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Two Neighbors and a Storm ...

By Cynthia Mills, CAE

The weekend after getting home from TCI EXPO, I had the most interesting experience, which was such a contrast to a week of talking about safety, educating consumers, companies becoming accredited, etc. It illustrated why we have to keep working so hard to get our message out. It also showed how much one person can do to change things.

First of all, both of our neighbors know what I do for a living – that I serve a membership of people who care for trees. Both of these neighbors have done a little of their own tree care in their own yards – and yes, they try to do it when they think I’m not at home or not watching. One of them has hired a tree care company to do a take-down in their yard.

On Saturday of the weekend after EXPO, I had decided that it was a lovely afternoon for a good book and a bit of rest. I curled up for some relaxation and a few minutes later, I thought someone was trying to saw through my house. I looked outside and guess what? Yep – the neighbor who in the past had had the sense to hire an arborist had his 15-year-old grandson outside operating a chain saw and a chipper in the backyard to manage a tree that had come down in the storm the night before. I couldn’t BELIEVE it! This is the guy who, when he plays golf with my husband, tells the rest of the foursome that if they keep hitting trees with their golf balls, he’s going to tell me on them. Needless to say, the grandson was not wearing chaps. They had NO idea that the tree might not stay safely on the ground without rolling. The base had snapped, and it was still partly attached. Let’s just say that the chipper operation didn’t give me any more confidence. I was so frustrated at the ignorance and the endangerment of this child.

The next day, while I was trying again to get a little relaxation, since it didn’t happen the previous afternoon, my other neighbor called. He first asked the most important question – was I an arborist as well as being an association CEO. I indicated that I was not, but that I would be happy to ask a question of my arborists on staff. He had a tree come down from his neighbors that split one of his, and he wanted to know if there was any chance of saving it. He wasn’t out there trying to mess with something that he had absolutely no knowledge about.

And so in one weekend, I had to handle a post-storm situation completely differently. Both knew better – one chose to be the safest and do what we need to work on with the public constantly – CALL AN ARBORIST from an ACCREDITED TREE CARE COMPANY.

We have nine accredited companies, 35 in the pipeline; and close to another 300 inquiries. The Better Business Bureau is reviewing our program to sanction Accreditation to consumers and plans to advertise it for us. In the near future, we will have that direct pipeline to your customers that will lower the risk of neighbors thinking they know how to handle trees – standing or on the ground. One of the next challenges we have is groups such as the fire department and the highway crews, etc. who are handling trees that are dangerous; that are in electrical hazard situations; etc.

We have a long way to go beyond our neighbors and customers, but we’re going to get there! Get in line for Accreditation – the Better Business Bureau is going to be telling your neighbors soon that those are the companies to call! I’ll work on my neighbor if you’ll work on yours!
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Crews from The Davey Tree Expert Company cleaning up in Pensacola, Fla. Photo courtesy of Davey. More pictures and a story – page 8.

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In six weeks, from late summer into fall, major hurricanes battered Florida in series of weather events unprecedented in that state.

The carnage started when Hurricane Charley “came ashore” in Charlotte County on Aug. 13, bringing with it 10-foot waves and 145 mph winds – which would top out at 180 mph in Punta Gorda. The most powerful storm to hit the Fort Myers area since 1960 was credited with causing at least 13 deaths. Causes of the deaths ranged from drowning to an accidental electrocution.

Over the next six weeks, three other hurricanes followed. Frances made its landfall on the east coast on Sept. 5; Ivan hit the “Panhandle,” on the western side of the state, Sept. 16; and Jeanne – already blamed for 1,330 deaths in Haiti – hit Sept. 25 on the southern end of Hutchinson Island, five miles southeast of where Frances came ashore.

Never in Florida’s history had four hurricanes struck one state in a single season. Each storm resulted in damage from high winds and heavy flooding. As of Oct. 15, federal and state aid had surpassed $1.7 billion, with more than 936,000 people seeking assistance for losses from the four hurricanes, as well as from Tropical Storm Bonnie, which hit the Panhandle the day before Charley hit further south. There were trees everywhere. Depending on the
region, there were pines, oaks, ficus and palms strewn on streets and crashed through roofs. Trunks and limbs blocked roadways and alleys, tore down power and telephone lines, crashed through fences, and fell into swimming pools. Some were still standing, but barely, sometimes teetering precariously over a neighborhood.

For tree companies in Florida, and those willing to travel, the hurricanes presented a two-fold opportunity: There was a chance to make money, as well as to come to the aid of communities and people in dire need of help. When he received a letter from the Tree Care Industry Association asking for certified arborists to help with the cleanup effort, Derek McConnachie, owner of Raleigh, N.C.-based Trees of Carolina, saw a third opportunity. To him, it was a chance to break the day-to-day routine and do something different. “I have a buddy who’s a big storm chaser,” McConnachie says. “He’s always telling me how much money you can make, and what it’s like during the cleanups.”

Welltree Inc.’s Kevin Gillis, who made the trip all the way from Maine to Florida to help a client in need, was also working on his first hurricane cleanup. He found some unexpected challenges, including a cell phone that no longer worked, preventing him from staying in touch with his office back home. For those who work on hurricane cleanup, there is opportunity and adventure, but it doesn’t come without cost. Those who’ve helped in this year’s cleanup effort described it as arduous work, with long days spent in sometimes undesirable conditions that present challenges both expected and unexpected. Those who’ve done it in the past caution about a lack of supplies, physical concerns, and facing other challenges, from downed power lines to flash flooding.

“The main thing is to try and keep your crew safe and not wait until you’re absolutely fatigued,” stresses Eddie LeBlanc of LeBlanc’s Tree & Stump Removal of Baton Rouge, La., who has gone on hurricane cleanup trips in the past. In doing this work, however, tree professionals grab another opportunity – the opportunity and adventure, but it doesn’t come without cost. Those who’ve helped in this year’s cleanup effort described it as arduous work, with long days spent in sometimes undesirable conditions that present challenges both expected and unexpected. Those who’ve done it in the past caution about a lack of supplies, physical concerns, and facing other challenges, from downed power lines to flash flooding.

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chance to do a good deed for people in need. “We wanted to work where it was the worst,” McConnachie says. “Where people needed it the most.”

Bill Gaston, president of Gaston’s Tree Service and its division, Wood Resource Recovery Inc., with a main office in Gainesville, Fla., was active in debris collection during the storms, including Charley. Going back to the 1980s, his company has responded year-round to major emergencies around the country, garnering internal manpower and additional workers from a core group of subcontractors to mobilize more than 100 units, if needed. It has responded to ice storms in North Carolina, tornadoes in Oklahoma, last year’s Hurricane Isabelle in Virginia, and many more.

“One reason we’re in demand is because of the large footprint,” Gaston says. “For any of these events, no company has that many resources. So, you rely on other companies.”

With his son running one arm of his business and his brother running the other, Gaston travels with his crews to the scene of events around the country, viewing it as both a good business opportunity and a chance to provide assistance to a community in need. “When these communities are hit, they’re a wreck,” he says. “When we go in there, our goal is to quickly and efficiently get life back to normal.”

The task is enormous. Tree care workers in Florida faced the same obstacles that other relief workers did – impassable roads and a lack of electricity, food, water and other basics, in addition to having to compete with other relief workers for sleeping quarters. Hotel rooms were in high demand, and that demand was reflected in higher rates. In some cases, those higher rates were for hotel rooms with neither electricity nor running water.

Kevin Bolling is a Broward County sheriff’s deputy and the owner of National Tree Trimming of Coral Gables, Fla. With the sheriff’s office, he’s assigned to a 125-man “Field Force Unit” that was sent (along with the National Guard) on what became a 10-day search-and-rescue mission into Charlotte County after Charley. Upon arrival, he looked at what he saw and at 2:30 a.m. made a call to his crew chief. “There were trees everywhere – on sidewalks, buildings, cars,” he says. “So I called the crew chief and said ‘Grab the boys and come on over’.”

The road trip was voluntary, but all of the field crew went. Within days, Bolling’s supervisors had expanded the operation adding primarily subcontractors they had prior relationships with. They brought them into Charlotte, Wakulla and Lee counties to help with tree removal and cleanup from storm damage. Under the direction of three supervisors, they worked 14 days clearing trees off houses and otherwise helping in the disaster cleanup.
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effort. “We were taking guys who are outstanding trimmers and turning them into hatchet men,” Bolling says, noting that his licensed arborists took to the task with great enjoyment. “They could just turn on the saw and do what they wanted with the wood. They couldn’t resist.”

Soon, there were tree companies everywhere.

“I was surprised how fast they opened up the area,” he says. “There were 100 tree companies within five days, with trucks everywhere.” With an opportunity to make a quick score, the competition was fierce. Bolling says that representatives of other tree care companies would approach his workers, ask how much they were making, and promise to double it. Some of the temporary hires took the opportunity, although they often found the promises to be hollow. “They’d work them to death and then not pay them,” Bolling reports. It didn’t take long for those employees to return to his crew, wiser for the lesson in business ethics.

With Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) crews and other emergency personnel crowding hotels, housing was tough to come by, as were items such as gas, electricity and food. The crews often worked in blistering weather, with mid-day temperatures hitting the mid-90s, and there were no air-conditioned fast food restaurants to duck into for a mid-day break. “The only place to get cool was in the cab of a truck,” Bolling says.

His crew found a hotel 35 miles away from the area they were working in, and brought their own generators to provide power, along with pole lights, and a dozen coolers for food. “If you didn’t bring it, you didn’t have it,” says Bolling, who assigned two men each day to drive from site to site feeding the other men. Food, tools and other items were best kept in safe places, locked, when not in use. “Things were just walking away,” Bolling says.

Gillis, owner of Welltree Inc. in Brunswick, Maine, made the trek all the way to Pensacola following Hurricane Frances as a favor to one of his clients who owned a large apartment complex. The apartment complex owner had called local tree care companies but didn’t get his calls returned. “The local people were overtaxed with prior commitments,” says Gillis. “We have a good working relationship with the owner and felt there would be value to have us come down.”

In Pensacola, Gillis found substantial-sized trees leaning on buildings and roofs. “It was like the pictures you see on TV, an absolute mess,” he says. “Some trees looked untouched and others were torn apart, like a mini-tornado had gone through. The storm blew through and wiped out everything in its path.”

Using a 60-ton crane provided by the owner of the 250-unit complex, Gillis and his one-man crew spent four long days and a short day working. They removed “about 20 trees” that had landed on roofs or were leaning against buildings. They collapsed at night in a semi-furnished room on the complex grounds.

“The biggest challenge initially was that there wasn’t any power, which made meals and sleep a little inconvenient,” Gillis says. There was also no running water, which meant that for the first few days, the men were unable to shower. “By the time we left, all that had been restored, so we left on a good note.” What never worked properly was his cell phone, which stopped working when he reached Florida and had to be replaced when he returned home. Improper signals had impacted the phones of several people down there, he says, and the pay phones weren’t working either, “even when we left Florida.” He was not in touch with his office for several days, until they got past the mid-Atlantic states. “I was not popular,” says Gillis. “I anticipated some communications problems, but not to that extent.”
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In addition to providing a new experience, Trees of Carolina boss McConnachie had the chance to use a relatively new 17-ton crane (on a boom truck). Teaming up with another company, he brought his four-man crew (eight men total) driving three trucks, the crane, a stump grinder and an articulating loader down to Pensacola shortly after Hurricane Ivan. Like others in similar situations, he was prepared – to a point. But it was a new experience, he says, and an educational opportunity. The damage Ivan caused was similar to that created by the hurricanes in other parts of the state – roads and rails were wiped out by flooding and shifting earth, or their paths were blocked by fallen trees and debris. Sewer systems and drainage systems were washed out. The University of West Florida helped in processing small business loans, and the Florida Small Business Development Center tried to find temporary work for those suffering financial hardship. The American Red Cross ran blood drives, and local churches and radio stations coordinated relief efforts to provide food and household items to victims of the hurricane. Tarps were made available to the public for those with gaping holes in their roofs.

“Finding work wasn’t a problem,” McConnachie says. “What made it real helpful is that all of our equipment is new, and it looks new. We rolled into a neighborhood, and a lady came out and asked for an estimate. We started that job and got an offer from another guy. We wound up staying in that neighborhood for eight days, moving from one end to the other end. People just kept coming out. It seemed half the houses had trees on them.” There were downed trees – mostly pines, and some oaks – everywhere. They were on roofs, in pools, through driveways.

In some cases, the company would meet with the client and their insurance adjuster in the same neighborhood. Some of the jobs paid as much as $8,000, and one paid $11,000. “There were a lot of trees (on that job) though,” McConnachie says. “It was all crane work and hazardous stuff. Not just trees on the ground.”

In total, the company serviced 12 to 14 clients on three adjoining streets. Using Dica mats to keep his equipment from tearing up the lawn, McConnachie was able to do much of the crane work from the front or side yards with minimal impact. “Where there was soil, the mats were outstanding,” he says.

The quality of the work, which was observed by the neighbors, helped sell additional jobs, says McConnachie, who was also providing confirmation of membership in the Tree Care Industry Association, proof of insurance and other certification.

While he charged premium prices for the work, McConnachie says the expenses incurred by the road trip, plus the danger and liability risks, justified it.

“In hurricanes, you always hear about two or three or four people who die doing tree removal,” he says. “If you take a tree at 45 degrees and it’s cracked, and you put a man up in it, there’s a ton of liability involved.” His crew worked 13 to 14 hours each day for 10 days, but they were able to avoid some of the problems others ran into. Because he’d reserved a room before the hurricane hit, McConnachie was able to put his crew into a hotel right in Pensacola, and the hotel had electricity. “There was power out all over the city,” he says. “We just got lucky.

Some of the residents in the neighborhood in which they were working were not so lucky. Two ladies living in one of the houses had no power for several days. McConnachie loaned them his generator, with an extension chord. “Then I left town and forgot it,” he says in a good-natured way. As this was written, he was planning to have it mailed home, paying the $100-plus freight himself.

Counting travel days and days of rest, McConnachie determined that he lost four days of work, and – even though he’d been prepared for the trip by his more experienced friend – the expenses were three times what he anticipated.

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In the Aftermath - Pricing and Price Gouging

By Dave Rattigan

By late October, the office of Florida Attorney General Charlie Crist had filed complaints against 13 companies for alleged price gouging in the wake of the hurricanes in August and September. Two of the companies charged were tree care companies, according to JoAnn Carrin, communications director for the AG, who said that the office fielded 650 consumer complaints related to tree removal in the hurricanes’ aftermath.

When a state emergency is declared due to a disaster, the laws against price gouging go into effect automatically.

According to information obtained from the Web site of the Attorney General (www.myfloridalegal.com), complaints were filed against two tree care companies in the wake of Hurricane Charley. In one case, according to press releases printed on the Web site, the tree care company provided an estimate on limb-removal that was 10 times the average of three other companies. In the other, the company gave a $30,000 estimate and wound up accepting $11,000 for a job involving removals that the AG’s office said would have cost an average of $3,359.14 in the 30 days preceding the state of emergency.

As great as I thought it would be,” says McConnachie, who estimated that he increased his overall revenue by 25 percent. “I’ll try it again. I’ll just do things a little differently.”

***

Bolling notes that while his company (already licensed to work in three counties) was easily able to obtain licenses to work in the counties they were in, local authorities were making it clear to others that proper licensing was required, with signs informing them that working without a county license would be treated as a third-degree felony.

