompanying Spanish version CD.

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Accompanying CDs:  “Forms” and “Policy” sections in English and Spanish versions.
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• Company Policy
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Manual: 446 pages, Y-row bind in English or Spanish.
Accompanying CCDs- Handouts, tests and answer sheets provided on CD for easy printing
Three Sections
• Trainers Instructions
• Trainee Handouts
• Quiz, Answer Sheets and Answer Keys

PPE Advisories
Each session in Tailgate Safety contains a Personal Protective Equipment Advisory box, where ANSI Z133.1 safety standards protective equipment is specified relative to the job function at hand. Graphical icons are presented in a call-out box clearly displaying Personal Protective Equipment suggested for the task at hand.

Memorable Illustrations
More than 100 illustrations from industry artist Brian Kotwica depict learning points in an informal fashion, designed to promote retention. These detailed line drawings entertain and educate.

Training Documentation
An important step in administering Tailgate Safety training sessions is documentation. A signed and dated Tailage Safety Answer Sheet serves as proof of training. The Tailgate Training Record Form helps keep track of sessions presented as required by OSHA.

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Fuel to Ignite Your Firewood Business

By David Rattigan

It seems that every tree service gets into the firewood business the same way. There are jobs, and there is wood left over. Pretty soon there’s a pile. And then they’re in the firewood business.

“The better logs go to milling, and class 4 logs go to firewood,” says Don Vona of Dion’s Tree Service and Firewood Enterprises Inc. in Howell, N.J., who counts firewood sales as one source of income for his business. With three crews, he says, “We cut a lot of wood.”

Ron Van Beek, owner of Tree Care Inc. in Holland, Mich., has been an arborist for 24 years. In the past, his company – a two-crew business that specializes in small land-clearing jobs and residential work – has given away tree parts rather than dealing with the time-consuming task of cutting, processing and handling firewood. He says he’s trying to renew his firewood business again this year, his interest spurred when his son Marc built a large wood splitter. “I also bought a Rotochopper for colored mulch,” he says, to go along with a Lucas portable sawmill. “We’re trying to use the whole tree.”

To turn his business profitable, Van Beek moved to a site on a busy street to produce and sell the firewood. In addition to maintaining his Yellow Pages advertising, his company developed a Web page last winter, and created new signage for company trucks. He’s also banking on the goodwill he’s created in the community with his support of civic and church events, such as donating mulch to churches or donating his chipping services for the township’s Christmas tree. With fuel costs rising, he’s anticipating a greater demand for firewood this winter.

Based on the experience of these and other tree care industry professionals who are also successful firewood dealers, Van Beek sounds like he’s on the right track.

As winter approaches, this is the time of year when the minds of many turn to firewood. “I’ve got to have a wood stove and wood fire in the wintertime. Otherwise, I don’t feel right,” says Dick Whitehead, a retired state police officer from Attleboro, Mass., who started cutting wood as a hobby (he says, it gives him a better, more cathartic workout than he can get in the gym) and, using a Timberwolf log splitter, turned it into a small business.

Many firewood sellers like to start small and stay small, but many tree care industry professionals – such as Van Beek – find they can create a nice income stream by marketing their product. How have they grown their business? They shared some secrets to their success.

Environmentally sound

Traditionally, selling firewood has been a way to dispose of excess wood while making additional income. Processing the wood is a cost of business often overlooked by the consumer, and business owners sometimes have viewed it as a part of the business to keep crew members occupied – and employed – during slow periods. But more and more, tree care professionals are also viewing firewood, lumber and mulch processing from an environmental perspective.

“Our whole objective is to recycle everything we bring in,” stresses Jeff Hansen, proprietor of Hansen’s Tree, Lawn & Landscaping Inc. of Saint Charles, Mo. “Nothing goes into a landfill, ditch or is dumped at the side of the road. We recycle everything we’ve got. It’s more environmentally friendly.”

Hansen, whose business runs seven tree crews and one lawn care crew, has positioned his fast-growing company as socially responsible and a positive contributor to the community (he says that an upcoming policy change to include random drug testing, and the subsequent drug free workplace, will be featured in his advertising). The business is heavily affiliated with baseball’s St. Louis Cardinals (firewood ads run on
radio broadcasts) and takes part in charity events, including sponsoring an annual clay bird charity shoot that aims to raise $50,000 each year to benefit disabled children.

“It’s a good way for us to give back to the community,” says Hansen, who estimates that his business sells between 400 and 500 cords of wood each year, and may sell more this year. Among his clients are restaurants that use wood-fueled ovens and grills. The greener wood goes to the restaurants, generally, and the rest to homeowners.

“Have you ever eaten a steak cooked over wild cherry? It’s unbelievable.”

Hansen also runs a one-line firewood ad in the Yellow Pages, is on the Web, and is located on a busy street. The company is moving to a new location off busy Interstate 70, and the new location will include a 12,000 square-foot shop that will offer retail firewood and mulch among other items.

**Location, location, location**

Roy Stinnett Jr., owner of Lexington Tree Service Inc. in Lexington, Ky., has been selling firewood to dispose of his excess wood for the 35 years that he’s been in business. In a fast-growing region, his business is still growing. “More houses are built every year with fireplaces, so firewood sales are going up and up and up,” he says, noting that rising fuel and electricity costs are making firewood a popular heating option. He estimates that his business has more than doubled in the last five years, “and it’s getting bigger and better and more productive.”

Stinnett markets across the board, with newspaper ads and inserts, hand-delivered advertising material, spots on television and radio, a Web site, and a billboard at their high-traffic location near a shopping center on busy Winchester Road. Stinnett also owns Lexington Outdoor Power Equipment Sales & Service, an abutting business whose customers may pick up firewood while on shopping trips. Some business also comes over from a truck-repair yard, also nearby.

The Web site has helped his business tremendously, Stinnett says. “That puts us into different states, to different people, in different areas,” he says. “People come in and buy from us, and are re-marketing our products. We have an abundance of firewood in our area, so prices are cheaper than in surrounding states.”

Stinnett’s company sells seasoned firewood for $95 to $110 a cord, greener wood for less. Lexington is one of the fastest growing areas in the United States, Stinnett notes, and all that development is good for business. “We keep five to eight people running wood and splitting firewood on a daily basis during the summer. We keep two (processing) machines running, sometimes for eight hours a day, five to six days a week.”

