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Spring Cleaning From the Idea Drawer …

In New England, it’s too cold to go outside for most of the winter. That leaves plenty of time for reading, contemplation, and entertaining somewhat farfetched ideas that wouldn’t be considered in busier times. Spring is a good time to take some of the disparate ideas, notes and items that merit further consideration out of the drawer and discard them or get to work on them. Below are some of the items from my winter idea drawer …

► When people are killed doing tree work, observers often call it a “freak accident.” It rarely is. Further investigation almost always uncovers a series of mistakes the led to the tragic result.
► Unemployment remains stubbornly high, yet the majority of industries and professions are worried about finding enough young people to replace the millions of baby boomers headed toward retirement. We all seem to be following the same path – reaching out to career counselors, high schools and trade or vocational business schools to interest the next generation in our industry. Is there a better way? Can we all really be facing labor shortages?
► Non-native forest insects and diseases pose the greatest danger to the urban forest, not development, climate change or eroding government funding.
► Will biochar become a popular and profitable use for the woody biomass generated by our industry, or is it an industry awaiting a crisis?
► Georgia is about to pass a tough new immigration enforcement law that would mandate all companies with more than five employees to enroll in the E-Verify system to confirm an employee’s immigration status. Passage would make Georgia the fifth state to require all or most employers to use the system, joining Arizona, Mississippi, Utah and South Carolina. Inaction in Washington is prompting the states to move forward. Get ready.
► As soon as I reconfigure my phone and figure out all of the features, we change plans and phones. Two or three of the new features are actually useful.
► Every time a scam artist in the tree business takes advantage of a homeowner, the reputation of the entire industry is harmed. Professional companies need to react immediately by reaching out and educating the media, and perhaps gathering to do some volunteer tree work, if needed, to help the victim.
► Forbes recently released the 25th edition of its World’s Billionaire list, which now has 1,210 people on it. Six of them are on the list thanks to Facebook. One person’s wealth increased by $500 million from last year – and he dropped lower on the list. Some numbers and trends are simply incomprehensible.
► If the American people and our governments have been living beyond our means, we will all need to earn more and spend less. How can commercial arboriculture adapt to the transition? Although there are no clear or easy answers to many of these questions, if we fail to attempt to understand the present while anticipating the future we will certainly be surprised by upcoming events. Our future isn’t certain, but it’s certainly coming – faster and faster.

Mark Garvin
Publisher
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APRIL

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ON THE COVER: Renato Herrara, with TCIA member Arborwell of Hayward, California, works in an old growth windrow of Eucalyptus Globulus. The trees were removed due to a history of failure and the liability they presented on the busy Notre Dame de Namur University campus in Belmont, California. Susan Monroe photo, courtesy of Arborwell.

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quick “off-the-cuff” diagnosis is a great temptation and it is hard to resist, especially when your customer wants you to show confidence and expertise; you are a tree care expert, after all. But, diagnostics is more difficult than it first seems; it is an upper level job skill.

There are three basic truths regarding practical tree problem diagnostics. First, while some tree problems are very obvious, other problems are very obscure. Second, some tree problems will not be diagnosed with your first effort. In fact, you may never fully diagnose some problems. Finally, your customers usually want an immediate and clear cut answer, which produces great pressure for you to provide a quick-draw diagnosis.

Tree problem diagnostics should be guided by the simple axiom: don’t make the symptoms fit the diagnosis; do make the diagnosis fit the symptoms. Like it or not, tree problem diagnostics is often a slow, deliberative, investigative process. Speed should never supersede accuracy.

Think about the advantage that physicians have over tree doctors. Their patients can talk to them (even though we often lie), and they deal with only one host, Homo sapiens, rather than the dozens, scores or even hundreds of trees we grow and maintain. Nevertheless, studies show that the greatest source of medical errors, including those resulting in patient death, is improper diagnoses. This truly matters. For physicians and for tree sleuths, as our good friend urban forester Alan Siewert notes, “Treatment without a correct diagnosis is malpractice.”

A 20-question approach to plant problem diagnostics is highlighted in the Ohio State University Factsheet titled, “20 Questions on Plant Diagnosis” [http://ohiolink.osu.edu/fgn-fact/3000/pdf/PP401_03.pdf]. These are not questions that you ask your customers; they are questions you should ask yourself. The goal behind “20-questions” is to present a systematic approach to diagnostics rather than a “show and tell” approach based on identifying the problem by looking at pictures. After all, what happens when a problem is unknown and there are no pictures? There were no pictures of emerald ash borer in the U.S. before 2002, yet it had been living here for 15-20 years prior to its discovery.

The 20-questions are listed in a logical sequence and there are logical “groups” of questions.

**Questions 1** is “What is the plant?”, but right away **Question 2** is a pause to ponder, “What is normal for the plant?” Maybe that leaf yellowing or needle twisting is simply normal for a particular cultivar rather than a symptom of a problem. **Question 3** is “What are the common problems with the plant?” Remember your plant taxonomy! This question focuses attention on maladies specific to plant families, genera,
species, or even varieties and cultivars. Are the blackened, shepherd’s crook symptoms on a plant in the *Rosaceae* family? It could be bacterial fire blight since this disease only affects plants in this family.

**Question 4** is “What do you see that looks abnormal?”, which gets at symptoms and signs of the problem, but immediately **Question 5** is meant to put things into perspective, “What is the overall health of the plant?” Your customer may think a thinning canopy is being caused by something that happened to the tree recently; however, showing them that the growth rate of their tree has been gradually declining over many years may convince them that they must deal with a deeper problem.

There are two “reality check” questions. The first is **Question 6**, “What exactly do you see?” This is an internal check to question yourself on whether or not you are looking at the problem carefully enough. Yes, there is leaf discoloration, but is it scattered throughout the leaf or on the edges or – as with many anthracnose diseases – is discoloration along the veins? Bark splitting may be caused by a number of problems that produce very similar symptoms. Periodical cicada oviposition damage exposes cambial cells to oxygen, which stimulates them to become swollen, wound tissue. The same thing happens when *Botryosphaeria* spp. fungus produces a canker by destroying bark, phloem and cambial tissue; the surrounding cambial cells become wound tissue.

**Question number 7**, “What do you see on other plants?” should cause you to step back and take a look around, which leads to you asking yourself **Question 8**, “What is the site?” The soil type relative to drainage, extent of compaction, amount of organic matter and acidity/alkalinity can tell a great deal about the success and failure of various plants. Poorly drained soils with poor internal aeration will sooner or later result in death and *Taxus*. Sun and shade exposure is also critical to the success of many plants. Japanese maples tend to thrive in protected sites, developing physiological leaf scorch in hot, sunny areas. Flowering dogwoods generally do poorly in open, hot sites (and often develop borer problems if stressed) and also in densely shaded sites where diseases, such as dogwood anthracnose, are favored. Partial shade is best for flowering dogwood.

**Question 9** is, “Who knows most about the plant?” As noted before, the fact that our patients can’t talk presents one of the greatest challenges to correctly diagnosing a tree problem. Thus, you must seek out someone who can “speak for the tree.” Do not assume the person who owns the tree is necessarily the person who knows most about the tree. Consider a commercial office complex; the owner of the complex may live in another state! Even the office complex manager may not have an office on the site. The people who know most about the tree may be office workers located in the building next to the tree. Never overlook interviewing the people who actually see the tree on a day-to-day basis.

Finding the right person to speak for the tree will help you learn the answers to the next group of diagnostic questions: **Questions 10**, “When did the symptoms first appear?”; **Question 11**, “What is the horticulture history?”; and **Question 12**, “What is the environmental history?” Knowing when the tree first began to show symptoms is critical to developing a proper diagnosis. However, we’ve all experienced the dramatic declaration, “it up and died overnight!” This just doesn’t happen ... unless the tree is uprooted and laying on the ground.