Although he personally found that treatment heavy handed, feeling that a tree worker licensed elsewhere should be allowed to contribute to the many homeowners in a time of need, Bolling noticed that the signs had their intended effect. Many of the unlicensed tree workers “fled once they put the signs up,” he says. “In the morning, I woke up and everybody was gone.”

Not all of the tree care companies interviewed for this story had the proper licenses. One says he didn’t realize it was required, and was understandably glad nobody checked. Another says, “From the information I gathered, it wasn’t an issue. The fact of the matter was, there was so much going on, they welcomed any help they could get.”

One thing companies also needed to deal with when answering the emergency call was maintaining a good relationship with their customer base. Matthew Peed, of Piedmont Tree Specialties Inc. in Macon, Ga., had a full load of work from Hurricane Frances, which hit Georgia after running through Florida. While the four hits that Florida took drew headlines for obvious reasons, some others areas (such as Mobile, Ala.) were also hit hard by some of the same hurricanes and tropical storms. “When the storm hit, we were obviously bombarded with calls,” Peed says. “We decided we’d take care of our regular clients first, and it didn’t bring in a bit of new business. We’ve just been taking care of our existing clients. New clients will come as time goes on; that’s consistent with our philosophy as to how we build our business.”
Determining pricing that's fair to both the consumer and the tree care company can be a challenge in a post-hurricane environment, according to those who have worked in that situation.

Kevin Bolling, owner of National Tree Trimming in Coral Gables, Fla., says he didn’t hear of any cases of price gouging during his crew’s stint in Charlotte, Wachula and Lee counties following Hurricane Charley. Prices were higher, but so were expenses, with additional costs for hotel and per diem, rental costs for equipment and crews paid at time-and-a-half.

“Per man, my profit margin was down 3 percent per man-hour,” he says, acknowledging that the company did make a good profit because of the number of hours they worked.

In one case, a supervisor took $4,000 less for an estimated job that was completed more quickly than expected. And in his company’s case, as with many others, some jobs were done gratis, for those who needed the help but were clearly unable to pay.

He estimates that his company did eight to 15 jobs for senior citizens who they surmised were living on a fixed income, with a tree crashed through the roof of their home.

Bill Gaston of Wood Resource Recovery Inc., of Gainesville, Fla., says that in a market-driven economy, driven by supply and demand, price gouging can be difficult to determine. A consumer should use due diligence, he advises.

“The marketplace determines the price of everything,” he says, noting that when he gives a quote on a job, he encourages a potential customer to check the company’s Web site, call its insurer, or do whatever else will put that customer at ease. He noted that two customers could look at the same quote for a $2,000 job, and one might find it a tremendous bargain, the other an absurd price.

“We would not let somebody make a decision that’s not in their best interests,” he says. “You don’t do that if you’re an ethical business.” Like other companies, his company did some jobs for free. In the middle of the cleanup in Orlando, for example, his crew pulled away from a job in one neighborhood to clear a path that had been blocked by a large tree. Clearing the path let workers from Progress Energy reach and repair a transformer, providing electricity that had been shut down for an entire neighborhood.

“We’ve done many (charitable) things,” Gaston says. “We don’t promote it; we just do it. Someday down the road it will come back to us. That’s the way it works.”

Carrin, from the Florida AG’s office, says that additional costs and expenses are taken into consideration by her office, but noted that some of the complaints focused on local companies that did not have to incur such costs. She also said that there were multiple complaints against some companies.

In all, Carrin says, the AG’s office fielded approximately 8,000 complaints about alleged price gouging from contractors, hotels and those selling food, water, ice, and building materials. Some investigations were still underway.

“We’ll check into all of them,” she says.

LeBlanc, from Baton Rouge, who had answered the hurricanes’ call in the past, elected not to do so during this hurricane season. In part, it was because he was concerned about serving his own customer base. “In October, Tropical Storm Matthew came through,” he says. “I wouldn’t have been here for that one had I rushed to Florida.”

Gillis says that while his business continued to operate in Maine, it was less efficient during the time he was away, in part because of the communication problems he had. “There were some big bumps that needed to be worked out,” he says.

McConnachie’s business was scheduled eight weeks out, and he hustled to get much of that work completed before the storm hit. He also had his wife call other accounts to reschedule the work.

Bolling’s company also took a proactive approach. Office workers called customers to inform them of the situation. If a job absolutely couldn’t wait (for example, if a tree needed to be cleared before a building project could begin) there was a five-man crew available to handle it. Otherwise, customers were offered a 10 percent discount, and were asked for their understanding.

“We didn’t have one customer complain,” Bolling says. Customers felt that, if the hurricane had hit in their area, “they hoped that people on the west coast would come and do that for us.”

Dave Rattigan is a freelance writer living in Peabody, Mass.
Bandit’s Color Critter II

Bandit Industries’ new Color Critter II attaches to their Beast recyclers to color mulch during the final grind of the mulch making process. The Color Critter II is a simplified version of Bandit’s original system that provides control of the disbursement of colorants onto material as it enters the grinding chamber. The stirring motion of the Beast mixes the colorant with mulch. The new design has fewer moving parts, which reduces maintenance. A plunger is used to open or close the slots that drop streams of colorant onto the wood. The opening and closing of the slots is timed to the feed speed of the conveyor, controlling the flow of material to be colored. A dial regulates the amount of time the color disbursement slot is open, which controls the amount of colorant being disbursed. An oxidizing colorant is used to penetrate deep and cover rapidly. Material exits the grinder fairly dry. In general, colorant costs are around $3 per cubic yard. A 3680 Beast/Color Critter combo, equipped with 540 horsepower, is capable of producing 150 cubic yards of colored material per hour. Contact Bandit at 1-800-952-0178 or via www.banditchippers.com.

Please circle 190 on Reader Service Card

Stearns Walleye Hunter Breathable Rain Parka, Bib Overalls

The new Stearns Walleye Hunter Breathable Rain Parka and Bib Overalls are constructed of lightweight, waterproof and breathable material with taped seams. For added durability, pack cloth is sewn on shoulders and outer arms of the parka and on the knees and seat of the bib overalls. The articulated sleeves of this parka provide for a full range of movement while the zippered underarms allow breathability. Seven zippered pockets keep items handy and dry. The parka has an adjustable hood, waist and hem. Zippered, gusseted leg openings on the Bib Overalls feature snapped storm flaps. They also have one Velcro pocket on the thigh. Visit Forestry Suppliers on the web at www.forestry-suppliers.com or order a catalog at 1-800-360-7788.

Please circle 191 on Reader Service Card

Monterey IceClear

In the past ice has been eliminated in many ways, mainly with various salt-based products. These products tend to be corrosive and cause injury to plants and soil where applied. Monterey Lawn and Garden Products’ new IceClear is completely new technology in ice prevention. Closely related to chemical products used to de-ice airplanes, IceClear is a ready-to-use organic liquid. It does not contain any toxic ingredients or corrosive salts. In fact, it is less corrosive than distilled water. It stops ice and snow from bonding to the sidewalks and driveways, taking the work out of snow removal. IceClear is a liquid and doesn’t freeze until minus 50 degrees. It is ready to use and can be applied by a pump sprayer. The product is odorless and will not stain. One gallon of IceClear will treat up to 2,000 square feet. Why use IceClear? It is easy to use, effective, and safe around pets and wildlife, will not harm plants and is non-corrosive. Contact Monterey at (559) 499-2100 or via www.montereylawnandgarden.com.

Please circle 192 on Reader Service Card

First Call Flagger Automated Flagging Machine

The First Call Flagger Automated Flagging Machine is ideal for the small crew operations commonly used in tree care. The portable traffic device replaces a human flagman with a machine – reducing labor costs while maintaining or increasing work zone safety. A single traditional flagman using a First Call Flagger can control traffic at both ends of a job site using the wired or wireless remote control. Set up for the First Call Flagger takes about 90 seconds, allowing easy flexibility in work zones with shifting work locations. The robotic flagman stands over 12-feet high with 12-inch red and yellow LED lamps that are visible from up to a mile away. The 8-foot descending gate arm and red stop light direct motorists exactly where to stop and holds them until the flashing yellow caution light activates and the gate arm ascends and locks into the upright position. If a vehicle runs through the gate arm while it is in the down position, a sensor activates a 120-decibel intrusion alarm. If a vehicle runs under the gate as the gate arm descends, the sensor stops the gate from descending and activates the alarm. The Flagger battery operates up to 100 hours without a charge. Contact First Call Flagging via www.firstcallflagging.com.

Please circle 193 on Reader Service Card
**Timberwolf in-line firewood processor**

Timberwolf Manufacturing Corp. has introduced a new top-of-the-line firewood processor. The PRO-HD offers a high degree of customization with an industry proven design. Rated at 3½ cords per hour, the PRO-HD is a powerhouse firewood processor and the “flagship” of the Timberwolf processor line. Features include a fast clamping, patented Top Roll system that handles odd or crooked logs with ease; a super fast, hydraulic cut-off saw; an 80-hp John Deere engine; and a 4-6 second cycle time. Options include: An electric autocycle, a hydraulic cooler, an 8-way wedge, a hydraulic deck lift, operator’s seat, DOT approved electric brakes, a 2½ hitch and safety lights. For more information contact Timberwolf at 1-800-340-4386 or via www.powerwolf.com.

**Pinscher PGR reduces cleanup**

Pinscher PGR, a Wedgle Direct-Inject chemical from ArborSystems, prevents flowering and fruit set, “pinching” off the fruit. This greatly reduces cleanup work. Pinscher is applied with the Wedgle Direct-Inject tree treatment system prior to flowering in the spring. With no drilling required, the Wedgle trunk injection system treats trees in the fastest, least invasive manner possible. Most trees can be treated in as little as five minutes. Pinscher contains the same active ingredient as Atrimmec. Atrimmec is a registered trademark of PBI/Gordon Corp. For more information contact ArborSystems at 1-800-698-4641 or via www.ArborSystems.com.

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Husqvarna sponsors Capitol Holiday Tree; announces sweepstakes winners

Husqvarna is an official sponsor of the 2004 Capitol Holiday Tree, which will decorate the front lawn of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. This is the fifth consecutive year Husqvarna has been chosen as a sponsor for the program. Husqvarna provided two chain saws for the tree cutting ceremony as well as safety apparel for the individuals who performed the tree felling. The 70-foot Red Spruce was cut in Virginia’s George Washington National Forest. The tree will be the centerpiece of a lighting ceremony, scheduled for December 9, in Washington, D.C.

Also, the grand prize winner of the Husqvarna “Total Source” Arborist Sweepstakes was announced at TCI EXPO in Detroit in October. Charles Morris, owner of Environmental Tree Service in Beaumont, Texas, won the grand prize package, including the new Husqvarna HUV utility vehicle, Husqvarna chain saws (a 338XP, a 334T and a 336) and safety apparel (helmet systems, roping gloves and chaps), all valued at more than $10,000. Morris has worked in the arborist industry for 21 years and has owned Environmental Tree Service for the past 11 years. Second prize was awarded to Turlock, Calif, arborist Ethan Autrey, who won a trip for two to a 2005 NASCAR race in Charlotte, including suite tickets, airfare and lodging. The third prize winner, Ricky Anderson of Theodore, Ala., received a certificate for two to the Kings Experience at the Richard Petty Driving Experience.

Bartlett recognizes Board Certified Master Arborists

Bartlett Tree Experts in November, for the first time, had two employees named Board Certified Master Arborists by the International Society of Arboriculture. Scott Diffenderfer, arborist representative in their Chambersburg, Pa., office, and Deborah Green, arborist representative in their Southampton, N.Y., office, earned the Master Arborist title after successfully completing an intensive exam administered by the ISA this past August. “We’re very excited to have not one, but two Master Arborists here at Bartlett,” said Robert A. Bartlett Jr., chairman of Bartlett Tree Experts.

The ISA has been certifying arborists for nearly a decade to improve the level of knowledge and standard of practice within the tree care industry. There are currently about 15,000 Certified Arborists and fewer than 25 have received the Master Arborist title. Certification as a Board Certified Master Arborist represents the highest level of skill in the care of trees and requires significant experience, advanced education, ethical standards and in-depth knowledge of landscape plants nationwide.

Wilson promoted to GM for John Deere Boots & Shoes

Wayne Wilson has been promoted to general manager of John Deere Boots & Shoes. As GM, Wilson will be involved in all aspects of leadership, including hiring and managing the John Deere Boots & Shoes sales force, account management, working with the John Deere dealer organization on the exclusive dealer line of footwear, inventory control, and assisting with product development. Wilson has more than 20 years of experience in the footwear industry, including 12 years at Georgia Boot. He most recently served as key account manager, eastern division, for John Deere Boots & Shoes, which offers a full line of premium quality footwear for agriculture, construction, forestry, and lawn and turf care.

Samson, ArborMaster team for rope test program

Samson, a leader in performance cordage, and ArborMaster Inc. recently teamed up to conduct a groundbreaking test program. The testing was closely monitored by members of Samson’s Research and Development team as well as other industry researchers, such as Andreas Detter from Germany. Ken Palmer, president of ArborMaster Inc., stated, “We were interested to measure, in a scientific way, the effects that rigging knots have on the strength of rigging lines as well as rigging slings when tied to a tree.” Knots reduce the strength of rope, so the testing, which has never been attempted in a comprehensive manner for the arborist industry, was approached with optimistic enthusiasm. Testing began with a 16-foot x 13-foot log being installed in a test bed, followed by a series of 60 break tests at Samson’s manufacturing plant in Ferndale, Wash. Various knots and hitches were put through rigorous testing and the information gathered was extremely valuable and will enable Samson to continue to confidently recommend and develop the best rope for the needs of their professional arborist customers.
ArborMaster Training Inc. gains grant

ArborMaster Training Inc. has been awarded a two-year grant from the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council for a program titled, “Saving Tree Workers’ Lives: The Neglected Component of Urban Forest Management.” The objective is to examine accidents in which aerial rescue is needed and what procedures are best suited to safely and efficiently rescue victims with minimal risk to the rescuers. “The tree care industry needs a realistic protocol and methodology to teach and respond to emergency situations in a way that can truly save lives,” says Ken Palmer, president and CEO of ArborMaster Training. “This grant will help to take a disciplined approach to stakeholders around the country. This is important to address geographical diversities and to gain buy-in and attention from the industry, nationally and ultimately, internationally.”

Care of Tree merges with Oakland-based Treescapes

The Care of Trees has merged with Treescapes Inc. of Oakland, Calif. Founded in 1977, Treescapes is the second West Coast company to become part of The Care of Trees. Safe and Beautiful (now called Safe and Beautiful by the Care of Trees), with its West Coast office in Menlo Park, was acquired in 2002. “Treescapes is a perfect addition to The Care of Trees,” says Scott Jamieson, the company’s president and CEO. “Both companies share the same philosophy and dedication to tree care and client service. We plan for this new office to become the center for expanding operations throughout the East Bay area.” The acquisition was also done with an eye toward employee development. “The Care of Trees is an employee-owned organization,” Jamieson says. “Consequently, one purpose of our growth is to create additional opportunities for our teammates, who are also our shareholders. Our acquisition of Treescapes enables both new and long-term employees … to benefit from the consistent skills training and employee development programs.”

Treescapes will continue to operate under the direction of its founder, Torrey Young, whose new title is district manager. His staff remains intact. Young is an ISA-certified arborist and an ASCA-registered consulting arborist with a long history of service to, and awards from, green industry associations, which will continue as he assumes the presidency of the American Society of Consulting Arborists for 2005. The Care of Trees employs six certified arborists and 36 staff members operating a fleet of 15 trucks.
The expectations were high – the anticipation levels rose as TCI EXPO in Detroit approached. A new city, a third track of educational programming, and the biggest trade show floor ever for EXPO.