In most seasons, there’ll be cold spurts that will have customers figuratively knocking down the door, but very often
people will drive in and pick up their fire-
wood (many of the businesses surveyed
here will both pick up and deliver, although
the delivered wood is more expensive).
Even after 35 years, Stinnett says he is
sometimes surprised to see folks drive up
and fill not just the bed of a pickup truck
with firewood, but sometimes the trunk or
floor of a Mercedes or other vehicle.

His business, which employs more than
50 full- and part-time employees, sold
more than 1,400 cords last winter, and that
was a mild winter. He’s expecting to sell
more in the coming season, and may exceed 2,000. While many buy wood for
the comfort and ambiance of a crackling
fire, the firewood business is weather
dependent, as was illustrated dramatically
in 2002, when a major ice storm gripped
Stinnett’s region of the country. It knocked
out electricity in the area, creating a major
need for wood as heating fuel.

“We had people begging to get fire-
wood,” he recalls. “It got so bad, we lined
them up down the street and had to escort
them into the property. We’d bring 10 to 15
people in at a time and then lock the gate to
keep people from fighting over the fire-
wood. “We weren’t able to split it quickly
enough. People were taking it unsplitt.”

A good wood fire is frequently a source
of fuel, but to many people the fireplace
fire is primarily important as part of the
winter lifestyle.

Ernie Gish, co-owner (with Mike Jones)
of Gish Logging Inc. in Fort Loudon, Pa.,
has been in the firewood business 30 years,
and over the past 20 – he bought his first
processor in 1984 – has seen his volume
jump tremendously. His business, primari-
ly wholesaling to more traditional
firewood dealers and (for the past five
years) also moving smaller-volume
USDA-approved kiln-dried packages
through convenience, grocery and big box
stores, moves 15,000 to 16,000 cords per
year. After grossing $4 million last year,
he’s aiming at $5 million this year.
Explaining the particular popularity of the
kiln-dried (versus air-dried) packaged fire-
wood, Gish says, “(People are) not buying
it for the heating aspect. They’re buying it
for the ambiance. They want a fire in the
fireplace for the holiday, the football sea-
son, or on date night. They want it to start
easily and burn as a nice, jumping fire.”

Gish’s background is clearly different
from that of tree care industry profession-
als who sell firewood to create an
additional income stream. He says that
only a tiny portion of his wood is sold retail
– in his mountainous region of
Pennsylvania, he says, many folks chop
their own – and he doesn’t have a high-
traffic location. However, he notes that
location is important to his wholesaling
business – 50 percent of the country’s pop-
ulation is within a 500-mile radius.

Quality service

Vona, of Dion’s Tree Service in New
Jersey, shares many of the same marketing
techniques – including a high-traffic loca-
tion – as some of his counterparts.
However, he says that the most important
factor in improving his firewood business
came 10 years ago, when he added an
office manager to run the office while he
was in the field. Suddenly, customers did-
n’t have long to wait for return telephone
calls to their firewood queries. These days,
customers calling for firewood will either
reach a live person or get a detailed record-
ed message letting them know the
particulars of the firewood available, and
can expect a quick return phone call. Vona
estimated that his business sells about
2,000 cords of firewood per year.

“It means a lot of have somebody in the
office all the time,” he says. “That’s what
really did it. They’d call, and she got back
to them immediately.”

Dion’s has other advantages that other
successful firewood dealers have: the
business has a high-profile site near the
highway, and an eye-catching 25-foot-
high pile of firewood on the property. It
also has a Web presence, a large sign, and
an eye-catching phone number
(1-800-FIREWOOD). Vona insists that
his best selling tool, however, is prompt
service.

“Nobody wants to leave a message on an
answering machine,” he says. “They want
instant verification.”

Dave Rattigan is a freelance writer
living in Peabody, Mass.
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Please circle 9 on Reader Service Card
Several years ago, Richard Harris retired from the University of California at Davis and he asked my partner, Nelda Matheny, and I if we could be co-authors on the arboriculture book. I got the unenviable job of re-writing the introductory chapter. I decided that what we really needed to do was introduce arboriculture/tree care to our audience. We needed to set the stage for tree care. To do that, I decided to use a phrase called guiding principles, a series of ideas that reflect what we do each day.

These guiding principles are general guidelines. They are a way of thinking and defining who we are as arborists. I recognize that we work in diverse environments with diverse species in diverse locations. But if we are going to have quality tree care, we need to have principles that will be applicable in each of those situations. I try to remember these principles in my own work.

1. As tree development changes with time, so must our program of care.

The first principle reflects tree biology. We do not want to give the same program of care to a young tree that we would to an older, mature tree. Young trees and old trees have different growth rates. Certainly young plants grow much more rapidly than mature trees do. Older trees are more likely to be susceptible to insects, particularly bark beetles and borers. Mature trees are going to be much less responsive to treatment. They have a great deal of inertia in responding to change – and their tolerance for change is lower than that of young trees.

We have to recognize that the tools, techniques and approach we use for a newly planted tree may not be appropriate when we are trying to maintain a mature one. Our attitude about care should switch from one of encouraging growth and good structure to one that provides environmental and structural stability. We can reflect on our own development. As teenagers, we ate anything, had limitless amounts of energy and saw ourselves as invulnerable. Can we say the same now that we are bit older? This is true as we consider tree development. Mature trees are going to be slower and less responsive to change. They are not going to be as tolerant of manipulation and they don’t really need to grow.

2. Tree care is a long-term, low-intensity process.

Our ability to get in there and work our arboricultural magic is really limited, particularly when we are dealing with mature individuals. To reflect that, an English arborist named Ted Green gave us this wonderful quote: “An oak grows for 300 years, rests for 300 years and dies for 300 years.” Even if a tree grew for 30 years, rested for 30 years and died overnight, we still would have a long time to apply tree care treatments.

3. Tree care is founded on the principles of plant health care.

It is safe to say that in our current practice the two are completely related. We might find the occasional exception, such as sudden oak death or Dutch elm disease. We don’t really know if tree care practices have been involved in these epidemic diseases. That said, healthy vigorously growing trees are best able to resist, tolerate and fight off both environmental stress and attack by insect and disease. That is a truism in our pest management protocols and our plant health-care protocols.
For many of these species of trees, their patterns of decline are related to pre-disposing factors. Our native oaks in California usually die due to an infestation of Armillaria, Phytophthora or some other wood decay. It is rare to see a standing dead oak. More commonly they fall apart one piece at a time. Armillaria usually only becomes pathogenic when the tree is pre-disposed or injured. We can’t really treat or cure Armillaria once it is in the tree. What we can do is prevent and avoid its presence by avoiding the pre-disposing factors and keeping the tree in good health and good vigor.