Symptoms usually progress over time to present a series of different “looks.” It is helpful to consider symptom progression in the context of having a beginning, middle and end. The oak shot hole leafmining fly feeds on sap flowing from wounds...
made by their sharp ovipositors in newly expanding oak leaves. Since the holes are made before new leaves unfurl, the rows of holes will appear as mirror images on different parts of the leaf. In the beginning, the holes are extremely small; however, as the leaves expand, the holes become larger. In the end, the holes may measure more than 1/2 inch in diameter. Of course, by this time, the fly is long gone.

The horticultural history focuses on learning how and when the tree was planted and how it has been maintained. The future for trees with “popsicle stick” trunks, where the trunk flare is buried beneath the soil, is described by the axiom “plant them low, never grow; plant them high, watch them die; plant them right, sleep at night.” Tree trunks erupting from “volcano mulch” mounds, where the mulch is piled high on the trunk, means stem tissue is remaining constantly wet and subject to rot, roots are being deprived of oxygen, and the multitude of mulch is providing a perfect home to trunk-gnawing rodents such as voles.

Learning the environmental history may require seeking information from an off-site authority such as the National Weather Service. Don’t rely on memory; yours or your customers. Few people keep meticulous weather records, so asking if the tree suffered exposure to freeze or frost conditions, droughty conditions, or flooding may produce inaccurate or misleading answers.

Although most of the 20-questions focus on questions that you ask yourself; Question 13, “What does the client think the problem is?” means you must conduct a careful interview with your client. Remember, this is an interview, not an interrogation! Avoid asking “leading” and accusatory questions such as “did you over-fertilize the tree?” or “did you give the tree too much water?” Such questions are more likely to anger your client rather than yield useful information.

Consider phrasing questions in a way that creates dialogue. For example, you may ask, “Tell me about your fertilization program;” or “tell me how you water your plants.” Both of these questions require more than “yes” or “no” answers and they will generate a two-way conversation. Make the client a partner in the diagnostic process, since a partner will be more likely to follow through with your recommendations.

The next set of questions involves expanding your diagnostic horizons. Question 14, “What diagnostic tools are available?” should easily flow into Question 15, “What additional resources are available?”, and the two should be influenced by Question 16, “How do I take samples?” Do you need magnification to see symptoms details? Is your hand lens adequate, or do you need a microscope? Do you need to take digital images to send to others for their input? Does your company have all the resources you need to seek a diagnosis, or do you need to seek help outside of your company? Do you need to research the problem on the Web? Plant pest and disease diagnostic clinics are the best source of information for learning what types of samples are most likely to provide good diagnostic results.

Question 17, “What else needs to be considered?” is the second “reality check” question. At this stage, you probably think that you have a good idea of the correct diagnosis. However, this is your last chance to stop and reconsider everything you have learned thus far; do all the pieces of the puzzle fit together to provide a clear picture? Remember; don’t make the symptoms fit the diagnosis!

Emerald ash borer provides a good example of what happens when people...
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make the diagnosis fit the symptoms. Prior to the discovery in 2002 of this non-native beetle in the U.S., people were certainly aware that ash trees were dying. However, correctly diagnosing a tree problem that is not known to occur is without doubt the most difficult diagnosis to make. We tend to focus on the “known.” “What else?” should always be a nagging question on a diagnostician’s mind, and if nothing “fits” with the symptoms you are observing, always consider that you may be looking at an unknown!

In light of what we’ve learned about emerald ash borer, you should approach answering Question 18, “What is your diagnosis?” with some trepidation. However, once you become certain that you have a correct diagnosis, it is time to declare your diagnosis, which will be closely followed by answering Question 19, “What is the significance of the problem?” and Question 20, “What are your recommendations?”

Indeed, Questions 19 and 20 are joined at the hip. Beech blight aphids have a nasty sounding name, their white woolly bodies may cover beech branches, and their honeydew may rain down to cover underlying sidewalks with sticky goo; however, they cause little harm to their host tree. Most of the mite and insect galls on tree leaves and stems are quite fascinating but cause negligible effects on plant health. A recommendation of “do nothing” for all of these pests is appropriate and defensible.

However, what about forest tent caterpillars that are defoliating a newly planted oak tree? The age of the tree is noted because the overall impact of these leaf-feeding caterpillars is directly related to the age of the tree. Mature oaks that are in a healthy condition can withstand early-season defoliation by general defoliators. Newly planted trees may lack the stored resources to support re-foliation after the caterpillar onslaught.

If you decide that you must do something; your recommendation should be based on non-biased, research based information; not on product marketing claims. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan said, “Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts.”

The 21st Question
So you come to the end and make your recommendations. Treatments are proposed and often enacted, and your job as a diagnostician is over. Next case, right?

The only sure-fire rule about diagnostics is nothing is sure-fire! One more reality check is required that reflects the humility and infinite learning curve necessary to be a good diagnostician – the fact that diagnostics is a continual process. The 21st Question is, “What if we were wrong?” This is a hard thing to admit; we all have egos and want our confidence to be reflected to customers and employers valuing our
Let’s return to emerald ash borer as an example of lessons learned from being wrong. It was known that a number of tree-killing diseases could occur on ash, including ash yellows and *Verticillium* wilt. Ash trees were generally considered “tough trees” and they were often planted in challenging sites such as in parking lot planters, or along street curbs. It was no surprise that many died. Finding holes in these trees was also no surprise, since it was well known that several native insect borers target stressed ash trees.

Eventually, diagnosticians noted distinct, D-shaped exit holes on infested trees – suggestive of an *Agrilus* beetle (EAB is indeed *Agrilus planipennis*). They noticed serpentine, frass-filled, larval galleries beneath the bark of living trees. They found small larvae that looked like miniature tapeworms in these living ash trees. What was missed? Many of us did not completely take to heart the diagnostic questions, “What exactly do we see?” and “What else?” and the nagging, post-mortem 21st Question, “What if we were wrong?”

Alexander Pope noted that “to err is human,” and our purpose in relating the emerald ash borer missteps is not to beat ourselves up. It took physicians a long time to figure out the complexities of AIDS and other autoimmune diseases. It is just that we should never be comfortable as diagnosticians; our Quincy-like probing must go on and on. As Sir William Bragg once said, “The important thing in science is not so much to obtain new facts as to discover new ways of thinking about them.”

*Don’t make the symptoms fit the diagnosis; do make the diagnosis fit the symptoms.*

Don’t make the symptoms fit the diagnosis; do make the diagnosis fit the symptoms. And in addition to the 21st Question, “What if we were wrong?”, let’s take seriously our obligation to perpetually conduct our version of medicine’s Grand Rounds. For trees, maybe we should conduct “Grand Rings” to keep the diagnostic process and recognize that we never know all of the answers.
Man killed by felled tree
Frank Meager, 33, of Cottage Grove, Minnesota, was killed February 2, 2011, in rural Williamsburg, Iowa, when a tree he was cutting down fell on him. Officials say Meager was a subcontractor working to clear the right-of-way for a pipeline company, according to WQAD News 8.

Crane collapses, operator flees
A tree care company crane being used to remove a tree in Lake Mary, Florida, February 7, 2011, collapsed onto a building and the crane operator fled the scene. No one was inside the building, which houses several businesses.

The crane operator was trying to remove a large tree when he apparently lost control of the load, causing the crane to topple, according to officials quoted in a WFTV Channel 9 report. One witness said the tree was too heavy for the crane and the rear of the crane lifted up in the air and, basically, in slow motion, it went completely over and the tree hit the ground. Part of the tree and part of the crane went into the building.