The most booths and the highest number of CEUs ever offered greeted attendees, who were treated to a seemingly limitless diversity of vendors, new tools and supplies. For exhibitors, the biggest challenges were keeping up with the traffic and getting eager arborists to leave their booths at the end of the day.

When attendees weren’t on the trade show floor they were packing into the educational sessions, where two technical sessions ran concurrently with the show’s always popular business management sessions.

For more pictures of the show, or information on the upcoming TCI EXPO Spring in Long Beach, Calif., visit www.treecareindustry.org. And, check out the January 2005 issue of TCI for pictures of TCIA’s National Day of Service, held in conjunction with TCI EXPO, at Belle Isle in Detroit.
Firewood lumber or mulch, TCI EXPO had equipment to view that helps arborists profit from wood waste.

Mark Adams, left, of Downey Trees in Atlanta and one of TCI EXPO’s demonstrators, talks to Bill Wilson, program analyst with the OSHA Alliance. Wilson was available at the TCIA booth to answer questions about OSHA-related issues.

The always popular Stihl booth drew customers in with a chance to spin and win.

Attendees had full lines of equipment from a variety of manufacturers at their disposal, helping them make the best purchasing decisions.

From hand tools to biological soil amendments, more than 160 exhibitors showcased the products arborists need to succeed in business. Above right are Sophia Kotsilimbas, account manager, and Peter Felix, president, both of Tree Health Management Inc.

At the demo tree, the centerpiece of every EXPO, demonstrators Mark Chisolm of Aspen Tree Expert Co., from left, Brian Noyes of Heritage Tree Care, and Robert Phillips of TW Ranch Inc., share their experiences on getting around the tree.

New at TCI EXPO 2004 - Free TCIA member hats, and the chance to win cash by wearing them on the trade show floor. Giving out the hats here is Brian Garnick, TCIA director of marketing.
2004 Grand Award Winners

General Tree Service
Clackamas, Ore.
The Pow Wow Tree
City of Gladstone
Category: Tree Maintenance,
Commercial under $10,000

Owen Tree Service
Attica, Mich.
Craig Van Laanen Tree House,
Trail’s Edge Camp
Category: Tree Maintenance,
Residential under $10,000

Project goal and scope of work: To locate and maintain on the Fowler Center property a tree large enough but robust enough to tolerate the construction of a tree house and the resulting special-needs camper traffic. We checked for girdling roots, height-diameter ratio, cavities, cracks, cankers and other deformities compromising structural integrity, assessed the extent of decay in buttress roots, trunk and scaffold branches, noted wind exposure, checked soil conditions and root plate integrity, removed deadwood and compromised branches, and reduced the risk of tree/branch failure along the walkway and tree house base.

Project goal and scope of work: To retain the original appearance of the tree as much as possible, while performing procedures necessary to stabilize the tree and minimize hazards to the public. An in-depth examination of the tree showed greater amounts of sound wood in the bole of the tree and less decay in the root system than expected. We proceeded with careful crown thinning and crown reduction in order to provide a smaller more compact crown area, combined with cabling to an installed power pole for support. This approach allowed us to meet the objective of retaining as much of the original appearance as possible while providing a more stable, less hazardous tree.

Large stem that failed is to the left. A root crown excavation around the entire root flare was performed to determine extent of decay, presence of anchoring roots. Note cavity in main stem, Bicentennial plaque.

The design team’s vision real as life - a branching column that blends into the woodland environment and compliments neighboring Red Maple.
**2004 Grand Award Winners**

**SavATree**  
Bedford Hills, N.Y.,  
Liberty Island Allee  
National Park Service  
Category: Tree Maintenance  
Commercial over $10,000

Project goal and scope of work: To reestablish the architectural intent by restoring the original design for the entrance on the west side of Liberty Island, which intended the allee of trees to provide a natural line of sight and draw attention upward to the Statue, create areas of shade for tourists, and emphasize the prominence of the Statue of Liberty as the centerpiece of the entire island. We performed young tree pruning, canopy elevation and crown cleaning on 100 Littleleaf linden trees. Their upright form was restored by promoting a dominant central leader with the reduction of co-dominant stems through subordination.

**Treeworks Ltd.**  
Montpelier, Vt.,  
Sea Island Company,  
Sea Island, Ga.  
Category: Tree Maintenance  
Commercial over $10,000

Project goal and scope of work: to maintain health and vigor of trees moved to the site of the G-8 Summit. Expedite establishment of 500-plus trees transplanted to new golf course. Create management protocols and instruments. Trees were very large transplants (20-41 inches) and most were moved with as much as 50 percent less root system than recommended. Except for those at the Cloister, an old hotel site, all were moved directly from the forest with no preparation. The Cloister will not only have the old building components the local community has come to love, but the same old trees as well. The oak that President Bush greeted dignitaries under, previously just a forest tree, has been catapulted to celebrity status. The North End golf course is stunning; largely due to the mature trees throughout that would surely have perished if contractors had tried to build the course around them.

**Wachtel Tree Science & Service**  
Merton, Wisc.,  
Gardner Double Vista Project  
Category: Tree Maintenance  
Residential under $10,000

Project goal and scope of work: to provide adequate and pleasing vistas of the Milwaukee River with its wildlife and boating activity; adequate and pleasing vistas of the house from the river that accentuate its setting and landscaping; provide a safe play area for the Gardner’s children and their friends and relatives who often visit; additional light for the entire property, both for the desired ambiance and for the numerous woodland plantings that Mrs. Gardner has established; maintain a complete canopy of trees, preserving many of the interesting canopy strata, and preserving the natural look of the forest community; and, to provide improved walking access to all areas of the property, particularly to the river. Trees were selected and marked for removal that were either defective, leaning, inferior species, species with great insect or disease potential, trees spaced too closely to other more superior individuals, or were needed to open key sight lines deemed most important by the client. Maintenance pruning plan looked for any residual hazard. After the pruning plan was completed, the wood chips were used to enlarge and extend a connecting path through the woods that leads down to the river. We retained sufficient trees to maintain the integrity of the forest canopy and still achieve vista and light goals. The greatest impact will be the visual appeal of the river viewed from the house and the house viewed while boating on the river. The beautiful park across the river from the Gardner’s is now visible and adds to the visual appeal of the river. This was achieved without sacrificing the natural setting, but in fact unifying the natural setting with the man-made elements.
2004 Grand Award Winners

On Earth Plant Care Specialists Inc.
Putnam, Va.
West Point
Foundry Reserve,
The Scenic Hudson
Land Trust
Category: Technical Rigging

Project goal and scope of work: Protect the archaeological fabric of the industrial ruins; protect the public who visit the preserve; advance the work of the archaeological field crew and their safety; improve the overall health of the forest; create a more scenic landscape; and take down large trees and move the pieces without jeopardizing the sensitive integrity of the historical elements (walls, foundations, furnace, underground systems, etc.) safely. Using technical rigging, we took down approximately 80 trees on site. We pruned some, relocated the wood in saw-log length, and turned some into firewood. We set up multiple pullies, so as to be able to redirect the wood to where it could only be handled (wood collection locations were specific designated areas.) Large areas of the site were inaccessible to vehicles. The safe working load of rigging systems varied because most of the time we used two pulleys up in two separate trees, and a pulley or a butt-line hitch in the tree coming down. We picked up the wood off the ground/or lowered from the tree, redirected it with speedlines to the road or a landing site. Minimum contact – minimum impact or none at all.

Swingle Tree Company
Denver, Colo.
Green Gables Tree Relocation
Green Gables Country Club
Category: Tree Relocation

Project goal and scope of work: Participate in completion of tree inventory. Evaluate health of trees in existing inventory. Determine potential for successful relocation using condition rating method from The Guide for Plant Appraisal. Consult with architect to find sites for successful relocation of healthy specimens. Direct care of trees prior to, during, and after relocation. Ultimately, utilize as many existing trees and incorporate them into redesigned/renovated golf course. Utilizing architects blue prints, determine trees in the “clearing plan.” We rated the potential of 441 trees in clearing plan using condition rating system. We produced a spreadsheet to determine candidates for relocation. Met bi-weekly with golf course superintendent, club general manager, and greens committee members to manage and direct tree relocation as golf course was renovated. After the irrigation system was shut down/torn up in fall 2003, we directed the watering schedule for large conifers. We directed bark beetle applications prior to and after the relocations were completed. We worked with the lead golf course architect to determine locations for specific trees.

Heritage Award

Collier Arbor Care
Clackamas, Ore.
The Signature Oak at the Oregon Garden

Project goal and scope of work: To extend the life span of a 400-year old oak tree and protect it from trunk and branch failures. Restore the oak grove and area around the Signature oak to a natural condition that existed before Europeans inhabited North America. Protect the Signature oak from compaction by garden visitors by fencing and path construction. Improve the appearance and health of the tree. Manage insect and disease on the tree to prevent long term health problems. Worked with the Oregon Garden Oak Grove Committee to restore the native oak grove stand and preserve and maintain the Signature Oak. Our company installed six cables in the large oak tree to prevent trunk and branch failures in a tree that has a history of branch failures and a potential for a trunk failure from a co-dominant trunk crack. In addition the tree crown was cleaned by removing dead or broken branches 2-inches in diameter and larger. Some partially broken branches were allowed to remain to maintain the natural appearance of the tree and provide educational opportunities about hazard trees to the public. Soil and leaf tissue tests were performed to determine nutrient levels and identify any deficiencies. Fertilization program was recommended. Invasive plant species like Himalaya blackberry were removed and existing native species such as camas, which was an important source of starch for Native Americans, were conserved.

The massive size and branch spread of the Signature Oak charms people at an Arbor Day ceremony.

In this photo, taken in May 2004, the transplanted Linden is in full leaf following relocation.
Awards of Distinction

Aspen Tree Expert Co. Inc.
Jackson, N.J., and
Beranek Publications
The Tree House Project
Category: Tree Maintenance,
Residential under $10,000

Goal: To reduce the liability to the clients while preserving the aesthetic beauty and primary structure of a giant redwood. The proposed work was meant to reduce the hazards in order to protect the many tourists who enter this tree each year.

Hartney Greymont
Needham, Mass.
Boston Harbor Island Tree and Youth Project,
Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation
Category: Tree Maintenance,
Commercial under $10,000

Goal: Partake in a cooperative effort to introduce arboriculture as a field and profession to inner city youth. Showcase and develop basic tree climbing and pruning skills in conjunction with Boston Urban Youth Tree Workshop to inner city youth. To increase the public’s safety by reducing the hazard potential of selected trees and improve scenic vistas at the historic Boston Harbor Island’s State Park. We were contracted to perform the tree care operations for George’s Island and Thompson Island with oversight provided by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. Work accomplished included safety pruning and deadwood removal to improve safety and structural integrity of the trees. Several trees showing signs of severe deterioration were removed to eliminate hazard conditions.

Bartlett Tree Experts
Stamford, Conn.
Root Invigoration and Cloning of Theodore Roosevelt Copper Beech,
Sagamore Hill National Historic Site
Category: Tree Maintenance
Residential under $10,000

Goal: To preserve an historically significant tree that had begun to show signs of decline, and to assist in the cloning of this tree so that identical copies may be available for future generations, and to care for other trees of significance on this historic site.

Hughes Tree Service
Gretna, Neb.
Watanabe Estate
Category: Tree Maintenance,
Residential over $10,000

Goal: To remove all dead, diseased and hazardous trees; prune out storm damage from an October 1997 snowstorm; prune trees to reduce the spread of disease; restore the natural beauty of the trees; remove invasive vegetation damaging specimen trees; and preserve as many of the trees as possible.

Prepare now for ‘05 Excellence Awards

The Excellence in Arboriculture program is a time-honored program to recognize and promote the best tree care projects in the industry. Entry requirements are simple and flexible, and there are many categories in which work will be judged. If you think you can’t compete with larger firms for Excellence Awards, think again! The companies featured here are small, medium and large-sized firms. Entries are not judged against all other entries, but against standards of quality tree care. All deserving projects win awards, not just the one deemed best in its category.

TCIA plans to add even more project class and size categories for Excellence 2005. If you are a TCIA member and have one or more projects you are particularly proud of, invest the small amount of time to enter. The rewards are well worth it. For more information or entry forms, call Peter Gerstenberger at 1-800-733-2622.
Awards of Distinction

The Care of Trees
King of Prussia, Pa.
Ann’s Choice, Erickson Retirement Communities
Category: Construction Site Tree Preservation

Goal: To provide arboricultural care for the trees of significance in the tree preservation areas to minimize impact from the construction process. All design elements, including grading fills, and reviewed using the critical root zone (CRZ) as a reference point. In particular, two dozen 75-year-old Chinese Chestnuts were preserved and serve to make up the central courtyard and outdoor gathering area of this retirement community.

R-TEC
Falls Church, Va.
National Zoo Farm Exhibit, Smithsonian National Zoo
Category: Construction Site Tree Preservation

Goal: To assure the survival of several large trees during the demolition of the 50-year-old exhibit and during the construction of New Farm Exhibit. We provided technical expertise during the design of the project. Performed Tree Preservation measures during demolition of old exhibit construction of new exhibit. Provided after-care and monitoring upon completion of new exhibit.

Living Tree Care
Hillsboro, Mo.
Heritage Oaks Lightning Protection
City of St. Louis – Forestry Division
Category: Tree Maintenance Commercial over $10,000

Goal: To safeguard seven of the oldest and most valuable trees in the city park with lightning protection. The department of natural resources was concerned with the health and longevity of the trees and, if a grant was awarded, this city’s forestry division would be able to hire a tree firm to do a variety of work on approx. 600 trees. We chose the lightning installation to highlight here.

The Davey Tree Expert Company
Kent, Ohio
Holding Strap for Felling
Category: Technical Rigging

Goal: To develop a tree felling technique that would allow the saw operator to complete his or her felling plan and safely exit the felling area before the tree is put into motion (for a hazard tree or tree with no escape route, this would place all parties in the clear prior to executing the final leveraged pull.)

Busy Bee Tree Service
Novelty, Ohio
Kent State University
Beech Relocation
Category: Tree Relocation

Goal: Removal and relocation of two tricolor beech trees that were going to be killed and disposed of to create a new delivery/loading dock for the Student Center, saving a valuable resource for present and future generations using the university.
Awards of Distinction

A Native Tree Service
Miami, Fla.
Historical Deering Estate Tequesta Burial Mound
Live Oak Trees
Category: Heritage

Goal: To stabilize this historic tree from problematic conditions, which appear to exist due to the damage sustained during Hurricane Andrew in 1992; minimize the disturbance of the Historic Tequesta Indian Burial Mound on which the tree sits; and, allow the park’s patrons to access the trail and boardwalk path around the historic burial mound without fear of branch failure from above.

Greenskeeper Environmental
Ashton, Md., Anne Arundel County
Reforestation
Category: Tree Maintenance, Commercial over $10,000.00

Goal: Three separate projects for Anne Arundel County, Md. – Magothy Estates, Boyle Property, and Henderson Property. The Magothy Estates and Boyle projects involved reforestation of the 25- and 100-foot buffers on tidal tributaries to the Chesapeake Bay. The Henderson project involved a riparian stream planting to stabilize a slope that was previously graded as part of a county storm drain improvement project. In general, the goal for all three of these sites was to remove all invasive plant species, and any hazardous trees and then re-plant with a wide diversity of native plants.