An example from the East Coast is bronze birch borer. Is there any effective treatment once the tree has this pest? Is not our treatment for bronze birch borer to maintain the vigor of the tree by summer irrigation and by avoiding mechanical injury? By pruning in the dormant season? This is an example of our modern approach to plant health care: maintaining the vigor of the tree reduces its susceptibility to the pest. For this reason, tree care is intimately linked to pest management. We could also consider the timing of our tree care activities as being linked to plant health care. For example, don’t we manage oak wilt by avoiding pruning in May and June?

4. Tree care applies general concepts to specific genotypes.

This may be the most important principle in my own work. As we engage in tree care, we meet a variety of plants. It is safe to say that an arborist in Manhattan, Kansas, can probably identify up to 15 tree species that he or she will meet over and over again. It is my belief that we need to know those 15 or 20 species intimately. We cannot treat a birch in the same way we do a cedar. We need to be able to acknowledge that one species may need one type of care while another species will require something different.

At HortScience, we summarize the species-specific qualities in a tree care profile. For example, what do we know about southern magnolia (Magnolia grandiflora) in our area? It is tolerant of our low winter temperatures. The species will be 80-feet tall with a 60-foot crown spread. The species is adaptable to turf, i.e. it tolerates irrigation but requires good soil drainage. In our area, southern magnolia has few pest problems. The major problems we encounter are surface roots, and the nuisance of leaf and fruit litter through the growing season. Southern magnolia rarely fails. When it does, the cause is lower trunk or root decay, often associated with root severance or fill. Finally we know that we can manage this tree relatively easily as long as it receives adequate irrigation and a program of regular pruning.

If you deal with common hackberry in Kansas or white ash in Michigan or red maple in New Jersey, you probably know the same sort information for those species.

5. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure because we have a limited ability to cure.

When you call me to come and look at a tree that has been brutalized – topped, roots severed, etc. – my response is going to be that I am a nice guy and a good arborist but I am not a magician. I can’t somehow conjure up the branches that were removed and the eliminate impacts to the root system. I can’t restore the tree to it is prior condition. We have a limited ability to fix trees that are in severe decline; trees whose structure has been compromised or are very poor health. We just have to acknowledge that prevention is worth the pound of cure.

6. Good tree care starts with quality plants.

I recently attended a meeting in San Antonio, Texas, during which I went on the tree tour. A local community group had planted 45 young oak trees. I was with the city arborist from a town in the Midwest. We looked at the trees, exchanged glances and walked away. She told me that she would not have accepted any of the trees in the planting. Their structure was that bad. I thought it was a terrible situation. Here was a wonderful group of people with great intentions planting new street trees. Yet they had to start with poor quality plants.

7. Tree selection is founded on right plant, right place.

Let me describe this as “know the site, then select the plant.” Too often we seem to decide what the right plant is and then put it in a space that is not appropriate for it.
What we really need to do is describe the space, then figure out what plant will work well within it. We have no ability to change the characteristics of the tree. We also have a limited capacity to change the site. What we can do is accurately assess the site and management situation, then select from the broad palette of plants available to us.

We should start with our needs. For example, “a plant that will be 30 feet tall, grow in a 6-by-6 boulevard strip and tolerate summer irrigation.” Then select the plant. There is no perfect tree that will work well in all situations. What we have to do is work with what God and the nursery industry have given us.

8. Our arboricultural treatments can have either positive or negative effects.

Our image of ourselves is that we are white knights who are going to do good. We see ourselves as people who are providing a positive service, but we can also have a negative effect on tree health and structure. For example, our pruning can either be positive or negative, depending whether natural target or flush cuts are used.

Alex Shigo once said that pruning is the best thing we can do for a tree and the worst thing we can do to a tree. Let’s acknowledge that our pruning styles, techniques, intensity and timing can be either bad or good, and strive to be on the good side.

9. Tree health and hazard are related but not equivalent.

We often encounter California bay (Umbellularia californica). By any normal measure of vigor, vitality and health, most bay trees look pretty good – a full crown, very dense. Yet there are a number of fruiting bodies of decay fungi at the base of the trunk. Even though the tree is healthy, it has an important structural defect. Our tree care profile for California bay would tell me lower trunk failure due to decay, usual-
ly Ganoderma, is the most common form of failure. When we are taking care of a tree, we have to consider both its health and structure. Our ANSI A300 and Z133 standards require pre-work safety inspection. What we are really doing is asking ourselves if the tree safe for a crew to climb? In so doing, we are assessing the defects and stability of the tree.

10. Arboriculture and forestry are related but not necessarily the same field.

Arborists and foresters share many common passions and training, but we often bring different perspectives and goals to our fields. We arborists focus on the development of individual trees. When we plant a row of 50 street trees we think all of them should live. We want every one of those trees to be the best it can be. On the other hand, our colleagues in forestry focus more on stands of trees. Arborists and foresters employ different management tools. We measure success differently. Most foresters view the urban forest as providing benefits such as recreation, or water quality or wildlife habitat rather than as sources of timber. We arborists are captivated by the individual trees that make up that forest.

In summary, two themes emerge from these guiding principles. First, we have to know the trees. We need to be knowledgeable about the species and cultivars we encounter. When we encounter a new tree, we need to use our network of colleagues, our texts and reference books, the Internet and other resources to teach us about it. Second, the guiding principles tell us about our tools and techniques. Arboricultural treatments can be good or bad. They are intimately tied to plant health care and pest management programs. Our tools and techniques are better-used judiciously, long term, low intensity.

If we follow these guiding principles, we will find that we will feel better about our work and have better, more productive businesses. We will feel like we actually did something positive during the day rather than cleaning up after someone else’s mistakes. And the trees will thank us as well.