Seconds after the 30-ton, 70-foot tall crane collapsed, the operator disappeared and police were searching him, noting that it was possible that he had driven himself to the hospital.

Tree worker falls to death
A 52-year-old man was killed February 8, 2011, when he fell while trimming a tree in south Caddo Parish, near Shreveport, Louisiana.

The victim and another worker, both employees of a local tree care company, were cutting an uprooted tree that had fallen. The victim was straddling the tree’s trunk when the tree suddenly shifted to an upright position, causing the man to fall about 25 feet to the ground.

The man, whose name had not been released, was pronounced dead at the scene, according to WXVT Channel 15.

Tree worker killed by struck-by
A 38-year-old tree worker was killed February 11, 2011, in Belleville, Illinois, after a falling tree branch struck him in the head. Damon Carpenter, of Centreville, Ill., was pronounced dead at the scene.

The incident occurred when a tree trimmer in a bucket several feet in the air cut a large branch, about 6 inches in diameter, that fell and struck Carpenter in the head. Carpenter apparently was not wearing a helmet at the time of the accident, according to an initial report.

The only other worker at the scene was the tree service’s owner, according to a Belleville News-Democrat report.

Tree trimmer hurt when boom falls
A tree trimmer suffered moderate injuries February 22, 2011, in Windsor, California, after the boom truck he was working from toppled, dropping him to the ground. The man, whose name wasn’t immediately available, was taken to Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital from the accident site.

Emergency crews initially received a report that a man working for a tree trimming crew was trapped beneath the boom of a large truck. However, the man was able to free himself, according to a report in The Press Democrat.

Man killed pushing tree with tractor
A Laclede County, Missouri, man died February 23, 2011, after a falling tree knocked him off of his tractor near Orla, Mo. David Huxel, 71, was on his tractor cutting down trees. He was using the bucket of the machine to push a tree over. The top of the tree snapped and fell on top of the tractor. Huxel was knocked to the ground and suffered a skull fracture.

The sheriff says he had most likely been dead a few hours when a family member found him that evening, according to KSFX, www.ozarksfirst.com.

Climber hurt after cutting own line
A Corpus Christi, Texas, tree care company owner was in the hospital after falling more than 20 feet from a tree February 28, 2011. Rolland Hyatt, 51, was trying to cut a branch from a tree, but accidentally cut his safety line and fell to the ground.

Hyatt crushed two vertebrae and it was expected he would be in the hospital for at least a month, according to www.kristv.com, NBC Channel 6.

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TCIA installs Weber, Chambers, Sortwell to Board

TCIA installed three new Board members during an induction ceremony at Winter Management Conference in February.

Bill Weber, team captain (and owner), of Arborwear, LLC in Newbury, Ohio, was sworn in as the new associate member. As the sole associate member director on the 10-member board, Weber represents the interests of TCIA’s other associate members.

Arborwear, a TCIA member since 1998, is a manufacturer and seller of clothing for tree work, including pants, shirts, hats, jackets and other outerwear and accessories. During college and afterward, Weber operated a small residential tree care business. Through the 1990s he co-founded and managed several polymer related companies before joining Arborwear in 2000. Understanding the need for clothing specifically designed for the rigors of the tree care industry, he helped build Arborwear to what it is today.

“When I was running my business I had no idea the depth and breadth of the industry. I want to make sure others realize what is out there and what is possible,” says Weber.

Weber replaces Tony Gann, of Altec who most recently served in the associate director position.

Weber has a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Vermont. He and his wife, Debbie, live in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, with their three daughters – Anna, 14; Katy, 12; and Margot, 10.

Phil Chambers, president and chief operating officer of Townsend Corporation, was sworn in as a director. Chambers, a former investment banker, joined Townsend Corp. dba Townsend Tree Service Co., Inc., a TCIA member since 1977, as its president and COO three-and-a-half years ago and is part owner of the privately held firm. Townsend is an integrated group of companies that provide vegetation management, line clearance, construction and storm-damag response as well as other peripheral services in both national and international markets.

He has served as president and/or executive officer of several national investment advisory, brokerage and insurance companies in the financial services industry.

“During my career in financial services, I gained experience in starting new companies and leading positive change in existing companies,” Chambers says. “I believe that I can help TCIA navigate the political and financial climate as well as provide leadership with membership expansion.”

He has a bachelor of science in business from Indiana University, and attended Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia. He and his wife, Karen, live in Indianapolis, Indiana. They have two sons, Brandon and David.

Peter Sortwell, president & CEO, of Arborwell Inc. of Hayward, California, was also sworn in as a director. Arborwell, a TCIA member since 1997 (Name changed from Arborguard to Arborwell in 2001) serves all of California, offering tree pruning, removal, preservation, installation, plant health services and arborist consultations to contractors, commercial property managers, golf courses, municipalities and estates. Accredited since 2006, Arborwell has 110 employees and gross annual revenues of about $15 million.

An ISA Certified Arborist, Sortwell is a graduate of the University of Maine with a degree in Plants & Soils Sciences. He started his career at S&S Tree and Landscape, a Sortwell-family owned company in Beverly Farms, Massachusetts. He later moved west, becoming a district manager of the San Francisco territory for Davey Tree, then general manager for Arbor Care, a Division of Environmental Care, in San Jose, California, before becoming vice president of the Tree Maintenance Division for Valley Crest Companies in Calabasas, Calif. He purchased Arborguard Inc. in 2001, changing the name to Arborwell.

Sortwell was a member of the then National Arborist Association, now TCIA, prior to his founding Arborwell, beginning in 1993. He served as a trustee of the National Arborist Foundation from 1992-1995, and on the Board of Directors from 1993 to 1997, and received NAA’s President’s Award in 1997 for his work in...
developing the former Excellence in Arboriculture awards program.

“I have 40 years of experience running small and large tree companies, and understand how to build an organization and differentiate from the competition,” Sortwell says.

His being the only West Coast director also brings an additional perspective to the board. “I believe it is important because West Coast tree work is somewhat different from the East or Mid West and the West Coast companies need to have local representation. Many of the West Coast companies do not understand what TCIA is and why and/or how it is different from ISA. I try to explain to them that we’re totally different. So, I am hoping, from a regional perspective in California, that I can help get the word out to these West Coast companies of what TCIA is and the benefits of them belonging to it.”

Sortwell lives in San Mateo, California, with his wife of 24 years, Anne, and his son, Tom, a high school junior. His son Alex attends Cañada College in Redwood City, Calif.

It is ReachMaster ... again!

Following the name change from ReachMaster, Inc. to Skako Lift, Inc. in July last year, Skako Lift, Inc. has announced that it will retain the ReachMaster name.

“Following the name change release last year, we received so many comments from industry professionals and actually directly complaints from customers and dealers about losing a name that for a decade had become almost a synonym with compact lifts that we had to re-visit the decision,” says Ebbe Christensen, president and CEO of Skako, a TCIA associate member.

“Many of our customers had built their business around the ReachMaster brand as a description of their activities, and we realized that while the name change still makes a lot of sense from a global recognition perspective, we were actually imposing inconvenience and expenses to a large group of customers, who would not let the ReachMaster name go,” explains Christensen.

Consequently Skako Lift decided to revive the ReachMaster brand, now with a small addition to the logo in order to reflect the relationship with Skako Lift as the manufacturer. The company will continue to operate as Skako Lift, Inc., and in addition to the ReachMaster brand, the company also is the owner of the Denka brand, and launched a new compact lift series under the name BlueLift in March.