Honorably Mention

Very old silver maple – Key trees on the golf course were pruned for health and safety. Pruning was restricted to dead wood and hazard limb removal.

Swingle Tree Company
Denver, Colo.
Green Gables Country Club
Tree Maintenance
Category: Tree Maintenance, Commercial over $10,000

Goal: To manage, direct, supervise and consult for tree care at an older, established Denver-area country club.

Winkler’s Tree Service
LaGrange Park, Ill.
St. Mary Cemetery,
Evergreen Park, Ill.
Category: Tree Maintenance
Commercial over $10,000

Swingle Tree Company
Denver, Colo.
Green Gables Construction
Site Tree Preservation
Green Gables Country Club
Category: Construction Site Tree Preservation

Goal: To improve the health, safety and appearance of large, mature trees on approximately 25 acres. Safety was of paramount importance as the trees overhung thousands of headstones and graves.

Spring application to help prevent spruce beetle attack on mature spruce throughout golf course.

Vines had to be cut and brush cut and dragged. Footing was precarious due to sunken graves.

Living Tree Care
DeSoto, Mo.
Father Dickson Cemetery
Category: Heritage

Goal: To bring this historic black cemetery back in annual stages. Dead trees are to be removed, stumps ground, vines cut, and weeds pulled. This year we divided 100-plus volunteers into categories of brush cutting, weeding, mulching and brush dragging. Our crew did most of the cutting and all the chipping.
Aerial Lift’s Ernie DePiero Raised the Bar for the Tree Care Industry

When Ernie DePiero passed away in early October at the age of 70, his twin legacies in business and in life are what people talked about most.

Not many people know the story. They may know him as founder of Aerial Lift Inc., one of a handful of manufacturers of aerial lifts and the only major maker devoted to the tree care industry. Some may also know him as a yachtsman and accomplished amateur photographer.

What they don’t know, most likely, is that Ernie DePiero’s is an American story. He was a Milford, Conn., farm boy who went to work for the local aerial lift manufacturer sweeping floors, later repairing broken equipment and ultimately coming to the realization that he could make a better product. That’s the Ernie DePiero business story.

But those who were close to him, and there are many, all agree that no matter who you were – employee, customer or someone in need – Ernie DePiero would treat you like family.

“He put his heart and soul into the business,” says his daughter Cheryl DePiero, who now shares the burden of carrying on in Ernie’s tradition. “He talked to the end of his days about his baby – the business,” she adds, “but it was always thoughts of others, not himself.”

Cheryl says (with the same modesty that Ernie was known for) that Ernie lived his whole life in Milford and graduated from the local high school. He was pretty much self-taught, she says, a hands-on person. “There wasn’t anything he wouldn’t try. Dad’s view was always to take care of the customer. It was something he learned when he started off in the repair business.”

As the story goes, Ernie began sweeping floors and later moved through the ranks as a mechanic for the now-defunct Tey manufacturing plant, maker of the Skyworker “bucket.” When Skyworker production left town, Ernie was left without a job. Like the subject of every good American success story, Ernie decided to open his own lift repair shop right there on the family farm. His mission then was to support regional tree service owners. That was in 1958. A photo of the first check still hangs in the president’s office.

In the intervening years, Ernie and his repair business blossomed. More and more, he and his team were being called in to make repairs or safety modifications to improve aerial lifts used largely in tree care. By 1979, Ernie was convinced he could make a better lift, confident he could design-out most of the problems of the day.

“He wanted to make one – to build one product, one good, rugged product – to keep it top-notch and make it for the tree care industry,” Cheryl says. “That meant quality work and, often, custom work.”

In 1979 the first units rolled out, the AL45. Today, the company makes four models, all for the tree care industry.

Customers these days include tree care professionals, utilities and municipalities; field repair and maintenance crews criss-cross America.

Some people, but not many, know that when the tree care industry was maturing, Ernie and his company were among the first to push for what would become TCI EXPO and Tree Care Industry magazine.

When it comes time to reflect on an industry pioneer, it is typical to turn to the industry leaders for comment. But that’s not the reason TCI contacted Gregory S. Daniels, chairman of the board of the Tree Care Industry Association. Rather, it was for his longstanding personal and business association with Ernie. Daniels is president of the F. A. Bartlett Tree Expert Co. of Stamford, Conn., founded in 1907.

“If I first met Ernie probably 35 years ago, and we’ve been friends ever since,” says Daniels. “I knew him when he was repairing buckets and was the authorized Skyworker repair shop. In the late 1970s, he developed his own product. If my recollection is correct, Bartlett bought his first three production units. Since then, we’ve purchased hundreds. (Bartlett is a family-owned, multinational tree care business with more than 1,500 employees.)

“Ernie was a guy the industry just admired as a supplier of quality products and service,” continues Daniels. “He was my personal friend. His generosity went beyond what most people would imagine. He was an industry cheerleader and he would give someone the shirt off his back if need be. But he was very modest and didn’t have an ego about things he did to help people. He never sought the limelight,” notes Daniels. Even now, Daniels knows of things Ernie did for others, and out of respect will not share them.

“Ernie didn’t have an enemy in the world. He was a guy you could sit down...
with and talk about anything. He was open
minded about his lifts, because he was
focused on one thing – designing them for
the tree care industry,” Daniels says. “He
was known for unparalleled service. Ernie
stood behind everything he built ... never a
question. The industry lost a true pioneer.”

That sentiment was echoed by Oscar
Stone, director emeritus of the Connecticut
Tree Protective Association. “Ernie was
very helpful to the Connecticut Tree
Protective Association. He was given an
award from them ... for his support of the
association,” says Stone.

Stone says he knew “Dip,” laughing as he
explained that was DePiero’s nickname,
since the 1950s, when Stone was involved
with the former Alpine Tree Care in White
Plains, N.Y. “He had some engineer design
the aerial lift that he first made, and it was
improved by others. In my opinion, that was
one of the best and safest aerial lifts we had
in this country,” Stone says.

Stone says Alpine at one point was going
to buy lifts from another company because
Ernie couldn’t produce the number they
needed for their fleet, but Stone pushed for
Ernie’s product. “Because, if your truck was
down, he’d send a truck out to work on it.”

Stone recounted being up in Plattsburgh,
N.Y., and having a hydraulic hose go in the
elbow of the lift. He figured he’d lose a
couple of days waiting for repairs. But he
called Ernie and Ernie had a repair vehicle
meet the truck in Saratoga and make the
repair so the truck could go right back into
service. “That’s the kind of service he gave
everybody,” Stone says. “I can’t tell you
how much I appreciated Ernie.”

Regarding the future of Aerial Lift, the
company will continue as it has with the
same values, according to Cheryl DePiero.
“We’ll continue to do it Dad’s way,” she
says, adding, “I miss my dad’s daily input
and I respected his keen knowledge of the
business. He will be missed by all.”

In Ernie fashion, the family asked that
contributions in his name be made to the
St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, 501
St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.
Year-End Video Sale!
Sale runs through 12/31/04

Non-Members:
15% Off all fax, mail and telephone orders!
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Online Coupon Code: VIDSALE
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TCIA Members:
25% Off already low member pricing!
ALL ORDERS!
Online Coupon Code: VIDEOBLWT
Redeem at www.tcia.org/store

Hazard Tree – Risk Assessment & Mitigation for Tree Workers (DVD)
Should workers climb this tree? Now you have the tools to make a safer assessment. This DVD contains full motion video. Navigate instantly to any section, use slow-motion to make a point, or freeze a frame during question & answer. Up to 3 ISA CEUs.

VHAZDVD Hazard Tree – Risk Assessment & Mitigation for Tree Workers DVD
Regular Price: $95
On Sale: $80.75
Online: $76
(Members: $56.25)

Electrical Hazards Videos
This 2 video set is required for TCIA Electrical Hazards Awareness Program training. Aerial Rescue covers rescue equipment, electrical hazard rescue, personal safety during aerial rescues and more. Electrical Hazards demonstrates the proper safety precautions arborists should be using according to OSHA 1910.269 and ANSI Z133.1 standards. 1 ISA CEU.

EHARK Electrical Hazards 2 Video Set
SEHARK (Spanish Version)
Above sets includes 2 videos.
Regular Price: $162
On Sale: $137.70/Online: $129.60
(Members: $81)

Rigging for Removal
Two video set focuses on techniques and equipment workers can apply in the field. The “rigging team” is made up of experts Don Blair, Ken Johnson and Robert Phillips. Includes Basic Rigging, Technical Rigging and workbook. 4 ISA CEUs.

RIGSET Rigging for Removal Videos (3 videos & workbook)
Regular Price: $162
On Sale: $137.70/Online: $129.60
(Members: $81)

Each sold separately:
ADVRIG Technical Rigging
BASRIG Basic Rigging
Regular Price: $90
On Sale: $76.50/Online: $72
(Members: $45)

RIGWKBK Workbook only
$10 (Members: $8)

TCIA – formerly the National Arborist Association
1-800-733-2622 • www.tcia.org/store

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TCIA – formerly the National Arborist Association
1-800-733-2622 • www.tcia.org/store
Year-End Video Sale!
Sale runs through 12/31/04

Basic Training for Ground Operations in Tree Care
Five video set with contributions from experts such as Peter Gerstenberger and Bob Rouse of TCIA, and Ken Palmer of ArborMaster. Titles are: An Orientation to the Arboriculture Profession, Vehicle Safety, Job Planning & Preparation, Working Safely & Efficiently, and Brush Chipper Operation & Maintenance. 5 ISA CEUs.

Each Title Available Separately
Regular Price: $59.95
Sale Price: $50.96/Online: $47.96
(Members: $31.87)

1. An Orientation to the Arboriculture Profession
   (Length 11:57)
   • Some of the benefits and aspects of tree care as a career choice
   • How to recognize and avoid the common hazards associated with tree work

2. Vehicle Safety
   (Length 9:30)
   • Pre-trip vehicle inspections
   • Defensive driving & traffic control
   • Backing up & dumping

3. Job Planning & Preparation
   (Length 11:42)
   • How to perform job site inspections
   • The importance of the work plan, the job briefing and emergency preparedness

4. Working Safely & Efficiently
   (Length 21:09)
   • Safe, efficient procedures and practices
   • Topics such as assisting the climber, chain saw operation, command & response, and much more!

5. Brush Chipper Operation & Maintenance
   (Length 16:07)
   • Safe practices with the drum chipper as well as hydraulic infeed disk and drum chippers
   • Major safety issues associated with hooking up, towing, operation and maintenance

Basic Training for Ground Operations Workbook
Tests included in the Ground Operations workbook are worth 5 ISA Certification CEU credits.

Ropes, Knots & Climbing
Expert tree climbers show techniques they use every day to increase safety and productivity. This video addresses appropriate elements of Z133.1, while providing clear instructions in many climbing techniques. Your workers will watch easy-to-understand demonstrations on the uses of ropes, knots, carabiners and saddles. Comes with supplement which includes 50 multiple choice exam questions, answer key, safety attendance record form, and step-by-step illustrations for ten of the most popular knots. Provides an excellent overview of climbing. 3 ISA CEUs.

Regular Price: $90
Sale Price: $76.50
Online: $72
(Members: $45)

1-800-733-2622
Basic Training for Tree Climbers
International tree climbing champs Ken Palmer and Rip Tompkins team up with veteran climbing instructor Robert Phillips to demonstrate the skills required to become a top-production tree climber. Five video set includes: Getting Started, Rope Installation & Ascending, Climbing Spurs, Tying-In & Positioning and Working the Tree. 6 ISA CEUs.

BC1V  Getting Started (Length 37:00)
- Pros and cons of the various types of climbing gear
- The importance of a daily gear inspection and pre-climb inspection of the tree and site
- How to tie important knots and climbing hitches

BC2V  Rope Installation and Ascending (Length 29:00)
- Techniques for installing a throwline
- Detailed instruction in body thrust & footlock climbing

BC3V  Climbing Spurs (Length 18:00)
- Selecting, fitting and maintaining spurs
- Proper spur climbing technique

BC4V  Tying-In and Positioning (Length 21:00)
- Selecting a tie-in point that is safe and effective
- How to advance the climbing line and use the personal lanyard
- How to install and use a false crotch or redirect

BC5V  Working the Tree (Length 18:00)
- How to re-crotch and double crotch
- Techniques for limb walking

Each Title Available Separately
Regular Price: $59.95
Sale Price: $50.96/Online: $47.96
(Members: $31.87)

Basic Climber Workbook
Tests included in the Tree Climber workbook are worth 6 ISA Certification CEU credits.

BCWKBK  Basic Climber Workbook
Workbook only
$10 (Members: $8)
Tree Care Industry Association Announces Federal Grant for Electrical Hazards Training

30 FREE Full-Day Electrical Hazards Awareness Seminars to Benefit U.S. Arborists.

Interested parties may pre-register for waiting lists to attend one of the FREE Electrical Hazards Awareness Program (EHAP) seminars, made possible by a federal grant from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The grant was awarded through the Susan Harwood Training Grant Program, which provides funding for nonprofit organizations to conduct training and education programs for employers and workers on the recognition, avoidance, and prevention of safety and health hazards in their workplaces.

TCIA's Electrical Hazards Awareness Program (EHAP), introduced in 1975, has trained thousands of arborists involved in line clearance and those working on residential properties near energized lines. It is widely recognized as the training standard for complying with OSHA 29 CFR 1910.289 regulations.

The FREE workshops will provide participants with most of the formal requirements of an Electrical Hazard Awareness Training Program (EHAP). Topics will focus on training requirements that serve as a prerequisite for working within 10 feet of an electrical conductor. Participants will learn about identifying electrical system components, the presence and nature of electrical hazards, protective measures available, and common unsafe acts to avoid. Workshops will be offered in English and Spanish, with accompanying TCIA EHAP materials (a retail value of $135) provided at no charge in either language.

Approximately 34 percent of tree care worker fatalities are related to electrical hazards. These workshops will help reduce the number of fatalities and injuries in this industry.

TCIA (formerly the NAA) is an international trade association that develops safety, education and management programs and standards of tree care practices. TCIA is the only accrediting body of tree care firms in the United States.

Companies, organizations, groups, or municipalities interested in hosting an EHAP workshop in their area should contact Lee Gilman at TCIA's headquarters by calling 1-800-733-2622.

If you are interested in attending a workshop please call Amy Waterstrat at 1-800-733-2622 to pre-register.

Pre-registered parties will be notified of times, dates and exact locations. Pre-registration is for waiting list only. At time of notification, full registration will be accepted. Seminars will be located in most major metropolitan regions.

This is NOT a complete certification program. Passing chapter exams from the manual provided and completing approved CPR and first-aid courses are also course completion requirements which may be used by employers to support designation of qualified line clearance trimmer status. For more information about TCIA EHAP certifications, call 1-800-733-2622 or visit us online at www.tcia.org.

This material was produced under grant number 46A4-HT33 from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. It does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.
Allergic Reaction to Criticism of Article

I recently was forwarded an e-mail from a reader of Tree Care Industry magazine, in which a number of rather snide remarks were made about me and my writing and research. This was based on an article about allergy-free landscape trees, written by Janet Aird, that appeared in the September issue. I would like to take this opportunity to respond to that fellow’s remarks and to a few other things I noticed as I read the article myself just now.

First, the impression in this article is given that “fruited mulberry” trees are the cause of considerable pollen allergy in central Arizona. Actually fruited mulberry trees are normally female trees and cause no allergy problems at all. It is the so-called “fruitless mulberry” trees that are the male trees, and these male clones do indeed trigger a huge amount of inhalant allergy in Arizona and in a great many other places as well.