Dr. Jim Clark is vice president for Hortscience Inc., a horticulture-consulting firm in Pleasanton, Calif. He is also co-author of A Photographic Guide to the Evaluation of Hazard Trees in Urban Areas and Trees and Development, A Technical Guide to Preservation of Trees During Land Development. He recently completed the fourth edition of Arboriculture, the Emigrated Management of Landscape Trees, Shrubs and Vines, with Dr. Dick Harris and Nelda Matheny. He is a certified arborist and a registered consulting arborist with ASCA.
Need Help With H-2B Visa Applications?

By Mark Garvin

Back in 1995, Jim Foley decided he needed to find a solution to the labor problems that plagued his landscape company. After a little research and a lot of phone calls, he decided the H-2B visa program might provide a solution. The program worked so well for him that he opened his own processing agency, Foley Enterprises, to help others in the green industry find workers.

The H-2B visa has become increasingly popular in the tourist and landscaping industries. The need for temporary employees (up to 10 months) has soared as the number of people willing to fill these jobs has dropped. Recently, more and more commercial tree care companies have explored the H-2B option.

This year, however, a valuable program turned into a personnel nightmare as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the new entity that replaced the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), shut the program down on March 9.

Thousands of companies relying on temporary workers to meet their needs were suddenly left scrambling for employees.

For many years, there has been an annual cap of 66,000 visas under this special.

How the H-2B Program Works

The H-2B program authorizes the admission of aliens to perform temporary or seasonal nonagricultural work for employers in the United States. An employer who wishes to employ alien labor through the H-2B program must first apply for a “labor certification.” This certification is a finding that:

- The employer is offering terms and conditions of employment that will not adversely affect similarly employed U.S. workers.

- Sufficient qualified U.S. workers will not be available at the time and place needed to perform the employer’s work. As we all know, in the tree care industry this is not difficult to demonstrate.

The application may not be filed more than 120 days before the date workers are needed, but should be filed at least 60 days before, in order to receive certification in time to get the foreign workers to your shop. Once the application is accepted, you will attempt to recruit qualified, eligible workers in the United States. If you can demonstrate that U.S. workers cannot be found, you will receive a labor certification for the jobs that remain unfilled.

Once you have a labor certification, you may petition for admission of qualified alien workers. A separate certification and petition are required for each job, such as groundsperson or climber trainee, but there is no limitation on the number of workers in an occupation who may be requested on a certification as long as an employer can substantiate the quantity needed.

It is the responsibility of the employer to recruit the alien workers who meet the training and experience requirements on the labor certification. You may choose to do this yourself, or you may decide to hire a personnel-consulting firm that specializes in this area.

Program Requirements

- Applies to “non-agricultural” occupation
- Applies to unskilled workers (less than a college degree required)
- Jobs must be temporary or seasonal (generally 10 months)
- Aliens must be non-immigrants (must be permanent residents of home country)

What Must You Do?

1. File Temporary Labor Certification (TLC) application with State Employment Service
work category. The problem arose this year in who did the counting and what was counted. Terry Foley, chief operating officer for Foley Enterprises, argues that USCIS should not have been doing the counting. The agency called a halt at 66,000 based on the number of petitions filed. Foley insists that embassies should have been doing the counting because a petition filed doesn’t necessarily mean a visa issued. She says that an application submitted doesn’t necessarily mean a worker across the border.

According to Foley, many employers cushion their application numbers in case someone doesn’t work out or business expands beyond expectations between the time they file the application and the time they need workers.

“The cap of 66,000 may have lasted us all the way through the season had they waited for the embassies to count them,” she speculates. “We don’t know why they decided to change things this year.”
worst – that USCIS will shut things down again early next year – what should tree care companies do?

“If you need someone to start March 1, plan to apply November 1 to your state’s employment agency,” recommends Foley. “Companies are not allowed to file a petition more than 120 days from the date of need. The Department of Labor is fully aware that everyone will try to get very creative with their start dates this year so they don’t get shut out. They will be looking at past petitions to make sure the start dates are consistent with previous years.”

Of course, the government won’t necessarily process the petition within the 120-day deadline. “They will get it done in time if you pay the ‘Premium Processing Fee’ of $1,000,” she says.

What does Foley Enterprises do to help? They will process all of the required paperwork and remain available until all the workers are in place. They help coordinate everything through two companies that have offices in Monterey, Mexico. The companies are not affiliated with Foley Enterprises, but “they are reputable companies,” stresses Foley. “We refer the employer to them. They fill out the paperwork and make sure that the employees get to where they are supposed to be.”

Foley Enterprises doesn’t recruit employees, because “employers all seem to know who they would like to bring up. They do their own recruiting through workers they already have in place, who recommend family and friends,” she notes.

Foley handles everything else needed to bring an employee in from another country. They place the help wanted ads (required as evidence that not enough U.S. citizens are applying for the jobs), take care of the correspondence with the appropriate agencies, etc. All Foley needs from the owner of a tree care company is the name and birth date of the person they want to hire.

In her experience, most employers know who they want to hire. Some were illegal residents who received amnesty in the late 1980s and have relatives back in Mexico who want to come work. If a company owner doesn’t have specific employees in mind, the two processing agencies Foley uses in Mexico offer recruiting services.

What is her best advice if you don’t want to get shut out this spring?

“Be very detailed in the documentation you submit on when your season begins,” she advises. “Also, get this process started well in advance of the 120 days. The processor needs time to put the petition together, get signatures and help the employer put the data together.”

Mark Garvin is vice president of public policy & communication for TCIA, and editor of TCI magazine.

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Voice for Trees pushes tree care agenda – from Texas

In July, the Voice for Trees PAC put out a call to members who would be willing to deliver PAC contributions to members of Congress. Joe Mangan with Dallas Tree Specialists in Richardson, Texas, answered the call. He met last month with U.S. Rep. Sam Johnson, a member of the House Education and Workforce Committee and chairman of the Subcommittee of Employer-Employee Relations.

Below is his report on the meeting.

“It was a unique and rewarding experience to have spent time with Sam Johnson, our U.S. Congressman in Dallas. Although Congressman Johnson would be considered a senior citizen at first glance, I found him to be a man of high energy.

“If our past experiences shape us into who we are, then this is especially true of Congressman Johnson. As a fighter pilot in the Vietnam War, he was shot down over North Vietnam and held as a prisoner of war for nearly seven years. As a result, Johnson is a strong advocate of homeland security and a proponent of a strong military. For example, he...
expressed serious reservations about H-2B Work Visas, as we were discussing the program. He said that this could easily be an avenue that America’s enemies could use to infiltrate our country with terrorists. He further stated that the program, though warranted, would need to have a system in place to thoroughly and effectively screen entrants before he would endorse it.