Bill Mitchell joins FEVA

Forestry Equipment of Virginia (FEVA), up-fitter of over center, insulated and articulating aerial devices for the forestry industry and a TCIA associate member company, has named Bill Mitchell, formerly with Aerial Lift of Connecticut for over 25 years, direct sales representative for the New England area. Mitchell is one of several recent additions for the company.

“We have expanded internally from 25 employees 1½ years ago to just over 80 today, adding a second shift,” says Robert Dray, sales and marketing manager.

Send your Cutting Edge news items to editor@tcia.org.
Husqvarna BP5 sprayer

Husqvarna’s new BP5 backpack sprayer features heavy-duty blow-molded tanks with UV inhibitors that are ergonomically designed for comfort, with adjustable, heavily padded shoulder straps that follow the contours of the body and eliminate stress points. With no exposed parts, the internal piston pump is protected for the rigors of everyday use but, is easily repaired. The BP5 offers spraying pressures from 15 to 168 psi, with a tank that holds 5.3 gallons and has a brass wand. The BP5 can be used with herbicides, pesticides, insecticides, fertilizers, chlorine-based materials, diesel, wetable powders, stains, sealers and oil-based and solvent-based chemicals. Standard features include: high grade Viton/Nytril O-rings, seals and gaskets, pistol grip with built-in filter and extra long hoses. All sprayers come with a CD-ROM that covers all aspects of field maintenance to reduce downtime and carry a one-year professional warranty.

PCC Fiberglass Saw Scabbard

PCC’s new Model 410 Fiberglass chain saw scabbard family for use with PCC’s aerial tower buckets and platform baskets are designed for improved durability and ease of maintenance. The many rivets have been replaced with only two low profile screws positioned out of the way. Screws allow rapid insert replacement in the field when the chain-saw-resistant liner eventually wears out. The fiberglass holster may be re-used. PCC also re-designed the scabbard to be mounted both inside and outside the bucket using an optional adhesively applied standoff for the outside mounted scabbard. The Model 400 Polyethylene saw scabbard design provides an intermediate duty plastic backboard and holster while incorporating the new rapidly-replaceable resistant liner. Both the fiberglass and polyethylene scabbards are available without liners as the Economy line of saw scabbards. PCC also offers liners separately. Available in the distinctive black color, the saw scabbards can have the distributor and dealer logos applied to the handle for frequent marketing impressions and re-ordering information. Scabbards can be bulk packaged or individually boxed.

SEF Small Engine Fuel

SEF Small Engine Fuel is designed to prevent ethanol-related problems in gas-powered equipment, providing easier, more dependable starts for chain saws, pruners, trimmers and other tools used in tree care. Ethanol in today’s street gas attracts moisture, leaves deposits in carburetors and degrades fuel systems, making tools difficult to start and often requiring costly rebuilds. Ethanol-free SEF is available in three versions to satisfy any manufacturer’s specifications – an unleaded fuel for 4-cycle engines along with two versions pre-mixed with oil (40:1 and 50:1) for 2-cycle engines. It is packaged in three sizes – quarts, 5-gallon pails and drums for high volume users. The 2-cycle pre-mixed versions require no measuring or mixing – just pour it in. SEF avoids the aggravation and cost of hard starts and downtime by preventing problems that fuel stabilizers can’t fix. It’s engineered by VP Racing Fuels, with 35 years experience in formulating performance fuels for the most sophisticated engines in the world.
Fecon FTX600 tractor

Fecon Inc.’s new FTX600 tractor combines cutting performance, track power, ground pressure and serviceability in the 600hp class of mulching machines. Equipped with a 600hp Cummins QSX15 engine, the FTX600 delivers 210 gallons of hydraulic flow to the variable speed mulching head and solid power to the hydrostatic all steel oscillating undercarriage. Fitted with either the Fecon BH300 or BH350 Bull Hog, the FTX600 can achieve 98-inch cutting height and 32-inch below grade, giving the operator unparalleled range of motion. Fecon’s Power Management system optimizes torque and rotor speed; allowing the FTX600 to tackle the toughest material, the roughest terrain and the most demanding schedules. With 5.9psi ground pressure, this tractor offers less ground disturbance and a lighter footprint than most in the 600hp class. It boasts a spacious comfortable cab with outstanding visibility through 45 sq. ft. of Lexan windows. Coupled with large compartment doors, tilting cab and efficient component layout, the FTX600 allows for easy maintenance and serviceability.

Rainbow Transtect insecticide

Rainbow Treecare Scientific Advancements’ new Transtect is a soil applied or bark application, systemic insecticide that utilizes dinotefuran for season long control of a broad spectrum of pests. Its properties provide rapid uptake and efficacy on such tree and shrub pests as armored scales, emerald ash borer, and Japanese beetles. Transtect also provides superior control of hemlock woolly adelgid and the challenging elongate hemlock scale. It comes in convenient, easy-to-dose water soluble packets and can be used for a variety of situations where fast results are needed including recovery treatments on infested trees.

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Events & Seminars

April 8, 2011
Mature Tree Care
Morris Arboretum
Philadelphia, PA
Contact: (215) 247-5777 x144; www.morrisarboretum.org

April 12, 13, 14, 2011
Wilderness Rescue: Rope Technician Course
Morris Arboretum
Philadelphia, PA
Contact: (215) 247-5777 x144; www.morrisarboretum.org

April 13-14, 2011
Trees, People and the Built Environment
Birmingham, England, UK
Contact: www.charteredforesters.org/conference

April 15, 2011
Common Diseases of Trees and Shrubs
Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, PA
Contact: (215) 247-5777 x144; www.morrisarboretum.org

April 21, 2011
ISA Certified Arborist Examinations
Round Rock, TX
Contact: www.isa-arbor.com/certification/tests

May 10-13, 2011*
Western Chapter ISA 77th Annual Conference
La Jolla, CA
Contact: www.wcisa.net

May 11-13, 2011
Arborist Short Course
University Park Forest Resources Building
Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Contact: David Harry (814) 865-7541; Scott Spjolander

May 13, 2011
Biodiversity and the Influence of Native and Exotic Plants in Landscapes
Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, PA
Contact: (215) 247-5777 x144; www.morrisarboretum.org

May 19-21, 2011
2011 Texas Tree Climbing Championship & Workshop
Trinity Park, Fort Worth, TX
Contact: www.isatexas.com

May 20, 2011
Seeing the Forest and the Trees: Using the Plant Stewardship Index
Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, PA
Contact: (215) 247-5777 x144; www.morrisarboretum.org

June 12-14, 2011*
Tees Florida 2011
Wynyard Jacksonville Riverwalk, Jacksonville, FL
Contact: (941) 342-0153; www.treesflorida.com

July 8-9, 2011
L1 Precision Felling & Chain Saw Handling Hands-on Training
Haddam, CT
www.ArborMaster.com or call (860) 429-5028

July 11-13, 2011
L1 Tree Climbing Methods & Work Positioning Hands-on Training
Haddam, CT
www.ArborMaster.com or call (860) 429-5028

July 24-26, 2011*
TCIA/PLANET Legislative Day on the Hill
Washington, D.C.
Contact: Deb Cyr cyr@tcia.org; 1-800-733-2622; www.tcia.org

October 5-7, 2011
2011 Texas Tree Conference & Trade Show
Waco Convention Center, Waco, TX
Contact: www.isatexas.com

October 25-26, 2011*
Illinois Arborist Assoc. Annual Conference & Trade Show
Holiday Inn Select, Tinley Park, IL
Contact: www.illinoisarborist.org

November 3-5, 2011*
TCI EXPO 2011
Preconference workshops Nov. 1-2
Hartford, CT
Contact: Deb Cyr cyr@tcia.org; 1-800-733-2622; www.tcia.org

February 12-16, 2012*
Winter Management Conference 2012
Curacao
Contact: Deb Cyr cyr@tcia.org; 1-800-733-2622; www.tcia.org

* Indicates that TCIA staff will be in attendance

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In the not too distant future, if your crews have problems getting chain saws and leaf blowers to start or run correctly, the problem might be the gas they are pouring in the tanks. The culprit is ethanol.