Second, it is stated in the article that monoecious trees are much less allergenic than dioecious trees, and normally this is not at all true. It is also suggested that most monoecious trees (oak, pine, spruce, pecan, etc.) are self-fertile, and again, this is only correct some of the time.

Third, it is stated in the article that monoecious trees are “usually pollinated by insects,” however in truth, monoecious trees are almost never insect-pollinated.

Fourth, in the article it is said that monoecious trees that have their male pollen flowers on the top and their female flowers on the bottom tend to be self-pollinated, often by gravity, and indeed this is quite correct. In the opposite flowering system, monoecious trees where the male flowers grow below the female flowers, the pollen grains are always small and light, and these trees are almost always self-inferitile.

Fifth, it is stated that, per the pollen control ordinance in Albuquerque, N.M., that all Morus (mulberry) species are prohibited, however in Albuquerque it is now perfectly OK to plant any female clones (they are pollen-free) of any of the dioecious (separate-sexed) species, including mulberry.

Sixth, and here the article’s author had it perfectly correct when she wrote that: “...the higher the ratio of males that are planted, the fewer females there are to trap the pollen and remove it from the air.”

Indeed, the more male trees that are planted, the greater will be the amount of pollen produced. Female trees of dioecious species DO trap and remove pollen from the air. In the negative reader e-mail that was forwarded to me, it suggested that this last point was absurd. “This is like saying that a woman’s eggs trap and remove sperm,” he wrote.

Well, in fact it is not like this at all! A woman produces one, or on occasion two, eggs per month. A large female tree in bloom will sometimes produce hundreds of thousands of viable pistils. And the function of these (female) pistils is to trap pollen of its own species—and only of its own species. It has been known since 1971 that pistillate flowers on dioecious trees produce a negative electrical charge. Pollen grains from male trees float and tumble about in the air and pick up a positive electrical charge. When you put the two (- and +) together, you get what is called “mutual attraction.” The pollen does not just get to the female purely by accident by any means. Mother Nature is more clever than some of us give her credit.

In addition to the large number of female flowers on a dioecious female tree, it is worthwhile to note also that the tips of these flowers tend to be broad, and to be sticky. The pollen is dry. And while each pistil can trap and use only one grain of pollen for each seed formed, it has been shown that individual pistils can and do often trap and hold more than a single pollen grain. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this all is the selectivity involved. If a pollen grain of a different species of plant lands and sticks to that pistil, it will be rejected. Likewise, one might expect to find a good deal of tiny airborne particulates stuck to these sticky pistillate surfaces, but they too are rejected and expelled.

The bottom line is this: many monoecious trees shed a good deal of allergenic pollen and all of the male plants from dioecious species shed allergenic pollen. On the other hand, female trees never form nor shed any pollen, ever. Female trees are allergy-free trees.

Tom Ogren
Author of Safe Sex in the Garden

Please circle 9 on Reader Service Card
Events & Seminars

Dec. 1, 2004
Insect Management in the Landscape
Michigan Green Industry Association
Doubletree Hotel & Conference Center
Novi, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

Dec. 8, 2004
Landscape and Nursery Weed Control
Michigan Green Industry Association
Doubletree Hotel & Conference Center
Novi, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

December 9, 2004
Hazardous Tree Identification Seminar
Rutgers’ Cook College
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 or ocpe@aesop.rutgers.edu

January 3-7, 2005
Advanced Landscape Plant IPM PHC Short Course
University of Maryland,
College Park, MD 20742
Contact: Debbie Wilhoit, (301) 405-3913,
www.raupplab.umd.edu/Conferences/AdvLandscape/

Jan. 5, 2005
EHAP—Electrical Hazard Awareness Program
Michigan Green Industry Association
TCIA approved, OSHA’s 29 CFR 1910.269 compliant
Doubletree Hotel & Conference Center
Novi, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

Jan. 6, 2005
Transplanting Techniques for Sustainable Landscapes
Dr. Tom Smiley and David Boone
Michigan Green Industry Association
Doubletree Hotel & Conference Center
Novi, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

January 7-February 4, 2005
Urban Forestry: Make Your Town a Tree City USA
Rutgers’ Cook College
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 or ocpe@aesop.rutgers.edu

January 10-11, 2005
2005 Empire State Green Industry Conference
Hudson Valley Resort & Spa
Kerhonkson, NY
Contact: NYS Nursery/Landscape Assoc. 1-800-647-0384; NYS Arborists (845) 855-0223; or www.nyrla.org

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

Jan. 13-14, 2005
6TH Annual CSRA Tree, Ornamental & Turf Seminar
Central Savannah River Area
Julian Smith Casino, Augusta GA
Contact: (706) 854-0926 or visit www.empiretree.com

January 19-20, 2005
Annual Mass. Tree Wardens’ & Foresters’ Conference
Host: Hotel & Conference Center
Sturbridge, MA
Contact: Pat Felix, (781) 894-4759

January 19-21, 2005
Kansas Arborists Assoc. 50th Shade Tree Conference
Topeka, Kansas
Contact: Dr. Charles Long, clong@tctelco.net or
(785) 499-8670

Jan. 20, 2005
Winter Plant ID at Cranbrook – Shrubs
Michigan Green Industry Association
Cranbrook Institute of Science
Bloomfield Hills, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

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

January 27, 2005
Prof. Cert. Applicators of L.I. Trade Show/Conference
Holiday Inn
Ronkonkoma, NY
Contact: Susan (516) 763-2530,
pcao@aol.com or www.liaatrees.org

Jan. 27, 2005
Aerial Rescue – A Closer Look, and Modern Climbing Techniques – Climbing in The 21st Century
Michigan Green Industry Association
Sponsored by Tree Care Industry Association
Doubletree Hotel & Conference Center
Novi, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

February 1-3, 2005
New England Grows 2005 Green Industry Conf & Expo
Boston Convention & Exhibition Ctr.
Boston, MA
Contact: (508) 653-3009; www.NEGrows.org

February 4, 2005
Estimating & Bidding: Charles VanderKooi
Huntington Hilton, Huntington, NY
Contact: Patricia Voges, (631) 665-2250 or NSLG2@optonline.net

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

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

February 12, 2005
Long Island Arboricultural Assn. Annual Tree Conf.
Farmingdale State University, Farmingdale, NY
Contact: Jean Brown 516-454-6550,
liaatrees@aol.com or www.liaatrees.org

February 16 & March 21, 2005
Arborist: Innovations, Techniques & Solutions Seminar
Rutgers’ Cook College
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 or ocpe@aesop.rutgers.edu

March 1, 2005
Nassau Suffolk Landscape Gardeners Association
37th Annual Professional Turf & Plant Conference
Huntington Town House, Huntington, NY
Contact: Patricia Voges, (631) 665-2250 or
NSLG2@optonline.net

March 4-5, 2005
Ecological Landscaping Assoc.
2005 Winter Conference & Workshop
Marlborough Royal Plaza Hotel
Marlborough, MA
Contact: (617) 436-5838; www.ecolandscaping.org

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; www.tcia.org

Send your event information to:
Tree Care Industry,
3 Perimeter Road Unit 1,
Manchester, NH 03103
or staruk@treecareindustry.org
The seminar, “Improve your Business with TCIA Accreditation,” drew a standing room only audience at TCI EXPO in Detroit in October.

Run by Bob Rouse, TCIA’s director of accreditation, the seminar was scheduled for an hour but ran well over the allotted time as Rouse fielded numerous questions from interested companies.

If you would like information on how to improve your business through TCIA Accreditation, you can:

► Call Bob Rouse at 1-800-733-2622
► E-Mail Ritchotte@tcia.org, or
► Log onto the TCIA’s Web site (www.tcia.org) and click on the Accreditation link. At the bottom of the page there is another link for requesting information.

Also, there will be another seminar on Accreditation at TCI EXPO Spring in Long Beach in March to help those who have begun the Accreditation process.

Join the 35 tree care industry companies, representing 38 branch offices, currently working toward Accreditation. Call to sign up today.

Accredited Companies as of Nov. 5, 2005

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>City</th>
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<th>Branches</th>
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<td>Collier Tree Service</td>
<td>Clackamas</td>
<td>OR</td>
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<td>C.L. Frank Company</td>
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</table>

Total Accredited Companies - 9
Total Branches Accredited - 9

Accreditation Seminar Wow’s Crowd at EXPO

Visit Our Website…..www.mickeyssbuckettrucks.com…..for special offers.

Call Toll Free 888-340-1756 or 570-401-3972
You do everything the right way so why not get recognized for it? Get your company Accredited!

Call TCIA at 800-733-2622 and talk to Bob Rouse or Kathy Ritchotte for more information and to order a free information package. Also visit www.treecareindustry.org to find out who is Accredited, or working on getting Accredited, in your area.

Please circle 47 on Reader Service Card
Customers usually don’t notice them at first. They walk in to Merrow’s Inc., a lawn and garden outdoor power equipment shop in Amesbury, Mass., to a display room filled with models of new trimmers, snow-blowers, chain saws and other outdoor equipment and accessories. But at some point, their eyes drift up, and they notice the row of old used chain saws with chipped-yellow paint. Then their eyes get wide.

These are McCulloch chain saws, for a time THE name in American-made chain saws. Across the top shelf of his shop’s public area, stretching across the length of two walls, Bob Merrow has a display tracing the evolution of McCulloch’s one-man chain saw.

“That one’s from the late ’40s or early ’50s,” Merrow says, pointing to the oldest one, a model 325. “I think they came out with that saw in 1949, if I’m not mistaken. (He is correct.) McCulloch started with chain saws before that, but that was the first one-man.”

There are 23 chain saws on the shelves, running from the Model 325 through the years to the Mini-Mac 1, which was made in the early 1970s. “This is a broad cut of what they had through the years,” Merrow says. “It’s not every model, but this shows the different models and styles they had.”

Included in the collection are a few unusual pieces, like the one fashioned after the Model 33, but designed for a left-handed person. It was produced but had short life. “I thought it was a prototype, but they actually brought it out as a production saw,” Merrow says. “It had some problems, so they recalled the whole bunch. It didn’t work the way it was supposed to.”

Another unusual one is the BP-1 two-cylinder saw. “It used one, basically, as a supercharger,” Merrow says. “One cylinder pumped air into the second cylinder, to get more horsepower.”

Duplicates of as many as 10 of the models on the shelves are kept in back rooms (Merrow admits to being something of a pack rat). There is also a No. 549 two-man...
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saw on the premises. “We don’t have room for that out here,” Merrow says. “I’ll probably hang it off the beams (at some future point), but we’ve got to hang it real well, so nobody gets hurt.”

Merrow, 52, has been working at the store, founded by his father, since he was 14 years old. He began repairing chain saws at age 16, and says of his collection, “These are what I grew up with.”

He will still get the occasional request from the owner of an old McCulloch, asking if he can repair it. He once bet a salesman that he could disassemble a Mini Mac in 10 minutes, and – using an air tool – had the thing opened up with time to spare. Because he’d known the bet to be a lock, he never took the guy’s money.

In addition to repair calls, he’ll often get calls for parts that have been out of circulation for years. In part because of Merrow’s self-confessed packrat tendencies, he can frequently comply (as he also can for Simplicity or Bobcat products, two other longtime lines). He estimates that he’s got 3,000 McCulloch parts.

“I once had a customer that moved to Montana, and they had an old McCulloch, a Super Pro-81 that they bought off me,” he says. When a part broke, they called all around that state trying to find a replacement. Finally, the woman called Merrow, who sent her the part. “By the way,” she told him. “If you ever come out here, you’re staying with us.”

Frequently, he says, tools have sentimental value, having been passed down from a father or an uncle.

Bob Merrow’s father, Dan, started his business from his own father’s garage in Amesbury in 1939, repairing outboard motors. He eventually expanded the business and started selling as well as repairing. He moved the location twice, the latest move occurring in 1956, to the current location on Route 110, a fairly busy road in a semi-rural area of northeastern Massachusetts. The business sells and services outdoor lawn and garden power equipment, including snow blowers, lawn mowers and trimmers, outboard motors, and more, including, of course, chain saws.

Merrow estimates that 25 percent of his clients are professionals, including “a bunch of tree guys.”

His dad began selling McCulloch chain saws in 1950.

“He sold his first one April 10, 1950. That’s just one of those facts you remember,” says Merrow, who tried to locate that saw when the family celebrated the store’s 50th anniversary in 1989, when McCulloch was running a contest to locate the oldest saw it could find. He found the original customer, and the person who had
purchased the saw from that customer, but the saw had been put in the trash. “I only missed by about a month,” Merrow says.

Although companies in Europe had already introduced the one-man chain saw before McCulloch produced one in 1949, McCulloch was the leader in the American market. Founder Robert McCulloch was an innovator who developed chain breaks, and McCulloch was one of the first companies to use an all-position carburetor (allowing the saw to be tipped in any direction). “Before that, you had to turn the bar to make cuts,” Merrow says, a step that obviously slowed down the cutting process.

McCulloch was also the first company to produce a saw lighter than 10 pounds, in 1967.

Robert McCulloch died in 1975, and not long thereafter the company was sold to Black & Decker, one in a succession of corporate owners the company has had since. While McCulloch had traditionally sold its product through licensed dealers, Black & Decker brought the saws to mass merchants. Eventually, Merrow’s began selling other lines, and stopped selling McCulloch. [In 1999, McCulloch’s North American operation was purchased by Jenn Feng Industrial Co. Ltd, a Taiwan-based manufacturer. Jenn Feng currently manufactures McCulloch chain saws and MTD is the distributor for McCulloch in North America.]

Merrow put up the first saws in the collection in the mid-1990s. The family is still friendly with Bill Stantial, a product representative for EDM, a power equipment distributorship, and his family. Stantial’s dad, the late Elliott “Stan” Stantial, founded the Stantial-McCulloch Co. Inc., the manufacturer’s distributorship in Greater Boston, and Merrow’s was one of one of his first dealerships.

“My dad had a big old barn,” Bill Stantial recalls. “We were cleaning everything out, and my mom was moving, and we found these old chain saws. They were more museum pieces than anything. I thought of Merrow’s immediately.” There were six different old McCulloch chain saws, which were offered to Merrow. Bob Merrow already had a few of his own, and when they were placed on the top shelf of his display room, the collection took shape. They were a curiosity for customers, who began making donations to add to the collection.

“One will come walking in, carrying an old saw, say, ‘Here’s one for your collection,’ set it down, and walk out the door,” Merrow says. “This Mac 15? A guy

One of the most unusual pieces in Bob Merrow’s collection is the one fashioned after the Model 33, but designed for a left-handed person.
dropped it off here to have it tuned up. He came back to pick it up, walked out to his truck, had it out there idling for a bit, then came back and set it on the counter. He said, "I'll never use it – put it up with your collection.'"

"I don't think it's worth anything," Merrow says. "A lot of people will come in, take a look, then get a funny look on their face, especially if they know anything about chain saws."

Merrow enjoys the juxtaposition

McCulloch was one of the first companies to use an all-position carburetor, allowing the saw to be tipped in any direction. "Before that, you had to turn the bar to make cuts," Bob Merrow says. At right, Merrow displays a McCulloch model No. 549 two-man saw that preceeds the all-position carburetor. The blade is in the horizontal position in the first photo, and vertical in the second while the position of the saw remains the same.
between the new Husqvarna models he now sells and the old, larger, weightier McCullochs from the 1950s and 1960s. (In addition to Husqvarna, Merrow maintains and repairs Stihl, Jonsered, Echo, Redmax and any other chain saw, as long as he can find parts for it.)