In summary, Congressman Johnson’s position on several of our issues:

- He is pro business, especially small business. He therefore believes the estate tax should be eliminated in its entirety.
- He favors giving employers new tools to defend themselves against OSHA citations.
- He understands the relationship between businesses and their trade associations, hence, would exempt them from the spam/fax/do not call legislation and fines.
- Congressman Johnson does not believe in tax credits.
- He does favor association health plans, so TCIA members could join together to offer affordable health care to their employees.

When I told the congressman of a recent hire I had acquired through Catholic Charities (they have a refugee assistance program), he was very interested when he learned the man came from the Sudan. He immediately called his personal contact at the Department of Homeland Security and instructed them to check out the screening process of Catholic Charities. Personally I feel more secure knowing we have a vigilant warrior in congress such as Sam Johnson. Lastly, I would encourage other TCIA members to take the opportunity our PAC provides to have an audience with a member of Congress. For the one hour spent talking with the congressman, I am grateful for the opportunity I had to be the Voice for Trees.”

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Understanding Understory Trees

The importance of understory trees in the landscape is often overshadowed by the showier, large trees forming the canopy. The smaller, accent trees—typically less than 40 feet in height—perform well in areas where root zones are restricted. Many require little pruning and adapt well to a wide range of climatic conditions, soils, insects and diseases. But like some other small fry, understory trees have special needs. Due to their ecological niche, these plants are somewhat dependent upon the favorable microclimate under which they developed.

"Because these plants evolved in a forest situation, many of their requirements for optimum health are not met," notes David R Hayner, an arborist in Pawling, N.Y. "When they are out of their natural environment, they are stressed and susceptible to severe damage by comparatively weak insect and disease threats. Anything that one can do to make their environment like that of the forest—watering, mulching, etc.—is bound to be beneficial."

City trees face compaction caused by pedestrians, bikes and other activities, as well as injury from lawn mowers, edgers, tillers and maintenance equipment. Unlike in their native habitat, where leaves and other organic matter decay into the soil and create a rich source of nutrients for the tree’s roots, leaves falling in yards are quickly raked and removed. Thus the transplanted understory has many more challenges than its naturally-occurring counterpart.

Still, vertical layers found in forests can be replicated by planting hardy understory trees beneath existing taller trees and filling in the gaps with different types of shade-loving shrubs. Shade-tolerant trees are a good solution for older landscapes showing a gradual loss of sunlight as tree canopies develop and block the sun from reaching the understory.

A crape myrtle, at left with pink blossoms, and the magnolia at right are both planted in the shade of some large live oaks and red oaks. Photos courtesy of Lana Robinson.
With a little more planning and research at the front-end of a project, an interesting and complex landscape can be created with the use of understory trees. Andrew Ross, president of RTEC TreeCare in Falls Church, Va., begins by scouting the surrounding areas to determine what to plant.

“I try for plants in the same family as the indigenous plants,” says Ross. “If the plant is matched to the environment, I don’t usually see many insect problems. Some trees have disease problems like the dogwood with discura anthracnose. I see their purpose as mid-level cover and screening, often used by a variety of wildlife, including deer, birds and foxes.”

Ross routinely monitors trees on three acres of woods in an area that is losing much of its available land to home building. By simply examining the vegetation, understory and trees, he says a local floodplain expert has identified four distinct zones – floodplain, floodplain/upland, upland/floodplain and upland.

“The understory trees’ worst enemies seem to be invasive vines, such as honeysuckle, poison ivy and Virginia creeper, and large deadwood or dead trees that can crush them. Some of my favorites are dogwood, hornbeam, ironwood, mountain laurel, American holly, and sassafrass. They all can do well in the shade. They all contribute with interesting bark, leaf color and/or flowering. Some are indicator plants of your specific zone,” says Ross, explaining that musclewood (Carpinus caroliniana) is an indicator of floodplain/upland and green ash (Fraxinus pennsylvanica) grows in a floodplain.

Hayner suggests these small fry are a crucial component in the comparatively stable ecosystem of the forest.

“Overstory trees need understory trees and the reverse is also true,” stresses Hayner. “I think of the Northeast forest and the understory plant that comes to mind is witch hobble (Viburnum cassinoides). This plant thrives as an understory plant, but I doubt it would last without the shade and protection of the overstory. However many of its relatives in the Viburnum genus are very useful plants. I assume many of them were at one time understory plants.”

**Site selection**

Location, location, location – a sound retail business principle and arguably the most important consideration when planting understory trees in the landscape. Tree selection based on zone hardiness, soil type and space requirements is equally significant, to ensure that the tree gets off to a good start. Frequently when an arborist is called upon to assist a homeowner with a struggling tree, however, these basic, “good sense” prerequisites have been ignored. This failure is a pet peeve of Rolf Briggs, who insists that understanding the nature, role and needs of these ornamental trees in the landscape is key to their survival.

“Unfortunately, landscape architects and designers do not have enough classes on plant materials,” laments Briggs, a consulting arborist at Tree Specialists Inc. in Holliston, Mass., which lies 25 miles southwest of Boston. “They receive a maximum of one semester. They don’t know the plant, and don’t know the characteristics of the plant, so they don’t understand how it does in the environment. They’ll plant serviceberry in the full shade. ‘Shade tolerant’ does not mean that’s the best place to plant it. You can’t plant serviceberry in full shade. It gets hawthorne rust and dies. They replace the tree, and soon, it’s dead again. It’s the wrong location. This tree prefers medium sun, not full shade. The long-term success is driven and dictated by what plants tolerate. It’s a constant problem. Too many designs are owner driven instead of site driven.”

Briggs says more attention is typically paid to the lighting, hardscape issues and driveway design, whereas plants are frequently treated as an afterthought and installed in a hurry. In some instances, it makes more sense to replace the tree with one more ideally suited to the site than constantly trying to nurse an ailing, logistically challenged understory tree.
Beyond competent site analysis, unpacking and installing the plant correctly are imperatives, says Briggs. “You don’t want to plant it too deep,” he adds.