In the next few months, depending upon what happens in the U.S. Congress, EPA may get the green light to raise the available amount of ethanol in gas from 10 to 15 percent, for use in 2007 model year or newer motor vehicles.

Experts from the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute say that some engines – and in particular two-stroke engines using fuel/oil blends – are currently not equipped to handle high ethanol levels. In decisions issued on October 13, 2010, EPA recognized that E-15 blends can cause “engine failures from over heating” as well as emission increases and “emission (durability) impacts and material compatibility issues.” Accordingly, EPA denied a broad waiver request to allow the introduction into commerce of 15 percent ethanol into non-road engines, vehicles and equipment as well as in older model year motor vehicles. However, EPA conditionally approved a so-called “partial waiver” that would introduce into commerce E-15 fuels for use in newer (2007 and later) model year motor vehicles.

Technically, E-10 as well as non-ethanol gas formulations will remain available. But because of the easy availability of E-15 through so-called “blender pumps,” combined with its relatively low price, inevitably there will be “mis-fueling” where E-15 will end up in the gas can as well as the vehicle’s gas tank.

According to Kris Kiser, executive vice president of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, which represents the makers of lawn mowers, chain saws and weed whackers, the specter of E-15 gasoline raises safety as well as performance issues with certain gas-powered equipment. In short, ethanol can increase the motor’s idling RPM.

“In a ‘neutral’ position the blades engage,” says Kiser. “If we’re dealing with a chain saw or a brush cutter or a hedge trimmer in a neutral position where our consumer is holding it, that’s very dangerous, so we’re very concerned about that.”

Secondly, ethanol attracts water, and over time that water can separate from the rest of the gasoline, damaging the engine, especially when the gas sits in the tank for a long time without being used. Here are measures you can take to prevent ethanol-related problems:

▸ Do not leave gas in your tank too long
▸ Look at buying additives for your fuel to help reduce the effects of ethanol
▸ Do not use E85, the higher ethanol gas, for small engines

“The fact is that the use of E-15 and higher levels of ethanol is a complex issue, and it can’t be rushed by efforts that overlook the impacts on consumer safety and economic interests,” says Kiser, adding, “We need to acknowledge that current equipment – including boats, chain saws, lawn mowers, snow mobiles, motorcycles, generators and other small engine equipment – may be permanently damaged and pose a safety risk if E-15 fuel is used.”

At press time, the fate of EPA’s waiver was tied up in Congress’s deliberations over the federal budget and funding of federal agencies, The U.S. EPA had not been stripped of the ability to implement its E-15 waiver decision – at least not by the short-term budget bill passed March 3 by President Obama.

Peter Gerstenberger is senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards for the Tree Care Industry Association.

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In the early history of arboriculture, climbers didn’t use ropes. Ladders were used to gain access into the canopy of trees. Ladders were also lashed horizontally in trees and used as scaffolding for tree care. Some creative climbers, who likely had a nautical background, started using a bosun’s seat or bowline on a bight to secure themselves from falling. Adding a friction hitch to the tail of the bowline allowed the climber to move up and down and be self-belayed.

The basis for doubled-rope technique or DdRT, is the use of a rope that is draped or doubled over a tie-in point, or TIP. The climber is tied onto one end and self-belayed using a friction hitch on the other leg of the rope. This is what most tree climbers have been taught and is the most common tree climbing system in use at the present time.

Rope access for industrial work or rescue, and in recreational climbing such as rock, ice, caving and mountaineering, use single rope technique, or SRT, to move up and down. Typically, hitches are not used for SRT.

Since SRT is going to require a whole new mental and physical approach to tree climbing, it is very important to try any new technique “low and slow” before going aloft. My favorite way to practice climbing is on a sunny day when there are plenty of branch shadows. I “climb” the shadows in order to force myself to balance and get into awkward positions while my feet are firmly and squarely on the ground.

Another safety procedure that should be incorporated into a climber’s system is the use of stopper knots. Stopper knots, typically a slipped half hitch, are tied below the climbing system. If something happens to the friction hitch or ascender/descender, the stopper knot will eliminate the possibility of the climber sliding down the rope to the ground. Most big wall rock climbers will tie stopper knots when they are ascending. Stopper knots in the running end of the rope have been used for years in recreational tree climbing. Adding a slip-knot every few feet under the ascenders is a comforting way to add a safety feature to a climbing system. Now that 11mm or ⅝-inch diameter climbing ropes are so prevalent, half-inch ropes cannot be used with ascenders or descenders. The smaller diameter ropes are lighter and coil into smaller bags, too. There are very few rope tools designed for half-inch rope. Some climbers use the tools on the larger rope anyway. This is very dangerous and could lead to a fall. My preference for SRT ropes for working in trees with TIPs lower than 100 feet is to use semi-static climbing line such as New England Ropes’ Tachyon. For taller trees I will change over to static lines such as New England’s KMIII. Having a rope with a bit more stretch in case of a swing or fall is going to reduce the shock load to the climber as well as to the TIP.

While I was fine tuning my SRT system, I incorporated some principles that I
learned from reading *On Rope (On Rope: North American Vertical Rope Techniques for Caving ... Rappellers*) by Bruce Smith and Allen Padgett). By this time the second edition had been published and there were some valuable additions. One of the principles that I incorporated was the use of two attachments to the climbing rope for ascent.

Typically there is an upper ascender on a tether that is just long enough to allow the climber to move it up the rope but short enough to not get out of reach when the climber is relaxed on the rope. The second attachment should be located lower, as far away from the upper attachment as possible. By having this separation, the chance of some event such as a branch or bark flake interfering with the one attachment will be less likely to affect the other. There is a common practice of using a friction hitch above an upper ascender. I’ve never been a fan of this configuration. The chance of something effecting both attachments is too likely, and the results could be dangerous. Sometimes the hitches are tied loose or with materials that don’t cinch down onto the climbing rope as well as mechanical devices. Two separated attachments are safer.

After meeting Morgan Thompson and seeing the Unicender at TCI EXPO Spring in Long Beach a few years back, I realized that the future of SRT tree climbing had arrived. The Unicender can be used as an ascender and descender without a changeover in equipment. Now, an SRT climber can move in the canopy as smoothly as a DdRT climber with a good slack-tending system.

There are many parts of an SRT climb that are easier and quicker than in DdRT. The first is during rope installation. Since the SRT climber only needs access to one end of their rope, the leg of rope that they will ascend is the only one that needs to be isolated. The rope can continue through other branch unions or spiral around the limbs and down the trunk. There is a feeling that SRT overloads the TIP, since there is a theoretical doubling of the load. If there were no friction at the TIP, this would be the case.

But, every TIP has friction that transfers some of the load. On most climbs I like to spiral my rope from the TIP to the base of the tree. Just like in the days before we had portable bollards for rigging, adding trunk wraps with the rope is a good way to control the load on the TIP. My favorite belay system for SRT is the trunk wrap ground anchor. The climber’s rope is spiraled around the trunk and then a belay anchor is tied. The belay anchor is used as a safety brake, primarily, and less as a source of friction. The tree wraps absorb the load.