“People will take a look at the little ones, then look at these monsters,” he says. “It gives you respect for the old loggers. (Some of) these were 32½ pounds, without the bar and chain, and the gas and oil. They are heavy. Sometimes, people will pick up a new saw and say, ‘This is heavy.’ No. It’s not heavy.”

Dan Merrow, 87, has been retired for 30 years. He still lives in Amesbury, and visits the store every morning. When people see the chain saws, Dan Merrow says, “They say, ‘My God, they must be heavier than Hell,’ and it’s true, they were. But some others, Mall and Homelite and Mercury Disston, those so-called one-man saws were pretty damn heavy.”

While the old chain saws were weighty, they were a welcome relief to loggers who previously relied on saws and axes. The first chain saws were developed in the 1920s. When he was young, Bob Merrow’s dad took him to Maine, to a logging camp. The loggers were mainly French-Canadian, short and blocky. Merrow recalls seeing them walking into the woods swinging their arms, with a heavy chain saw in one hand and two five-gallon gas cans in the other hand. On the way back, they’d be swinging the saw and the cans, but the cans would be empty—after a day spent cutting enough wood to drain both gas cans.

“My dad was a big guy and he said he wouldn’t even think of tangling with them,” Bob Merrow says. “They looked like tree stumps. Solid.”

Frequently, customers will come in with their children. The kids will point at the chain saws, and questions will begin. “It’s like guys with old cars, people like to see them,” says Merrow, who in the past has loaded up the saws and brought them to old engine shows, for display.

Just as the collection of 23 chain saws is a reminder of his shop’s history, it also provides a timeline for man’s ingenuity.

“This shows where we’ve been, where we’ve come from, and where technology has come from,” he says. “Some of the old ones only went 6,000 rpm,” he says. “The new ones go 14,000 to 15,000 rpm.”

For more information about Merrow’s, check the company Web site at www.merrowsinc.com.

Dave Rattigan is a freelance writer living in Peabody, Mass.
Buy New Equipment Before Year End

It’s Not Too Late for a Big Score

By Bob Conroy

Baseball season may have come to an end, but you can still hit one out of the park – with the bases loaded! How can you and your business hit a grand slam this year? You can do this by: 1) Increasing after tax income, 2) Increasing your immediate cash flow, 3) Acquiring brand new equipment, and 4) Using very little cash outlay. What is the key to this opportunity? You need to act now!

Currently, there is a one-time depreciation bonus businesses can take in the first year of new equipment acquisition. This was mandated in the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003. This bonus provision expires December 31, 2004. In order to qualify for the write off, four requirements must be met. The equipment must normally qualify under the IRS Modified Accelerated Costs Recovery System (MACRS) (and most useful business equipment does). This includes equipment such as heavy trucks and equipment, computer hardware and software and office furniture. The equipment must be acquired after May 5, 2003 and before December 31, 2004. It must be “original use” or new equipment. The equipment must be placed in service by December 31, 2004. The depreciation bonus is over-and-above the Section 179 write-off of $100,000. This can mean two things; there is room to take advantage of additional tax benefits, even if the business already made significant equipment purchases during the year, or it gives the company additional flexibility in managing its tax situation.

How can you react quickly and make the most of this opportunity? Lease the equipment. Leasing will keep your cash outlay small, usually two months of advance payments (which are credited toward the purchase, i.e. 60-month lease less two payments, 58 payments are left) and some nominal administrative fees. Make sure the lease is a $1 buyout, or at least has a buyout option at the end of the lease term where the buyout is not significantly greater than the projected value of the equipment. In order to depreciate equipment under a lease, the lessee must have the intention of ownership. In this case, leasing becomes a powerful tool on many levels. Let’s see in the examples. (See Figure 1.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Depreciation Expense</th>
<th>($50,000)</th>
<th>($100,000)</th>
<th>($140,000)</th>
<th>($280,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Depreciable Asset at Year-end</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Flow and Income Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Depreciation Expense, from above</td>
<td>($50,000)</td>
<td>($100,000)</td>
<td>($140,000)</td>
<td>($280,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lease Interest paid (2 mos.)</td>
<td>($969)</td>
<td>($1,935)</td>
<td>($3,876)</td>
<td>($7,752)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Deductions</td>
<td>($50,969)</td>
<td>($101,935)</td>
<td>($163,876)</td>
<td>($287,752)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Tax Rate</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total CASH TAX SAVINGS</td>
<td>$17,839</td>
<td>$35,677</td>
<td>$57,357</td>
<td>$100,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less First Year Lease Payments</td>
<td>($2,224)</td>
<td>($4,448)</td>
<td>($8,896)</td>
<td>($17,796)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year CASH BENEFIT</td>
<td>$15,615</td>
<td>$31,229</td>
<td>$48,459</td>
<td>$82,917</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, each situation shows a positive cash position. This means that acting prior to December 31 could save you money, especially if you were planning an equipment acquisition in the near future. It is always wise to consult your tax advisor before making these decisions.

Given the constantly changing world in which we live, businesses need to be agile and forward thinking enough to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves. This particular opportunity will be gone before we know it and new, less liberal tax regulations take effect. If you can analyze your situation, seek the help and advice of financial advisors and know your situation always improves with better, bigger and newer tools, then you will be ready for the challenges that face us in the years to come.

Bob Conroy, owner of Lease One New England, is a CPA with more than 20 years of practical business experience. He has owned businesses in the professional service industry, as well as retail, and has consulted with a wide range of business owners. He is a featured speaker as well as panel member at conferences related to real estate, non-profit management and other areas of financial management. Currently, Lease One finances about $250 million in leases annually. Contact Conroy at 1-888-234-2841 or info@leaseonenewengland.com.

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Personal Computing: Preventing Catastrophes from Data Loss

By Reid Goldsborough

What’s the worst thing that can happen to your computer? Worse than a hard disk crash, virus infection, spam assault, denial-of-service attack, hacker takeover, fire, flood or other human, mechanical or natural disaster is a faulty backup when you really need it. If the computer blows up, as long as your data is backed up securely, you can recover.

Tape backup is still popular among business users because of its long use and cost-effectiveness per megabyte of data. This is despite the increasing popularity of other backup solutions. Many home and small businesses use recordable CDs and DVDs to back up newly created data. Various types of computer users are now employing an external hard drive, connected to a USB port, to quickly and cost-effectively back up entire hard drives. And those with broadband Internet connections can use Internet backup services to conveniently store selected backup data off site.

Still, tape backup has a large installed base. But like anything having to do with a computer, backing up to tape isn’t foolproof. Tape drives, backup tapes, and tape backup software can fail. When they do, panicked computer users often rely on the services of a data recovery firm such as CBL Data Recovery Technologies Inc., a company headquartered in Armonk, N.Y., with branch offices around the world and a Web site at http://www.cbltech.com.

CBL and companies like it want your business, and they try to be helpful in various ways. Here’s how you can minimize the chances of a tape backup failing in the first place, according to Doug Owens, managing director of CBL’s San Diego laboratory and resident tape expert. Many of these same precautions apply to other backup systems as well.

Make sure you have more than one copy of a backup tape. Instead of using the same tape time after time, use multiple tapes, rotating through them. You can use any of a number of different systems for this. With the odd/even system, you use one tape on one day, a second tape the next day, reuse the first tape on day three, and so on. With the five-day rotation system, you use a different tape for each day of the week. Backup tapes are typically rated to be used from 5,000 to a half million times, depending on the type of tape. Tape backup software typically will keep track of the tapes, regardless of the rotation system you go with.

Make sure you verify your backups. Most backup software will automatically do a quick “read-after-write” verification and will optionally do a full verification. The latter is both more thorough and more time consuming, roughly doubling the backup time. If your data is crucial, it can make sense to do a full verification on a regular basis.

Make sure your equipment is being maintained properly. You should clean your tape backup drive periodically, following directions in its manual regarding frequency.

Consider having an authorized maintenance person from the manufacturer of the tape backup drive, or from a third-party repair firm, check the alignment of the drive every 12 to 18 months. Most businesses just send the drive back to the manufacturer when it begins to have problems, but if a drive has problems, so can the backup tapes.

Make sure you store one backup tape off site. This will ensure that your data is preserved if your site experiences a fire, flood, earthquake, hurricane, tornado, volcanic eruption or other disaster. Some companies swap backup tapes with other offices, sending them for example via Fed Ex. Others periodically do a “remote backup” through the Internet from one office to another. With some small businesses, a selected employee takes the backup tape home with him. A further option is using an off-site storage firm, which provides fire-protected storage facilities for print and digital media as well as tape.

Make sure that with the backup tapes kept on site, they’re stored in a stable environment, without exposure to extremes in temperature, humidity or electromagnetism. Don’t, for instance, store the tapes in a safe on the opposite side of the wall from a large generator, whose electrical fields can wreck havoc with the data on them.

Finally, make sure you periodically test your backup tapes and your restore procedures. You can, for instance, try restoring some of the data on them to a different server or to a different partition or folder on the same server where the original data is stored. With backups, the old maxim applies: Better safe than sorry.

Reid Goldsborough is a syndicated columnist and author of the book Straight Talk About the Information Superhighway.
By Thomas G. Dolan

A few months back, we sent out queries to readers asking who would be willing to participate in an article on best and worst business decisions. The responses we received to both that request and the resulting article indicated that a good many of you are interested in both sharing your experiences and learning from those of your fellow arborists. So here’s another article on the same topic.

What stands out from both sets of interviews is the great variety of responses from participants when they share their best and worst business decisions. For Matt Peed, president of Piedmont Tree Specialty Inc. in Macon, Ga., his worst and best decisions have been intimately related, in that the latter have corrected the former.

Now in his fourth year, Peed, about a year ago, realized “our marketing was pretty good and our work was top notch, but I was making decisions not knowing where we were financially. I didn’t have a clear goal of where we were going and how much we should be accomplishing. And I also didn’t have a handle on costs, especially hidden costs.”

Peed says he spent much of the past year doing “homework,” and probably his best single decision was hiring a local business consultant, Scott Prophett, to help give the company a clear direction.

“Where we’ve made great strides is having a complete business plan,” Peed says. “We have the infrastructure set up so that now we have clearly defined sales goals, including how much we intend to take in per week. Along with that we’ve learned to know our budget and costs. These include the costs for each piece of equipment, broken down for costs for each job, fuel costs for each piece of equipment, and actual costs per crew. We now have accurate, up-to-date financial data that we share with the crews. We know how much is billed out and how much is coming in. Before we knew the big totals of what was going out and what was coming in, but we didn’t know the specifics, so couldn’t manage them.”

Two big dynamics of the new operational procedures is having a system for employee promotion and a policy for handling customers.

“For employees we now have five different levels of promotion. When the applicant comes to the interview, we have everything laid out before him, a clear career path, and the requirements in order to move up. For instance, a certified arborist will make so much an hour. We’ve found that being this specific also helps us attract the sort of ambitious, hard-working employee we want.”

What goes into the computations, Peed adds, is the increased pay for each level of employee along with the estimated increased productivity. Also important, Peed says, is having an articulated policy regarding customers. One was that, in the case of storm damage, existing customers would be taken care of first.

“We had this policy in place before the big storms hit, and at first probably turned away several hundred people,” Peed says. “Without this policy thought out and set down ahead of time, we would have been responding to people as they called in. But by having a policy and following it, there was a big payoff. We’ve built customer loyalty and they’ve shown they appreciated our making a priority of their storm damage. What having a business plan really did is make us define our focus. We realize we are in a relational business, not so much a
tree business as a people business."

Dave Scharfenberger, vice president of Wachtel Tree Science & Service in Merton, Wis., also indicates that his best decision was getting on top of costs. But he did it not through a consultant but a computer. “We upgraded our network system with a server and added a database that could provide us with practical solutions,” Scharfenberger says. “We’re thrilled with what the information is doing for us. Now we can track costs and productivity by individual employee, by crew and by job.”

Scharfenberger adds that having more complete information about any particular customer readily available also helps. “When talking to a customer on the phone or in the field, you have the information at your fingertips,” Scharfenberger says. “When somebody asks about a particular tree, you’re able to fire back the data that it’s an eight-inch diameter white birch. This impresses the customer and shows you are able to take care of him.”

He adds that the company recently purchased its own property, which “makes it easier to control and helps us be more productive than having to depend upon landlords.”

One of worst decisions Scharfenberger made was “buying equipment without first working with the crew to see if they can use it. If they feel they can’t use it, then they won’t. So now I always go over equipment purchases with the crew first.”

Sometimes unavoidable mistakes or even failures can be learned from and turned into successes. That is the philosophy of Marty Shaw, president of Happy Tree in Knoxville, Tenn. Shaw recalls spending up to $35,000 in a typical direct mail campaign. In 2001, he spent about $26,000 on direct mail with, he says, “no noticeable result.” A key reason was that 9/11 had taken place and people were not inclined to spend on their landscaping. “It was bad luck, but nobody cares about

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bad luck in business,” Shaw says. “You just have to adapt.”

What Shaw did was rethink his direct mail strategy, and instead of paying a large amount for bulk mailing, spent only about $1,100 targeting new homeowners. “We got the same or better results than we had with the bulk mailing, even in good years,” says Shaw. “The reason is those homeowners had more work to be done. Whereas our average sale from the bulk mailing was about $200, from the new homeowners it was about $1,000.”

Sometimes failures aren’t the result of bad business decisions, just adverse circumstances. What Shaw learned from the direct mailing experience he had also learned in a different, longer-range career context. He had started out in a lawn care business, then went to college to learn more about horticulture and landscaping.

“My parents always wanted to do things the old school way, but I was young, and wanted to try new things. So there was conflict. It was better I got out on my own.”

Sortwell grew up in a family tree care business. But he left. “It was one of the best things I ever did,” he says. “I knew where the business was and, having been in the industry for 30 years, I knew where I could find good managers and salespeople to hire.”

Randy Owen, president of Owen Tree Service Inc. in Attica, Mich., reports his worst and best decisions have had to do with employees.

“When I started the company, I believed if I provided employees with a good job and quality work environment, that they would provide me with a good living and retirement. It turned out to be the opposite. It was one of the worst career moves I ever made. The reason is my employees took advantage of me. They thought I was rich. In reality I was being killed by overhead. They cheated on everything,” Owen explains.
As a result, Owen says, “I had to change the business to make it more structured, to tie it down to true business practices to keep everybody in line. We made the rules more rigid. If someone got caught cheating with his timecard, he was fired. Before, I was losing $100,000 a year on people cheating a couple of hours at a time on their time cards.”

Another good move, Owen says, was implementing drug testing. “It was hard in the beginning, and we lost some people. But if you have employees with drug problems, they’re going to draw in other young people. But if you get good people, it works the other way, and the bad ones don’t want to stay.”

A strong quality safety program has also been a good business decision. Whereas the workers’ compensation modification rate starts at 1 and the industry average is 1.25, Owen reports his is 0.62, “so we get a 38 percent discount on our costs.” Owen says there’s nothing special about his safety program except that “we don’t cut any corners and rigorously enforce all regulations. We change employees’ minds, so they continually think safety.”

Another good move, Owen says, has been participating in and having his staff participate in professional associations to help raise the educational level of the company. “I enjoy the participation for my own personal growth as well as the opportunity to communicate with a lot of people in the industry who I would not normally have access to,” says Owen, who is currently a member of the Board of Directors for the Tree Care Industry Association. “And, since my company has become known for promoting professional growth, I’ve attracted staff who have stayed with me, since they have high ideals about professional performance. They feel good about working in an environment like this where they can play a part in promoting positive industry changes.”