Jerry Grandjean, an arborist based in The F. A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company’s New Jersey office, says one reason understory trees require more monitoring for diseases is because of the shady, damp environment in which they grow. “Shaded dogwood, for example, is prone to anthracnose. Even though it’s native, the conditions are right for disease. The tree’s environment is wet longer, and there’s not a lot of air, not a lot of sunlight. So you must be proactive with respect to disease,” Grandjean suggests.

Most large shrubs, such as wax myrtle (Myrica cerifera), Burford holly (Ilex cornuta ‘Burfordii’), azalea (Rhododendron spp.), and photinia (Photinia serrulata) can become understory trees if they’re not pruned constantly.

“Hollies are good understory plants around here. They are native. The American holly (Ilex opaca) grows to 20 feet with no problem other than it is a little thinner in the woods. Lack of light means it will not have as dense a foliage as people would like to get,” he says.

Rhododendron (Rhododendron maximum) is an evergreen shrub or small tree that reaches 15 to 20 feet in height as an understory in Grandjean’s neck of the woods.

“Drainage is an issue for this bush or tree. It prefers a sandier, well-drained soil versus a heavy clay, and is more susceptible to root rot than some species. That goes for magnolias as well,” says Grandjean.

Magnolias can be evergreen, semi-evergreen or deciduous, with the latter more cold tolerant. One of the hardier forms of magnolia is the star magnolia (M. stellata). They tend to be rather small in stature, and form small, multi-trunked bushes or trees with star-like flowers. The only downside is that some of them bloom a bit on the early side, so in some years, frost may curtail blooming. Plant magnolia in a north or east location, out of the wind. They can take sun and favor acidic soils.

“Multi-trunk understories add design and visual appeal to the landscape. Several species that fare well in low light conditions are redbud, dogwood, and maple. Redbud and dogwood, the most common shade-tolerant species, actually prefer partial shade all day, especially afternoon shade. According to the USDA, Zone 5 (-20 to -10 F) is the coldest zone in which flowering dogwood (Cornus florida) succeeds. This airy and delicate tree exhibits clusters of small white flowers in late spring and pretty red berries come fall. In the forest, dogwoods are only found growing in the shade of taller trees. While dogwood thrive in rich, well-drained soil, they often flourish on poor growing sites and are drought tolerant. Rugged and relatively pest-free, dogwoods should either be planted beneath the shade of bigger trees or on the north or east side of a building.

Tree selection

Briggs bases his tree selections on USDA zone hardiness characteristics. Typically, that means winter injury down to Zone 5 and less in eastern Massachusetts.

“In the Western part of the state, that changes to Zone 4 and less. Cape Cod, along with South Rhode Island, is Zone 6 and less. We have three divisions in our state,” notes Briggs.

In his region, Briggs sees both native and nonnative understory trees in the landscape. One popular native ornamental, Serviceberry (Amelanchier arborea), prefers moist, well-drained soil in sun to partial shade. Serviceberry blends well into a woodland setting. A negative is that Serviceberry is susceptible to leaf blight, fire blight rust and mildews, as well as borers and scale. But some newer cultivars are more resistant.

“We also have a Japanese tree lilac (Syringa reticulata) that is quite popular. Fewer pests are labeled for lilac borer and powdery mildew. But I’ve never had either on a Japanese lilac planted 15 to 18 years ago in the right spot. Insects are designed to attack weakened trees. If you put the appropriate plant in the appropriate spot, you don’t need to spray,” he says.

Multi-trunk understories add design and visual appeal to the landscape. Several species that fare well in low light conditions are redbud, dogwood, and maple. Redbud and dogwood, the most common shade-tolerant species, actually prefer partial shade all day, especially afternoon shade. According to the USDA, Zone 5 (-20 to -10 F) is the coldest zone in which flowering dogwood (Cornus florida) succeeds. This airy and delicate tree exhibits clusters of small white flowers in late spring and pretty red berries come fall. In the forest, dogwoods are only found growing in the shade of taller trees. While dogwood thrive in rich, well-drained soil, they often flourish on poor growing sites and are drought tolerant. Rugged and relatively pest-free, dogwoods should either be planted beneath the shade of bigger trees or on the north or east side of a building.
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Dogwood and Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) are two resilient and versatile understories. The Japanese maple (cold tolerant up to Zone 6, -10 to 0 degrees F) comes in many varieties, offering different leaf textures, growth habits, and degrees of shade tolerance. Depending on the cultivar, this species is 12-25 feet tall at maturity. Both the trunk and foliage of the low-mounding type has an Oriental look. Japanese maples perform better in part shade, especially the palmated leaf varieties. Avoid planting these small maples near pavement as they are prone to leaf burn.

Redbud (*C. canadensis*) can be more challenging to transplant and get established than the dogwood or Japanese maple. Another drawback is that its natural lifespan is only about 25 years – less if planted in full sun. Still, its deep pink blooms and elegant shape make it a desirable tree. Redbud does best where it is somewhat protected against late frosts and in well-drained soils with organic material. In terms of hardiness, this native tree’s natural northern limit is up to the Great Lakes, just across the southern border of Michigan (Zones 4 to 9). Its native habitat as an understory tree is at the fringes of woodlands, so it performs best in partial shade. Pruning is rarely required.

Canadian eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) is a viable understory tree in the East, planted in the shade of towering oaks or on the north side of buildings.

Some understory trees and shrubs that are tolerant of flooding and wet soils include buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), pussy willow, swamp azalea, spicebush, and maple leaf viburnum. Bluebeech (*Carpinus caroliniana*), also known as American hornbean, is another understory tree found along streams and in swamps and wet bottoms in the East.

Quite a few palms are small and shade tolerant. The Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association touts the dark green needle palm (*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*), a slow-growing native that develops into a multi-stemmed clump as it gets older. This palm can reach 8 feet in height and 6 feet in width in part sun or shade. According to the association, it is one of the hardiest of palms, growing from the Florida Keys to Washington, D.C. With protection, it can be grown as far north as Cape Cod. This lovely evergreen is attractive all year, sporting clusters of yellow or purple flowers on a foot-long spike in spring and fruiting in the fall with small reddish brown berries. The palm, which boasts large (3-4 feet across) fan-shaped leaves divided into 15-20 segments, is very drought tolerant.