Using a belay anchor potentially allows novice belayers to perform a climber rescue. There are belay devices available that can be anchored at the base of the tree. Most of these devices require training in order for the belayer to be competent. Using a trunk wrap with a belay is evident and easy to learn.

Before anchoring the climbing rope I always assess the climb. If I’m going to go from the ground to the TIP with no lateral movement, I add at least 20 extra feet to the access end of the rope before tying off the end of the rope. Tying stopper knots at least 6 feet from each end of the rope prevents the climber coming off the rope or the
belayer dropping the climber in a rescue scenario. Before ascending, be sure to give the climbing system a good bounce test.

There are some considerations that the climber must be aware of when using a trunk wrap tie off:

- The load on the TIP can be multiplied, depending on trunk friction and rope angles.
- The rope between the TIP and the anchor is vulnerable to cutting. My climbing ropes are all bright colors. Before I make any chain saw cuts and most handsaw cuts, I use my lanyard to add another attachment to the tree (two points of attachment are required by ANSI Z133.1-2006 when using a chain saw aloft).
- The rope can also snag cut limbs as they fall to the ground. The climber has to pay close attention in the same way that he or she does when setting up ropes for rigging. Redirecting the anchor end of the rope laterally out of the high canopy then down a neighboring tree is one way of getting the climber’s anchor out of the work zone.

The ground crew needs to pay attention to the trunk anchor, too. If they don’t keep limbs clear from the trunk a limb could snag the climbers rope. Using saws anywhere near the rope is not allowed. The brush is moved well away from the ropes.

Having other climbers or ground workers paying attention to the climber’s ropes helps add a level of safety, too. Stopping the climber before they make a cut may be annoying but it can save a life. In addition, the ground crew needs to pay attention to

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Trunk wrap anchor with mule tieoff. Image courtesy of Tom Dunlap.

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NEW ENGLAND ROPES

TOGETHER IN MOTION
the trunk anchor, too. If they don’t keep limbs clear from the trunk a limb could snag the climbers rope. Using saws anywhere near the rope is not allowed. The brush is moved well away from the ropes.

There are many ascending systems that can be configured using readily available tools. Since most climbers will have TIPs less than 100 feet from the ground, I’ll discuss the Frog System. There is a consensus that the Frog is the easiest to attach, least complex and most efficient ascent system. The components in the Frog System are:

- Foot ascender
- Lower ascender – this may be a chest ascender attached to the harness with a tether on top to keep it fair and smooth
- Upper ascender – with a tether attached to the harness that keeps it within arm reach
- Foot stirrup on upper ascender – this is optional but adds so much efficiency

Something that is important to understand with SRT systems is that getting all of the components adjusted and lined up is critical. Sometimes all that separates a smooth, easy ascent and a hard workout is a quarter-inch adjustment. With the foot loop and foot ascender the climber can move up the rope just as easily as climbing a ladder.

During the ascent, the climber can make lateral moves to take the easiest route to the top of the tree or to move onto a limb to do some work. Once I get into position to start working in the tree, I take the rope out of the second attachment. Most of the time the chest or lower ascender stays attached to my harness and ready to go back into use.

One place that SRT really shines is when it comes to using redirects to position in the tree. There is generally a natural redirect that is close enough to where I want my rope to run. If the redirect is located on a route to the ground, I will take the tail of my rope, toss it down ahead of me and continue my climb. Most of the time, lateral redirects put me out into the edges of one portion of the canopy. At some time I’ll need to work the other portion of the tree, Components in the Frog System are: foot ascender, lower ascender, upper ascender and foot stirrup on upper ascender. Courtesy SherrillTree ©2011.
so I want to be able to clear or retrieve the redirect. In this case, I lower part of my tail through the natural redirect. The tail stays on the other side of the redirect. Then, I drop down through the redirect.

At times, I’lI be below the redirect. Then I will just remove the Unicender, toss a bight of rope through the redirect, and reattach the Unicender. When I’ve worked that section of the tree, I climb back to where the tail of my rope is hanging. Then I’ll lanyard in securely, remove the Unicender from the line and pull the bight of rope back to me. This will clear the rope from the redirect. It isn’t necessary to clear every redirect. The climber will have to monitor how much friction there is at each redirect. If too many redirects are used, the rope will not be able to be pulled down once the climber has descended.

No matter what descender is used, the climber must use a brake hand when he or she descends. The brake hand takes the place of the second attachment point during ascent.

Another SRT climbing system that has merit is the rope ascending/descending system, or RADS. Again, there are many tools that can be used to configure this system. A descender, such as an Eddy or a Rig, is attached to the bridge of the climbing harness. Then an upper ascender is attached to the rope. The upper ascender must have a hole where a carabiner can be clipped. The running end of the rope is clipped into the carabiner in the upper ascender. A foot loop is also attached to the carabiner.

The climber goes up the tree in a sit-stand motion. Slide the upper ascender as far as possible. Stand up in the foot loop and pull down on the running end of the rope. There will be a little bit of lift since the rope has been rigged like a mechanical advantage system. Next, after all of the slack has been taken, sit onto the rope. Slide the upper ascender and continue up the rope. When the time comes to do limb walks or move laterally, the upper ascender can be left in place. As the climber moves away, the rope tails through the carabiner at the upper ascender. Later, when it’s time to move back, the climber pulls on the running end to take up slack as he or she moves up the rope.

There are several sources for more information about SRT. The first is to read On Rope by Smith and Padgett. This book lays out the accepted practices and concepts of SRT. Attending tree climbing competitions will expose climbers to new and cutting edge climbing techniques. After a competition, most climbers love to show off their gear. Being active on Internet discussion forums, i.e. treebuzz.com, will keep climbers connected to climbers around the world.

SRT is becoming more and more popular all of the time. Tapping into this knowledge base is as easy as clicking on a few keys.

Tom Dunlap is a TCIA EHAP trainer and CTSP who lives in Austin, Texas. This article was taken from his presentation on the same subject at TCI EXPO 2010 in Pittsburgh.
The Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA) has been hard at work for some time contemplating and preparing the Guide for Plant Appraisal, tenth edition. As the senior member of CTLA, I would like to step back and take a minute to share with all of our respective association memberships, who the Council really is.

We are a truly unique group of individual volunteers coming from a broad spectrum of plant and landscape related enterprises. As representatives of seven national and international organizations, we represent the interests of nursery growers and retailers, landscape architects, designers and installers, tree care contractors, foresters, commercial, utility and municipal arborists, forest product and arboricultural appraisers, and academia. I know of no other group within the green industry with the diversity of interests as is represented by the CTLA.

Our goal is to produce a Guide in textbook form, which will be both comprehensive and thorough. As such, we hope to provide each plant and landscape appraiser with firm footing on which he or she may develop their practice of tree and landscape appraisal. Our intention for this Guide is to educate, support, occasionally challenge, but most of all help you, the individual plant appraiser, perform your job professionally and successfully.

We are a collaborative working group intent on answering the questions and satisfying the needs of our diverse industries. A landscape architect may need to solve different problems than a practicing arborist, and an arborist will typically view a woodland setting in a different light than a forester. This diversity is both strength and a challenge. Our vision, therefore, is to answer the need to take plant appraisal to the next level.

In summary, the CTLA by working together, and then responding to the green industry with one voice, hopes to produce practical application guidelines to empower each plant appraiser to rise to their highest level of individual performance, mutual respect, appreciation and professionalism for the benefit of our customers, clients and the appraisal community at large.

We want to sincerely thank Russ Carlson, who has served faithfully for many years as the CTLA representative for the ISA. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and a need to concentrate more on his business, Russ recently stepped down. His contribution has been valuable and he deserves our appreciation and thanks.