John Brown, president of Farmer Brown’s Outdoor Services Inc. in Raleigh, N.C., says, “The worst decisions I’ve made were not taking time to fill a position properly. Hiring would often take place during times that were at a hectic pace. I’d fail to get the qualified long-term employee by not taking the necessary steps, such as getting enough applicants before making a decision, as well as taking the time to screen each applicant and get enough work references to establish work history. Not taking this time didn’t save money, it cost money. So now that I have been taking the time to do it right, the number of our qualified, long-term employees has significantly improved.”

Brown says “The best thing I’ve done in this business is, right from the start, doing the right thing for the customer at all times.

“If a customer thinks a tree should be taken out, and I see it can be saved with a little bit of care, I’ll recommend that, even if I lose the work. Sometimes people think they need a retaining wall and I offer a cheaper scenario, such as grading the slope. I had one customer who had a huge oak tree over the power lines so he asked me to remove those limbs. I told him to contact the utility company to remove the limbs over the line, since I was not line certified. I suggested, ‘While you’re at it, why don’t you ask them to remove the entire tree?’ So the customer talked to the power company. At first they didn’t want to do it, but then they did agree and took the entire tree out. The customer was so appreciative that he later gave me a landscaping project four times the cost of the tree.

“I practiced that philosophy from day one in business,” stresses Brown. “In the beginning I didn’t make as much money as some others. But I’ve watched others take advantage of customers and they’re out of business. They come and go. Doing what’s right for the customer sometimes costs money up front. But now I have a very desirable income. Sometimes it takes a little while, but if you always try to do what’s best for your customer, good word of mouth spreads, big time.”

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Your business stands or falls on how well you invest your time, and there is no better investment for a business owner than TCI EXPO Spring. Circle your calendar for March 10-12, 2005, to join us at the Long Beach Convention Center in California. Trade shows are great for discovering new products and making new contacts – and TCI EXPO Spring is the venue for tree care on the West Coast.

A few days at TCI EXPO Spring is time very well spent. Where else can you have such concentrated exposure to information and products? There’s nothing like being able to see the all of the equipment from the major manufacturers in one place. The trade show pocket program, with contact names and phone numbers for vendors throughout the country, is worth the price of admission alone. You can’t forecast the future, but you can spot important industry trends if you meet where your entire industry gathers. Are you ahead of the curve in management practices and equipment or behind it? You can become more knowledgeable about industry trends and get an insight into what’s ahead for your market. Vendors talk with everyone – around the country. You’ll be surprised at what you hear on the trade show floor.

And don’t come alone! Suppose there are 30 companies you want to see. If you bring five people, each can visit six companies and spend some time asking in-depth questions. Assign different duties to each. If you want to buy a new computer program to manage sales, billing and your customer database, make sure at least one person on your staff visits all of the software vendors at the show.

Off the trade show floor, wouldn’t your whole staff benefit from attending your industry’s meeting – not just to get CEUs (although there will be plenty of those), but to see the wider profession or attend great business seminars on OSHA compliance and managing time? TCI EXPO Spring’s business and technical program is filled with innovative industry speakers and educational sessions. This year, the show will feature three, not two, education sessions running concurrently.

Last year, for the first time at TCI EXPO, one day was devoted to Outdoor Product Demonstrations. The concept proved so popular that once again this spring, Thursday and Friday will feature the indoor trade show at the Long Beach Convention Center, and Saturday, March 12, will showcase tree care industry products outdoors – in action. Run those chippers and drive those stump grinders! A hands-on day will truly help you make the best purchasing decisions.

When you face challenges to your personal or professional growth, the most valuable experience you can have is to meet someone who’s “been there, done that.” You’d be hard pressed to find a better place for peer-to-peer networking than TCI EXPO Spring, with 1,200 or more of your peers from around the country! With more than 65 years’ experience in helping arborists run their businesses profitably, TCIA offers you a professional growth experience like no other. See the TCI EXPO Spring brochure in this issue for more information.
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The Ergonomics Standard may be gone, but the importance of ergonomic workplace hazards—and OSHA's resolve to address the issue—live on. The National Advisory Committee on Ergonomics was scheduled to hold its sixth, and potentially final, meeting on November 16-17 in Washington D.C.

NACE is part of the Labor Secretary Elaine Chow's comprehensive approach for reducing ergonomics-related injuries and illnesses in the workplace. It has been part of OSHA's four-pronged approach to address workplace ergonomics issues—the other prongs being guidelines, enforcement and outreach—adopted since an Ergonomics rule was overturned in the first few months of the Bush Administration.

The Advisory Committee was chartered for a period of two years and convened for the first time on January 22, 2003. Its purpose is to provide advice and recommendations on ergonomic guidelines, research, and outreach and assistance. By law, an advisory committee has no rule-making or spending authority. The committee advises the Secretary on various industry-specific and/or task-specific guidelines; identifies gaps in research; identifies research needs; looks at methods of outreach; and finds ways to increase communication among shareholders.

Early in the process, four industries have been targeted for ergonomic guidelines: nursing homes, retail grocery, poultry processing and shipyards.

Employer groups as well as many members of NACE have remained concerned that OSHA would treat the guidelines as standards by using them in enforcement actions. Richard Fairfax, OSHA's director of enforcement programs, addressed the committee to try to quell such concerns. Fairfax stated that the Agency focuses its efforts on using legal strategies designed for successful prosecutions under the General Duty Clause. Concerns undoubtedly remain, because to successfully cite under Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act, one has to prove that there is a hazard present and that it can be mitigated. The documentation of such a hazard usually relies on an industry's standards or guidelines.

The argument about enforcement is unsettled but may be moot, judging by the small number of ergonomic citations levied. OSHA is clearly concentrating its focus on outreach and education.

Of all OSHA's national alliances, approximately half address ergonomics specifically. For example, as part of an alliance with the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), three OSHA staffers participate as ad hoc committee members on the AIHA Ergonomics Committee, enabling better information exchange on ergonomics. An "e-tool" is available free of charge to OSHA and all of the airlines for employees handling checked baggage. Large employer groups such as the Independent Electrical Contractors and the Dow Chemical Company have agreed to form alliances with OSHA to work on industry-specific ergonomic issues.

In FY 2003, OSHA announced 10 Susan Harwood grants focused on training on OSHA ergonomics guidelines in nursing homes, poultry processing, and retail groceries. In addition, OSHA has 20 education centers and has scheduled 47 different ergonomics training classes to raise awareness about how to address problems in industries and facilities. OSHA has also posted a new computer work station e-tool on its Web site to help find practical solutions that can be applied to work stations around the country.

In January 2004, the fourth NACE meeting was held in conjunction with a research symposium, entitled, Musculoskeletal and Neurovascular Disorders – The State of Research Regarding Workplace Etiology and Prevention. At this meeting, the NACE Guidelines Workgroup suggested that the Committee recommend that OSHA consider developing guidelines for the 16 industries or industry groups chosen based on the Guidelines Workgroup criteria, excluding the four industries for which guidelines are already complete or are in development.

Borrowing a popular campaign catch phrase, the tree care industry can probably count on four more years of ergonomics outreach and research, but no new standards.

Peter Gerstenberger is Senior Advisor for Safety, Compliance & Standards for the Tree Care Industry Association.
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By Jason Landers

A 200-year-old white oak stretches out peacefully on a knoll that overlooks the Tennessee River. On clear days, its perch offers inspiring views of the river, rural landscapes and the Smoky Mountains. But this panorama is a coveted one. An assertion that such views are for front porches and lazy mornings threatens mature trees like this. At the very least, it tempts developers to disturb sensitive roots by planting a house too close.

The site where this particular white oak resides is the prized parcel of an emerging 70-acre subdivision just outside Knoxville, Tenn. As with other lots in Oakleigh Estates, it would have fetched hundreds of thousands of dollars for the developers at Schmid & Rhodes Construction. A guaranteed sale is all about location, says David Rhodes, co-owner of the construction company. And he insists this site, at the high point of the neighborhood, would be a guaranteed sale. Instead, the tree stands on what is now protected common ground. There it forms the centerpiece of Oakleigh and a living testament that smart development and tree preservation can merge quite profitably.

“If we had built a house on it, right where the tree sits, it would have been great in a developer’s mind,” Rhodes says. “We took a lot of extra precautions and costs to get around that tree.”

Those costs include splitting the concrete boulevard so it wraps around the common area in a way that didn’t disturb root zones, breaking with engineering protocols during road construction so the road didn’t alter the grade significantly, and installing lightning protection to ward off the number one killer of big trees in this stormy region.

Other trees on the property received similar treatment. Schmid & Rhodes built their entrance around mature twin red oaks and a towering hemlock, all of which got the same root care and customized lightning protection.

Rhodes says the measures give the neighborhood that instant character that only mature trees can provide. “It gives people a feel that their neighborhood has been there a long time,” he adds. “They want a neighborhood feel. They want neighbors. But they want some room. They want buffers, privacy and a retreat.”

And he is convinced that the trees of Oakleigh provide all of that.

Yet Rhodes and his partner, David Schmid, were eyeing something more than saving only the mature trees when they undertook the venture. They were looking at preserving the rural feel of the development, former farmland where an adolescent hardwood forest has taken root around a small meadow. The cornerstone of that effort has been a detailed tree preservation plan that Thomas Schmitt, of
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Cortese Tree Specialists Inc. in Knoxville, spent six months developing.

This detailed plan is unprecedented in the region, insists Schmitt, who contends that in all of east Tennessee “there has not been a whole development like this where the emphasis has been on preserving the trees.”

Among other provisions, the plan restricts where houses can be sited, establishes rules that guarantee tree zones will not be disturbed, and calls for arborist consultation throughout the construction process, as well as annual inspections and hefty fines should a builder or homeowner ignore a provision.

### Humble beginnings and close calls

When Schmid and Rhodes first surveyed Oakleigh, they witnessed a forest in decline. Southern pine beetles had invaded the thicket, leaving a browning swath of destruction in their path. The dead pines obscured the view of the underlying hardwoods—a mixture of healthy white, red and post oaks, as well as hickory, dogwood and poplar.

Another developer might have seen an eyesore fit for clear-cutting. But Rhodes, who had attended a one-day class offered by Cortese on the benefits of saving trees, saw potential. He envisioned a low density development that would be built around the existing landscape. “There were some striking trees on it that we wanted to maintain,” he recalls. “We felt that those were an amenity.”

Additionally, the hardwood canopy is alive with birds, tree frogs and crickets—music to the ears of anyone who has spent time commuting through the hectic streets of Knoxville. Deer, turkey and raccoon sightings at Oakleigh are everyday events, as common as the gray squirrels that forage on a steady diet of acorns.

The partners hired crews to cut the dead and stressed pines. “We spent a lot of money to hand pick the diseased pines out and grind them on site without damaging the hardwoods,” recalls Rhodes.

Today when you look out over Oakleigh, you will still spot short leaf and Virginia pines scattered on two-thirds of the 18 lots that comprise the development. But they are noticeably absent from a third of the lots, where the vein of infestation ran its course.

In addition to pine beetles, there were a number of near misses that prompted the developers to take steps to save the trees. A tornado twisted through the area in 2003. It toppled dozens of trees in neighboring developments but spared Oakleigh. That was followed by a series of thunderstorms that struck down several mature specimens.

In a single year, lightning struck three trees. It is a common occurrence in eastern Tennessee, where lightning is the number one killer of mature white oaks in the state. One of the damaged trees, a 98-foot tall Hemlock, towered over the entrance. The previous landowner planted it some 80 years earlier. After the loss, the developers opted for the lightning protection on the four largest remaining specimens.
“This tree has not been struck,” says Schmitt, as he pats the trunk of the white oak at the heart of Oakleigh. “We’ve got it protected,” he adds, smiling as he tugs at a wire that runs from the height of the canopy, all along the 120-foot spread of the limbs, and down the trunk to lightning rods that are buried in the ground.

Details of the plan

In addition to the large trees, the developers were, from the beginning, committed to almost total tree preservation, says Rhodes.

“If we had stopped there, we would have failed,” Rhodes says of the efforts to preserve the largest specimens and remove the stressed pines. “Because people are going to buy the lot, and then they are going to clear cut it. So we have located house seats (125 feet x 125 feet) on these pieces of property where people can build. Within that house seat they can clear anything. Outside of that house seat, you can clear underbrush, but you can’t take down any trees.

“We will take down a tree,” Rhodes insists. “We are not tree-huggers. But there is a combination there between good development and people enjoying their surroundings.” And the not-so-secret combination to that lock is found in the comprehensive tree preservation plan. It derives its authority from the Oakleigh covenant—a document that governs almost every facet of activity at the development, from the design stage through site preparation and construction, to an ongoing maintenance program.

The idea for the tree preservation plan developed over time. Two years to be exact. That is the number of years that elapsed from the developers’ initial contact with Cortese, in which they asked the tree service to begin researching the elements of a preservation plan, to the final green light, in which they gave the nod to write a detailed set of rules that would have teeth.

An arborist with Cortese for 15 years, Schmitt was tasked with drafting the document. During the six months he spent doing so, he combined standard preservation principles with site specific goals. He inspected each lot, handpicked the trees that must remain and sized up the best location for the houses. To be a keeper, a tree must be of a species that possessed longevity, be structurally stable and free of disease and infestation. He also paid careful attention to the lay of the land and developed strategies that minimize drastic changes to it.

To say Schmitt is passionate about trees is an understatement. He’s spent his whole adult life in the pursuit of saving them. He graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in forest management, then received certification in forest horticulture. Even the bumper sticker on his rear pickup truck window screams commitment. It depicts a topless tree with a slash mark through it and reads, “Prune or replace. Don’t Top!”

Under the preservation plan:

- Homeowners must consult an arborist as detailed site and landscape plans are drafted;
- Construction crews must take “extreme” measures to avoid parking vehicles and equipment, or placing materials, in tree protection zones;
- Fences must be erected around the protection zones and may not be removed or encroached upon during construction;
- The homeowner/builder must meet with an arborist prior to the beginning of the work in order to review all work procedures, access and haul routes, and tree protection measures;
- Only a certified arborist is allowed to identify dead, diseased or dying trees that are slated for removal. And only a qualified arborist may remove them;
- Debris from trenches, basements or other excavations are prohibited from the protection zones, even on a temporary basis;
A certified arborist must inspect the subdivision annually and report his findings to the homeowners' association.

Other regulations describe how and when walking trails may be built, what branches may be pruned, and under what conditions and how non-native invasive vines are to be removed.

Hefty fines are imposed on any violation of the rules. For example, failure to follow the recommendations in the arborist’s annual report can equate to a $250 fine per item; unauthorized destruction of a tree will result in a fine of $500 per inch of diameter; and damage to small trees and vegetation incurs a $500 penalty per occurrence.

Contrasting developments

Records from the Knoxville Metropolitan Planning Commission show that more than 1,000 acres were rezoned from agriculture to commercial/residential use in 2003. According to that year’s Development Activity Report, the average lot size in Knox County for a new home was .9 acres. The average size of a lot at Oakleigh is closer to four acres, leaving much room for tree preservation.

While every developer strives for a neighborhood that stands out, the distinction Rhodes is banking on is that Oakleigh will blend in. The neighborhood, with its estate-sized lots, stands miles apart from the scores of faceless subdivisions where developers plant rows of homes on converted, treeless farmland. It is an equally distant departure from the once wooded developments where ecology is uprooted for the sake of cramming in one more lot.