Some nice understory trees for Southern climates are fringe tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), and Carolina buckthorn (*Rhamnus caroliniana*). Forty different species of manzanitas (*arctostaphylos*), Pacific wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), silky tassel (*Garrya elliptica*), and Toyon, or California holly, are some picks for California landscapes. In Texas, some understory trees suitable in most of the state are redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), Mexican plum (*Prunus mexicana*), yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), and Eve’s necklace (*Sophora affinis*). Some other handsome, hardy Texas natives include possumhaw holly (*Ilex decidua*), Texas kidneywood (*Eysenhardtia texana*), and smoke tree (*Cotinus obovatus*). Highly acclimated non-natives such as chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*), and the ever-popular crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) do well in Texas, also.

USDA Zones 1 and 2 understory choices include: box elder (*Acer negundo variegatum*), flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida Var Rubra*), grey dogwood (*Cornus race-mosa*), highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), maple-leaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), pussywillow (*Salix discolor*), redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), shadbush (*Amelanchier canadensis*) and sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*).

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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Tips for Once the Tree is on the Ground

By Marshall Adams

Marshall Adams wrote about tree falling, “Techniques and Tips From and Old Faller,” in the July 2004 issue of TCI. The following pointers are intended to help a faller in completing the job.

When a tree is lying on the ground and you need to cut through to the bottom, watch carefully to see the color of the chips your chain is bringing out. Bark is usually a different color than wood and you will see the difference when you touch bark with the tip of your chain. And that is how you do it – touch, touch, touch – working your saw back and forth and feeling and watching for the color change of bark. I can generally cut any thin-barked log that is lying on concrete by this method and never dull my chain.

As you near the bottom of the cut, change the tone of your arm to a holding position. At that point stop pushing the chain through the cut. The arm that is holding the handlebar, and the weight of the saw, is like a chain-hoist holding the saw at a certain height. The tip of the bar only goes “down” as your other hand lifts gently on the pistol-grip. If you fail to do it this way you will stick your chain into the ground every time when you break through the bark.

When you begin to cut the bottom of a tree or a log on the ground it will be necessary to “bore” into the wood. At this point you must remember why God gave you a thumb. Always wrap it around the handlebar rather than allowing it to run horizontally along the top of the handlebar. I have some pretty nice scars on my left hand to show for learning that one late in life.

There is a trick to boring, and you can do it smoothly. Lower your motor and bring your saw up to speed, touching the bottom of the tip of the bar to the bark first. Press downward as you push the chain into the wood.

As soon as the chain enters the tree, twist the bar a little and push the chain

Above is a rough drawing by Marshall Adams illustrating how to avoid pinching your bar when one log will drop and the other log will not drop.
“Sometimes I pick up a stick and drop it in the cut above my chain. As the cut spreads the stick falls deeper into the cut preventing my bar from being pinched.”

Marshall Adams

through the cut. Twisting the bar moves the top of the chain’s cutting edge over and under wood that has not been cut, reducing the chain’s ability to climb or kick back. Boring is a required part of log bucking, and cutters learn fast how to avoid kick-back.

If a log is not lying tight to the ground – and one side of your cut will drop and the other will not – simply slope your cut a little to allow the side that will drop to do so. To see how this works, hold your hands together like you are praying and lean them to one side; then lower just one hand. You will see instantly how this trick works.

Sometimes I pick up a stick and drop it in the cut above my chain. As the cut spreads the stick falls deeper into the cut preventing my bar from being pinched. If there is room between the ground and the tree where I am making the cut, I will slide a piece of bark or even a limb under the tree, directly beneath my cut, to save the chain from hitting the ground. Of course, it is always wise to cut half way through and roll it over to cut the other half – if you can.

Additional pointers

It is wise to have your helper tie the rope off to something if it is necessary to pull a tree or a top in the right direction. If he or she cannot pull hard enough and the top or tree begins to set back, you are in big trouble again. There goes the neighbor’s house.

I cannot stress strongly enough that you must look up when a tree is falling. Hopefully, you will be wise and be far from the stump when a tree is falling, but broken limbs at the top of a tree can travel a long way and get you. I have experienced that one, too, but my hair has grown back nicely to cover the scars. And the old aluminum hardhat is retired.

Marshall Adams is the co-owner of Habitat Development Corporation in Woodland, Wash.

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Fitting Trees into a City and a Budget: Desert Southwest Community Tree Guide

As many Desert Southwest communities continue to grow during the next decade, sustaining healthy community forests becomes integral to the quality of life residents experience. The role of the urban forests is to enhance the environment, increase community attractiveness and livability, and foster civic pride. As communities strive to balance economic growth with environmental quality and social well-being, trees take on a significant role.

The Arizona Community Tree Council Inc. along with the U.S. Forest Service-Southwest Region, and the Center for Urban Forest Research-Pacific Southwest Research Station have published the findings of a recent study in a book titled “Desert Southwest Community Tree Guide: benefits, costs, and strategic planting.”

On October 14, 2004, the guide will be presented to the public during an information session at the Glendale Civic Center, Glendale, Ariz.

According to Dr. Greg McPherson, The Desert Southwest Community Tree Guide will help communities promote energy efficiency through tree planting and stewardship programs that strategically locate trees to save energy and minimize conflicts with urban infrastructure. These same trees will also provide additional benefits, such as improved air quality, storm water run-off reduction, increased property values, and better human health and well-being.

The guide covers regions located in the Sonoran and Mojave deserts. The region extends south to Mexico bordering western Arizona and eastern California. It extends from Tucson and Safford, Arizona, on the east and Southern California cities of Palm Springs, Lancaster and Bishop on the west. In the north it is bounded by Las Vegas and Boulder City, Nevada.

Discussion will focus on how this document can assist county and city managers to develop professional, practical and fiscally responsible community forestry plans for their jurisdictions. City and county managers and staff should not miss this opportunity to remain current in the application of these new guidelines for land development in their jurisdiction.

Grounds Managers Face Money and Manpower Issues

In a recent email survey of 31 properties representing more than 4,000 acres, the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) found money and manpower issues to be the two biggest challenges facing its members.

“The survey was primarily conducted in order to assist one of our members who needed to make a costs/salary presentation to management,” says Thomas Shaner, PGMS executive director. “We added the question, ‘What is the biggest challenge facing you?’ and nearly 70 percent of the respondents indicated problems with budgets or staff.”