We now welcome Scott Cullen as the new ISA representative. Scott brings to the Council a wealth of knowledge and appraisal background that should further strengthen the product we are charged to produce. We look forward to working with Scott.

CTLA industries and representatives
- Association of Consulting Foresters, Bret Vicary, Ph.D., MAI
- American Society of Consulting Arborists, Logan Nelson, RCA
- International Society of Arboriculture, Scott Cullen, RCA
- American Nursery and Landscape Association, Dick Gooding, OCNT
- Tree Care Industry Association, David Hucker, RCA
- American Society of Landscape Architects, Tim Toland, RLA
- Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), Len Burkhart, Ph.D.

Dick Gooding is president of Gooding’s Nursery & Landscaping in Sherrodsville, Ohio, and senior member of the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers.

By Dick Gooding

**Consulting Corner**

**WHO IS THE CTLA?**

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- Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), Len Burkhart, Ph.D.
Choosing an Aerial Lift:
Truck-mounted or Mini
Given the number of truck-mounted aerial lifts and the number and kinds of mini lifts on the market, it is difficult to sort through which one might be right for you. But if you break it down to the features and capabilities you want and need, it might narrow the options.

The “sweet spot” for tree care operators is 55- to about 80-feet working height, according to several manufacturers interviewed for this article.

Equipment makers also promote side reach. But remember that as the lift height increases and the angle of the boom changes, the safe side reach may decrease. Before making a purchase, be familiar with ALL the specifications, as the capabilities may change.

Most truck mounted units are available in dielectrically protected versions for working around energized power lines. As of this writing, there are only a smattering of dielectrically protected minis, though most leading mini brands tell us that insulation is either in R&D or on the horizon, depending on the brand.

Obviously, makers of truck-mounted lifts or makers of minis will argue that their technologies are the best and most versatile. Since no one technology can “do it all,” weigh all arguments.

We’ll start with a look at the truck-mounted lifts.

At Altec, Kathy Milne, market manager for tree care, says truck-mounted lifts allow users to do everything with one unit, given there’d be a lift with a chip dump body and trailered chipper together. “The lift is not towed nor self-propelled. It makes for a total, integrated tree care package,” she says.

“Dribability, that is the ability to drive up to a work site, set up, get the job done and drive away, also is a benefit, though, obviously, the truck cannot fit into most backyards. Not every piece of equipment will fit every scenario,” she stresses.

Altec’s experience is that tree care providers favor working heights of 60 to 75 feet, says Milne, explaining that can be achieved with a truck mounted lift with an optional 10-foot “elevator,” which raises the base of the lift boom for the height up to 70-foot-plus versions. She also notes that tree care pros favor the articulating (jointed) over-center boom. Altec provides insulated units to the tree care industry, she notes.

“The wildcard in pricing a truck-mounted lift is the choice of truck,” Milne says. “Depending on need, it can be a less expensive manual transmission or a big-time off-road 4x4 chassis.”

“Altec also has one mini model, the relatively newly designed AT37GW, an articulating telescoping unit mounted on tracks with a minimum of 36-inches width for those backyard applications,” Milne says. “Tracks are grass friendly. They get you through a standard fence gate with a working height over 40 feet.”

“Terex Utilities’ truck-mounted aerials span a range from 30-foot aerials on F450/F550 sized chassis to greater than 100-foot aerials on Class 8 chassis,” says Joe Caywood, director of marketing for the company.

“The highest volume of truck-mounted insulated aerial devices used in tree trimming are the 55- to 60-foot working heights. The configuration is often matched with a chip box allowing the operator to pull a chipper to complete all aspects of the project,” Caywood says. “When purchasing a lift, key considerations should be given to all the product’s technical capabilities, such as side reach, working height and basket-to-ground access.”

He notes that Terex aeri-
als are not just truck-mounted; they also can be found installed on track vehicles and skidders for off-road or accessibility challenges.

Caywood says the average life of truck-mounted aerial devices is 12 to 15 years, and that usually includes a first and second owner.

On the mini side, he says, “Terex’s strategy is to provide insulated aerial devices for all arborist applications. On minis, this is accomplished through use of the same production components found in insulated truck-mounted aerials, including fiberglass boom and buckets and plastic liners to meet ANSI A92.2 Category C requirements.”

“What gives the truck-mount value to the tree care pro today, especially in commercial, ROW and residential settings, is productivity – more branches on the ground and in the chip box, plus easier access to the job working at height.”

With respect to the mini lifts, in Caywood’s opinion, “The self-propelled unit does not require another vehicle or manual exertion from the trailer to the jobsite. On the other hand, he says, “Disadvantages include the requirement of a trailer for hauling the unit and planning for trailer access to get the equipment relatively close to the worksite.”

“And the advantages of a wheeled mini versus tracked depends on your application. Over the years the market has transitioned from a backyard unit that could be driven with the operator on board to track units that are controlled with a remote control or fixed control by the operator. The remote-controlled, track-mounted mini units offer benefits with accessibility and lower ground pressure and turning radius – making less impact on lawns and sensitive areas,” he explains. “Most mini or backyard units support capability to fit through a 36-in gate. The track unit offers easy access in hard-to-reach areas for working heights up to the 45-foot range.”

With regard to new green initiatives, Caywood notes that, “Recent green developments have been hybrid systems and recycled fiberglass chipper boxes. Hybrid trucks applications have transitioned from utility companies to arborists. There are different types of hybrids for different applications, but an industry leading hybrid for chassis mounted aerial devices is the HyPower hybrid by Terex.”

“The HyPower plug-in hybrid utilizes stored energy to provide power to operate the aerial device and lights. By use of hybrid systems, it provides a quieter work environment and reduces fuel consumption and emissions. Selecting the right hybrid is critical and arborists need to understand their average miles driven vs. PTO hours and vehicle weight goals to select the appropriate system,” he adds.

“Another recent development in the area of green technology was a joint development between Terex and Astoria to produce a recycled fiberglass chipper box. Besides using recycled materials, a primary benefit of the chip box is that it is approximately 1,400 pounds lighter than a standard steel chip box. Decreased weight can allow more chip storage or overall decreased GVW.”

Versalift makes three types of truck lift booms – straight, elbow and telescopic, according to Paul Rugh, director of special accounts for the company.

“We make tuck and chassis-mounted lifts and also make mini lifts, tracked or rubber-tired backyard machines. SDP makes the track carrier we put a 40-foot lift on, and SkyLift makes a rubber wheeled carrier we put a 52-foot machine on.”

With respect to bucket-type trucks, the typical configuration, according to Rugh, is a 33k GVW chassis, (maximum weight loaded) with the lift pedestal mounted behind the cab, knuckle toward rear, which, for protection, puts the basket over the cab.

“Favored by tree care professionals are 50-, 55-, 60-foot lifts. In the last 10 years or so, what’s becoming more popular is to put an elevator beneath the base of the lift, essentially to increase lift, say, up to 70 feet without needing a longer truck. Only so much boom overhang is permitted,” he explains. “This also keeps special licensing to a minimum.”

Rugh notes that what is likely to become
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a big deal in the future is to reduce total truck and lift weight, and he points to the emerging market for a 55-foot unit on a lighter duty trucks.

“Lift trucks hold their value pretty well with decent care and treatment, and it is not unusual to see larger ones to run 10 to 12 years before needing replacement,” Rugh says. “Assuming at the far end of its use that the truck and lift pass all dielectric tests, they still will retain about 20 to 25 percent of their initial value.”

“Right now,” he adds, “it’s hard to find a late-model 60-foot truck. What you can get are either new or worn out. Demand is that good.”