Schmitt is more optimistic. He contends, “There is lots of room for improvement. So many developers take a fixed plan and say, ‘this is what the neighborhood is going to look like – period,’ no matter what’s there. They don’t even begin to work around the trees. They put the roads where they want. They put the houses where they want. With just a little bit more planning from the beginning, it could be done on the low or high end. It just takes a little bit more work and the willingness to do it.”

Another contrast between Oakleigh and other developments is the amount of time that has been dedicated to preservation. Schmitt has visited the site more than 20 times during the early stages of development (Construction of the first house started in November 2004, with four more homes to follow suit in the spring).

“‘It’s been really valuable to have him walk with us all along the way,’” says Joe Key, superintendent of construction at Schmid & Rhodes. Key says they consulted the arborist at every major turn, from installing irrigation lines to cutting a single ditch for all the utilities, and from erecting a stone wall at the entrance to setting boundaries for the houses. “There were certain things Thomas (Schmitt) helped us understand that we had to be more sensitive about and compensate in areas where the development could have caused problems.”

Jason Landers is a freelance writer who lives in Glencoe, Alabama.
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Carl Chambliss—Chambliss Tree Service, Catlin, IL

“Everything about our chipper knife purchases has been great. Zenith knives are a far superior product; they last longer and cost less. The customer service people have been most helpful also.”
Chris Vanderhoof—Paul Bunyan Tree Service - Roslyn Height, NY

“We have purchased Zenith knives for over 3-1/2 years because they perform well and have great prices.”
Kim Sperling—Van Curen Services Inc., Newbury, OH

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<td>BC1000</td>
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Voice for Trees Heard in Ohio

The Voice for Trees, in the person of Jeffrey Jones of Nelson Tree Service, recently had a chance to meet with Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) Chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee. Jones delivered a check from the VFT-PAC and took the opportunity to discuss issues of concern to our industry.

The House Education and Workforce Committee has wide-ranging jurisdiction of interest to tree care companies, including labor standards and statistics, regulation or prevention of importation of foreign laborers, workers’ compensation, wages and hours of labor and work incentive programs.

“IT was a pleasure to get another opportunity to meet with Rep. John Boehner,” says Jones. “He is a good man in Congress, and as a former small business owner himself, he understands the needs of the small business community. I was happy to participate with the Voice for Trees PAC to talk about tree care and air some of our concerns as they relate to important legislation that could potentially affect our industry.”

If you would like to be more involved in VFT-PAC, please call Mark Garvin or Erin Hass at 1-800-733-2622.

Discounts for TCIA members on arborist supplies

Available to members only, TCIA has teamed up with one of the industry’s leading suppliers to save you money and contribute to the tree care profession.

Under the agreement, Midwest Arborist Supplies will contribute 2.5 percent of total ONLINE purchases (less shipping) made by confirmed TCIA members to be applied toward dues of members. The company will also contribute 2.5 percent to TCIA to be applied toward the development of safety and educational programs for the tree care industry.

For Example:
If you buy $2,000 worth of products from the Midwest Web site, you will receive a credit from TCIA for a reduction in membership dues by $50; and TCIA receives an additional $50 royalty from the company for development of safety and educational programs. Can you think of any reason why you wouldn’t want to reduce your membership dues and contribute to industry safety – all at no additional cost to you? Neither can we. Midwest has a full line of equipment and supplies for arborists. Go online – and be sure to click the “Member Discount Program” box – at www.treecaresupplies.com to start reducing your dues today.
Daily recording and processing of Driver’s Vehicle Inspection Reports (DVIRs) has never been easier. Included with the November issue of the Reporter as a free member benefit, TCIA’s Driver’s Vehicle Inspection Report (DVIR) details 46 inspection areas targeting arborist equipment. Simply check off areas that need repair for guided compliance with §396.11 and §396.13.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Regulations covering most CDL drivers require preparation of a written report at the completion of each day’s work on each commercial motor vehicle operated. These DVIRs are specially designed with features such as alternate copy perforations to ease control and distribution of original office copies into 90-day-log files while retaining driver copies in the book.

Produced in book format, with 50 sets of forms per book, DOT required procedures are summarized within as a consistent reminder to drivers.

To ease reporting and improve compliance at your company, call TCIA at 1-800-733-2622 and request additional DVIRs for costs as low as $1.95 per unit.

Before you buy a car, do you check Consumer Reports magazine? Do you search for reviews online?

More and more, tree care consumers are looking for information on hiring reputable tree care companies. Unfortunately, there have been too many articles in recent years on nonprofessional companies that engaged in consumer rip-offs, were found guilty overcharging, and caused damage to properties.

Consumers – and the media that provide them with information – are eager to publicize programs that help distinguish companies that do things right.

One such company, Tree Specialists, Inc., in Holliston, Mass., recently joined the first group of TCIA accredited companies. Owner Rolf Briggs reports that the firm has been reaping the publicity benefits of Accreditation ever since.

When the local paper picked up the press release TCIA sends out on behalf of all newly Accredited companies, consumers finally had a way to distinguish between the dozens of companies advertising their services in the Yellow Pages.

Accreditation = consumer credibility

For more information on the only business practices and compliance audit process in the industry, call Bob Rouse at 1-800-733-2622.
Organizing a tour for a group is not always easy, not even for a skilled travel agent. It is further complicated if travel is to a foreign country, with a large, heterogeneous group of technicians, each with his or her own needs: single or double room, vegetarian menu, car sickness, air sickness, Alitalia versus Lufthansa, etc. How many times we asked ourselves “Why did I do this?” Aren’t we already fed up with the everyday work routines, with all the meetings, debates, conferences, exhibitions, etc. We often questioned, “Is it really worth it?” It is an operation of titanic proportions on the one hand, but exciting on the other – especially once everything is organized and ready.

On Sept. 5, we were all ready to leave for this unforgettable event, the technical tour “to the roots of modern arboriculture,” greatly desired by us and organized with the help of “Consorzio Forestale Padano.”

We were actually ready three years earlier: everything was organized for 25 Italians to head to a foreign country – scheduled to depart Sept. 14, 2001. But the tragic and criminal events of three days before that date obliged that we cancel our plans. Since that day, traveling has been different, more difficult than before. But, here we were, three years later, ready, full of enthusiasm, leaving fears and doubts behind us for eight days in the United States with plans to visit the places where modern arboriculture, that which influenced our own professional life, was born. Eight days in New Hampshire in New England, visiting at Dr. Alex Shigo’s home, where he was waiting for us.

We would have eight days to visit, in person, the places – forests, laboratories, universities – where experiments occurred, where the “CODIT theory” was worked out, where texts and research were written to develop techniques to care for trees. Many other times I have been to Alex Shigo’s home, talking about and learning about trees while walking in “his” forest, among “his” trees, so that every time I felt that the long travel was a return back home, at least “professional home.”

There Alex Shigo welcomed me 20 years ago, when I went for the first time to meet him, full of doubt about his theories and studies. But this time it was different: now Alex had obtained his due recognition and appreciation; he is known everywhere, his studies have deeply changed arboriculture and phytopathology; in all the universities of the world he is welcomed, studied and cited.

Today, Alex Shigo is retired and he doesn’t travel much, but his mind is still alive and ready, with the curiosity to research and produce. And people from all over the world – students, arborists, researchers – go every year to Durham, N.H., to visit him, to exchange opinions, to receive consultations, or simply for friendship or to give their regards. Rarely does Alex say “no” – it is not in his nature. Maybe his attitude has attracted jealousy and envy. But he doesn’t worry about it – that is someone else’s problem; he welcomes and talks about everything with everybody.

There are 19 of us this time – technicians, managers and businessmen. There is Ñuan Pagola, arborist and Spanish friend of San Sebastian; there is Giovanni Palombini of Teramo, who remembers seeing Shigo in Varese in 1991 at a workshop we organized in Italy, and how that day changed his professional life. Everyone has his own expectations: some are visiting the United States for the first time; some are anxious to meet Alex Shigo personally; others can’t wait to walk in the mythical and beautiful New Hampshire forests, hoping that an early autumn carpets the landscape with the unforgettable colors of the foliage – and, there are those who want to eat lobsters. What everyone in the group has is a passion for, and interest in, trees. And all are confident of having an unforgettable experience.

Everything has been organized as well as possible on the basis of previous trips. Because time is short and one week is not so long, it is necessary to be sure to see and experience – personally and professionally – as much as possible.
We begin with Alex Shigo, who immediately opens to us the doors of his house in Durham, N.H., a university town, because he says “we can’t say to have really visited a country if we have never come into the house of one of its inhabitants.” Everyone is free to go where he wants, to see and read his books, to look through the microscope at mushrooms, to visit the kitchen and the guest bedrooms. And, immediately afterward, the lessons begin, not in a closed room with CDs and photos – Alex doesn’t need those. He teaches with the strength of his passion and with his extraordinary ability in communicating; a small blackboard with chalk is enough, and for a classroom we have the forest around his house, where we walk, taking what we find as our starting point: trees alive and dead, hollows, spontaneous flora, signs of animals – everything is a source, a starting point for discussion.

In the middle of the woods, there is a chair that is used by Alex to sit for a moment, but he goes on speaking and relating his message to “touch trees!” because only in this way will you know them. He repeats that his educational methods are deductive, beginning from the end and analyzing what has occurred. Alex has the ability to show very simply the most difficult and complicated biochemical or physical processes; because, he says, “nature is simple, we make it complicated.” He considers the complete picture of a tree, including all factors that influence its life.

These are intense days: Under an oak we discussed Armillaria, and about why the phytopathological concept of heartwood rot is wrong. We talk about correct pruning methods, about damage that injections can cause to trees, and sometimes about philosophy and even about music, because with us is an inhabitant of Cremona who is interested in the characteristcs that affect the resonance of wood used to build the best violins.

One day, we visited a cottage where Shigo lives in summer months, on Mendums Lake. There, Marilyn, Shigo’s inseparable and lovely wife, is waiting for us. She has prepared a typically American buffet lunch. At the end of the workshop and the day, some took a dip in the lake, some took a canoe to explore the lake, some relaxed or played volleyball, and others played with Mandy, the golden retriever that greets everybody. In the evening, we had a simple dinner, with lobsters, clams and sweet corn on the cob – just like typical tourists.

During the visit, we met Dr. Kevin Smith, a researcher with Shigo who showed us experimental laboratories of the USDA Forest Service in Durham, where the first dissections of trees were made. And in the laboratories, we learn to touch by hand discolored wood, false heartwood and different kinds of protection wood. We met Dr. Walter Shortle, co-author with Shigo on numerous scientific publications, and who spoke to us about experimental works with Dutch elm disease and about the difficulty in obtaining public funding for research.

In Manchester, N.H., Cynthia Mills, president of the Tree Care Industry Association – the most well-known international association for commercial arboriculture – and her staff showed us around TCIA’s offices. There was particular interest in the Accreditation Program recently activated by TCIA, an objective way to administer quality operations and an excellent way for companies to make themselves stand out in the market. One member joined the association; another bought a lot of books, publications and educational videos.

In Boston we were welcomed by Mark Tobin and James McGuire, managers of Hartney Greymont, a large commercial tree care company in the area and a TCIA member. Everyone was free to take information about business organization and operations, about equipment and more – in short, a complete picture of the realities of American tree care operations.

When he met us, Shigo said there must have been a great passion and interest for such a large and diverse group to travel so far and long to study modern arboriculture. While this is true, the memory and souvenirs of how much we saw and how much we learned will stay with us forever. Thank you Dr. Shigo. And, also thank you to all the people who we met and who gave us a glimpse of American arboriculture. I hope sometime to return the favor. You are all welcome in sunny Italy!

Dr. Daniele Zanzi is a recent chairman of the European Arboricultural Council and owner of Fito Consult, a tree care company in Varese, Italy. He and his group from Varese visited New England this past September. He can be contacted at dz@fito-consult.it.
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The Electric Tree

By Richard W. O’Donnell

Merry Christmas! During the holiday season, an estimated 40 million Christmas trees will be lighted in American homes. And millions more will bless dwellings all around the world.

These festive trees will include the balsam, Douglas, Fraser and Noble firs, blue spruce, Scotch pine and white pine; also, the Virginia pine, Afghan pine and the Leyland cypress. They are grown in all 50 states.

That magical tree adds a special warmth and joy to your home at Christmas. Did you ever wonder how this tradition got started? We are not discussing the old-fashioned wax candle tree, which, to be blunt, was nothing more than a fire hazard. We are talking about the much safer electric trees. Who was the first person to put one up in a home?

The world’s first electric Christmas tree was lighted in 1882 in the home of a New York electric company executive, Edward Johnson. He displayed the electric tree in his home to prove that a fire would not break out when it was lighted. One of Thomas Edison’s chief assistants in his Menlo Park days, Johnson was director of the Edison Illuminating Electric Company of New York.

Until Johnson broke with tradition, Christmas trees displayed in homes featured lighted candles. The wax candles had caused a number of tragic fires over the years. Johnson was convinced electric candles on trees would be safer, and he went to a great deal of trouble to prove his point.

“Electric trees will prove to be far less dangerous than the wax candle parlor trees,” he wrote in a letter sent to all the New York newspapers in early December 1882. “I hope you will have a representative of your fine newspaper on hand when I light the world’s first electric Christmas tree in my home two days before Christmas.”

Alas, the New York press did not cover the lighting of the first electric tree. They chose not to send a representative. Fortunately, a reporter from the old Detroit Post and Tribune was in New York at that time, and he sent a description of the historic tree to his newspaper. The newspaperman’s first name has apparently been lost forever. Only his last name is known. It was “Croffut.”

“Last evening,” Croffut wrote, “I walked over beyond Fifth Avenue and called at the residence of Edward H. Johnson of Edison’s electric light company. There, at the rear of the beautiful parlor, was a large Christmas tree presenting a most picturesque and uncanny aspect. It was brilliantly lighted with many colored globes as large as an English walnut, and was turning some six times a minute on a little pine box. There were eighty lights in all, encased in those dainty glass eggs, and about equally divided between blue, white and red.

“As the tree turned, the colors alternated, all the lamps going out and being relit at every revolution. The result was a continuous twinkling of dancing colors – red, white, blue, white, red, blue – all the evening, like the tree laden with lambent splendor that sparkles above the fountain in Aladdin’s palace.

“I need not tell you that the scintillating evergreen was a pretty sight – one can hardly imagine anything prettier. The ceiling was crossed obliquely with two wires on which hung 28 more of the tiny lights; and all the lights and the goblins and the fantastic tree itself with its starry fruit, were kept going by the slight electric current brought from the main office on a filmy wire. The tree was kept revolving by a little hidden crank below the floor which was turned by electricity.”

Croffut concluded: “It was a superb exhibition.”

It would cost a small fortune to duplicate the first electric tree today. The bulbs were hand blown and would sell for at least $5,000. All of the wiring was handmade. The bulbs and wiring had to be tested individually before the entire tree was lighted in all its glory. Colored light bulbs on trees were a new experience and the fear of an accidental fire was great.

Even though the Johnson tree received little in the way of publicity that first year, it did indeed cast a magic spell. Christmas just doesn’t seem like Christmas these days unless there is a tree in your home.

As the great American poet William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) once wrote: “The groves were God’s first temples.”

Richard W. O’Donnell, a native of Boston, was a feature writer with the Boston Globe for several years. His work has also appeared in The New Yorker, Smithsonian, Yankee and many other national publications. He now resides in Port Richey, Fla.

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