Comments received included: “Working with less endowment monies. Managing new buildings and landscapes while maintenance budgets are cut,” “Low wages for permanent staff leading to high turnover,” “General budget and maintenance,” “Keeping good staff,” “Motivating employees to care about more than a paycheck,” “Achieving desired results with time constraints due to other duties,” “Finding conscientious, qualified manpower,” “Lack of sufficient summer...
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maintenance crews,” and “Not enough staff to get it all done.”

Reflecting a current trend in the green industry as a whole, several respondents also recognized the need to be able to better communicate with Hispanic workers, and meeting deadlines with fewer workers and less money.

PGMS membership is primarily composed of on-site grounds professionals for schools, colleges, cemeteries, parks, estates and other institutions. On average, survey respondents managed 129-acre properties, the largest being 650 acres and the smallest five acres.

Excluding one private estate, which represented more than 2 million square feet of gardens, the respondents manage an average 38,500 square feet of ornamental flower beds and use, on average, 506 cubic yards of mulch each year. They also oversee an average 75,240 square feet of sidewalks, patios and terraces.

With a range of 50 to 54,000, they average 10,690 annuals planted each year in 69,200 square feet of bedding plant area.

On average, each property has 1.5 supervisors who earn $19.33 an hour (range $10.40 to $36.46). They have 2.5 foremen earning $13.39 (range $9 to $23.07) and 11.07 full time employees earning $11.22 (range $7 to $14.35). They also hire an average 5.89 seasonal employees who are paid $8.28 (range $6 to $12.15).

New Jersey finds more Asian longhorn beetles

The Asian longhorn beetle infestation continues to expand in New Jersey. Several sites have been found to be infested in Carteret and Rahway, both in the northeastern portion of the state. The first beetle was first discovered in a Carteret in August. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture set up a quarantine zone that included Carteret, Woodbridge, Rahway and Linden, with restrictions on moving firewood, tree trimmings, nursery and other wood products. Tree climbers, surveyors and other specialists inspecting trees have found both adult beetles and eggs. Officials are urging people to look for signs of the pest, which include large holes in trunks and branches, oval or rounded tree wounds and large piles of sawdust around tree bases. Report finds to (609) 292-5440. For updated information, visit www.aphis.usda.gov and click on Asian longhorned beetle under “Hot Issues.”

Chuck Smith’s Log Mauler is now manufacturing a new skid steer attachment, called the Yard Jockey. The Yard Jockey is a great tool to have on any construction site. It comes in handy for moving welders, compressors, trailers, etc. With the use of the skid steer you are able to maneuver and get into tight places. We are in the tree care industry and find it to be a time saver moving the equipment around our maintenance shop. We also use it to do our big stump jobs, it is great for moving the stump machine. It has a standard size receiver so you can use a ball or pintle hitch.

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If You Don’t Feel It’s Safe, Don’t Climb It

By Edward Kennedy

I met the client shortly after 8 a.m. as planned to estimate a removal job. What I saw I did not like and as we walked to the backyard area for a closer look at the large poplar, roughly five foot DBH, I had already decided that key leaders of the tree were structurally unsound, and would necessitate the utilization of a crane with a boom length of at least 150 feet.

The tree presented with a co-dominant structure of seven leaders, some dead, some dying and about half of them suspect as to structural integrity. The main crown extended over a primary supply line of at least several thousand volts, and a fence was located under the critical parameter area.

Most of us in the business have an instinct about trees, and although it is not nearly as acute as that of the intuitive awareness that women possess, I had an apprehensive feeling that put me on high alert with the client. He was a middle-aged male, with nary a care as to the danger me on high alert with the client. He was a mid-possess, I had an apprehensive feeling that put

I consider myself as a patient man, and this has improved over the years. However, I felt irritation if not anger rising up and manifesting in my tone as he waxed on and on about cost reductions. I have found it a good rule to judge people by how they treat others, and this individual demonstrated no consideration for the safety of workers doing the proposed work, only for the thickness of his wallet thickness.

In all my years I have never “de-listed” anyone except a cranky, arrogant retired school teacher who refused to be confused by the facts and insisted that my trimming of her tree accommodate her unrealistic expectations. She had done so much instructing that she had lost the ability to listen, but that is another story. I felt so inclined with this individual standing in front of me, and concluded the meeting by curtly informing the client that I would not climb the tree, nor would any of my employees, and that if he refused my cost estimate for doing the job safely, he would be advised to find a “crazy” to do the work without the assistance of mechanical means.

My exit was blocked with a quick maneuver by the client, who redirected my attention to one particularly unsound leader over the wire, and asked for a cost factor for the removal alone of that member. Mentally cutting the whole removal price by 65 percent, the figure was dismissed instantly again as too high by the client, and I side-stepped him with a comment, “Good luck on finding a crazy,” and exited the property.

Two weeks later I drove by the tree and was astonished to see the unsound leader gone. Out of curiosity I had driven by to see if anyone had in fact removed the member. Someone apparently had! For eight months after that, I occasionally thought about that dangerous tree, and in a meeting with another company owner, mentioned that situation. I was surprised to hear him reiterate two stories that satisfied my curiosity.

He knew the individual who had taken the unsound leader down. The climber had been hired by the client for a pittance and had climbed the suspect leader, sectioning the top down to the main truck. He had used a gin point from the leader itself as it was an isolated member, and there was no other feasible way to remove it without a crane. He had played the part well, having his girlfriend take pictures of this daring feat, while he worked above the high-voltage supply line. But everyone did not exactly live happily ever after.

The company owner I had been talking to had talked to him just before my visit and related that the unsound leader had fallen 20 feet. Landing upright, he shattered the bone structure in each heel and had been hospitalized. The investigation, reportedly, uncovered that he was not covered by compensation, and I am told, but have not verified, that there was a financial settlement with the worker.

The moral of this story is not that there are crazies around who will risk their health/life taking uncalculated and high risks to save some cheapskate a few damned dollars. The real moral is that sooner or later this type of irresponsible work lifestyle will catch up to anyone who practices it. As we all know, there are things that can happen to even the best in this profession, and the danger element is always high, necessitating mitigating work techniques and safety practices to reduce the element of risk.

Fortunately, in this case, the individual did not lose his life. Yet what kind of person would tempt injury, even death itself, for a few dollars? You may be interested to know that a suspected substance impairment was a contributing factor in the fall, and further, I personally suspect it was a substance impairment that allowed the hapless individual to climb a structurally unsound member, directly over a high voltage supply wire, in a structurally unsound tree.

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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