“What you have to remember about the truck mounts, for example, is in work like ROW, next-to-road or cutting through fields. Some lifts go with all-wheel-drive trucks to work around high transmission and distribution lines and in areas that cannot be reached from any pavement. But for general tree care, truck-mounted lifts let you be more competitive. You can do a job faster, and you look more professional.”

“We actually make trucks from 29 to 210 feet, but for tree care, 55 to 65 feet. Also becoming popular is to take a little 40 footer on a Ford 550 chassis with a 6-foot chip box, versus a 12-foot, and this is making...
for a backyard residential urban-suburban vehicle.”

On the mini side, the typical Versalift aerial lift on backyard mini is an articulating, telescopic elbow machine. The upper arm is telescopic, which can increase working height without increasing boom length. Rugh points to the Versalift SST40 mounted on track or wheeled vehicle, featuring an optional double set of hydraulic outlets.

Curt Blank started out in the tree care business and is now owner of All Terrain Aerial Lifts, which he says is the sole distributor and dealer for MLE tracked lifts designed for the tree care industry as well as other MLE indoor and outdoor track lifts. All Terrain is also a dealer for Niftylift.

“When I was in the tree care business, I found that we could reach only about 15 to 20 percent of the work from the truck and only about 60 feet even working on tippy toes,” Blank says. “I wanted something taller and that could go through a 3-foot gate. I spent months researching manufacturers and reps of tracked lifts. If the unit got past the 60-foot working height, it did not have the engineering to get through a 3-foot gate.”

“We came across a U.S.-made machine, an indoor lift, which had the engineering I wanted, and collaborated with MLE to develop a tree care lift with insulation,” Blank says.

According to Blank, “This is the only tracked or mini lift in the world that I am aware of that is manufactured with insulation, that can go through a 3-foot gate and reach an 80-foot height. This MLE mini is designed specifically for tree care, not adapted from other uses.”

These mini lifts offer various power options – battery, diesel engine or diesel engine with a 110-volt option, so the engine can be turned off to run on household current.

“We offer metal protection over critical components like hydraulic hosing and wiring. You don’t want a branch to fall, hit something, damage the unit and leave you hanging – literally,” Blank says. “Many other mini units are made of aluminum. We (MLE) do structural steel.”

“Another factor is parts. The MLE for tree care is made in the U.S., and getting...
parts is far faster than with foreign makes,” he says, adding that weight capacity is another consideration. “Our capacity for a two-man bucket in all positions is 450 pounds, and 550 for most. The one-man insulated unit capacity is 350 pounds for all positions.”

“The MLE for tree care also has a push-button auto-level capability and can sense ground instability. It will set off an alarm and will not allow you to go out or up, only down and in.”

“You save on insurance, motor vehicle fees and other costs because you can tow this mini, tracked lift with a pickup truck and trailer, and yet get to reach 90 to 95 percent of your work,” Blank says.

“The Teupen core competency is an outrigger supported, self-propelled tracked lift,” says Scott Reynolds, president of Teupen USA, Inc. “The range for tree care work is 58 to 85 feet, which puts our working heights right in this sweet spot.”

“For tree care, our most popular length is that of the track-mounted, outrigger supported LEO23 machines,” Reynolds says, explaining that 23 reflects 23 meter reach, or 75 feet. “Under 75 feet, our booms are articulated. Over that for us will be a telescoping straight boom,” he adds.

“We soon will unveil the LEO18, a 58-foot modification of an exiting model that takes the direct hydraulic basic controls and upgrades them, adding capabilities like electric-over-hydraulic control and self-leveling outriggers to line up with our core competencies. In May, look for the first LEO25TPlus, a straight telescoping boom with an 80- to 82-foot working height and an improved outreach to 46 feet, to arrive in the U.S.,” he says.

“The whole concept of our track-mounted machines is that they are very compact and typically can be up to a third the weight of a wheeled machine of the same class,” Reynolds says. “That means one of the advantages is to be able to transport it with a small vehicle and to be able to traverse terrain with minimal damage to the ground and elements like turf, sprinkler heads and even pool decks.”

“Return on investment-wise, in comparison with a truck, tracked lifts put on operating hours only on the jobsite. With a truck mounted unit, every mile you travel to from the job puts wear and tear on the entire unit and affects your return on resale.”

“We currently do not offer insulation, but that is being evaluated. We are finding that customers are beginning to inquire about it,” Reynolds says. “Benefits gained from insulation need to be weighed against the boom structural stability and security.”

Following the loss of the representation of the Hinowa line of mini lifts to JLG at the beginning of the year, Houston-based Skako Lift is launching a brand new lift line under the name ReachMaster BlueLift.

“It is really not a replacement situation, but frankly more a step forward, as we know the new BlueLift line will literally raise the bar in the segment,” explains Ebbe Christensen, president & CEO at Skako Lift, Inc. BlueLift was “a company we secretly had kept a close eye on for a couple of years from a competition point of view,” he adds.

BlueLift, which is built in Italy, is similar to the now JLG branded Hinowa product, also built in Italy, but according to Christensen, that is where the similarity ends.

All BlueLift units will offer 440 pounds capacity in the basket at full vertical and horizontal reach, auto-setting of outriggers and a function memory system that allows an operator to store lift movements.
the mere touch of the controls.

“It is a feature that will both positively impact the environment as well as enhance the lifespan of engine and pump components, and of course reduce energy consumption,” explains Christensen.

Initially, four models will be introduced with, respectively, 39-, 46-, 53- and 72-foot working height. In mid summer a 60-foot unit will follow, and at the end of the year an 82-foot unit. All units are dual powered with 110v direct drive and either a Honda 440ix or a Hatz diesel engine. A lithium power supply option is also in the works and is currently undergoing testing on a prototype.

“We’re still evaluating the true market need for the lithium versions, as the higher cost and unknown data as far as durability of these systems should be considered against the current well-known 110v/com-bustion versions, but if the technology takes off, we will be ready,” concludes Christensen. ReachMaster BlueLifts do not have insulated baskets.

“Quality, affordability and ease of use are what make the Niftylift work platforms a great product,” says Kirk Messing, sales manager for Niftylift distributor RBG Inc-Raymond, N.H. “Working heights range up to 70 feet, with taller machines in the works for the future.”

RBG’s two most popular models are the self-drive Niftylift SD50 4x4 and SD64 4x4x4. “Both machines offer 4 wheel drive with hydraulically driven drive hubs. Unlike other machines in the market that are track driven, the turf tire option does very well on lawns and in backyards. Lightweight with hydraulic outriggers is the key to not tearing up the customer’s lawn. Track machines can tend to dig in when driving or turning the machine.”

“Kubota diesel high horsepower motors and full hydraulics offer the reliability and affordability that customers are demanding,” Messing says.

“In 2008 we saw a huge jump in Niftylift sales because of rising fuel cost. 2011 is trending in that same direction. The Niftylifts fuel consumption compared to a conventional truck mounted lift is a lot less. Other factors include new emission standards on cab chassis that are raising the cost of your conventional bucket truck.”

Like any equipment they all need mainte-

nance and servicing. Reliable simple machines tend to be easier to fix and maintain with less cost. For now one drawback of the Niftylift is it is non insulated, says Messing. “From my 20-plus years experience in the aerial lift industry, I see the need for both conventional bucket trucks and portable self-drive type lifts,” says Messing. “Customer’s needs and budgets always come first when selecting the right unit.”

“"I see the need for both conventional bucket trucks and portable self-drive-type lifts. Customer’s needs and budgets always come first when selecting the right unit.’”

Kirk Messing

Bob Dray is sales manager at FEVA, or Forestry Equipment of Virginia. The company is an “integrator,” marrying lifts, Terex exclusively, with your truck chassis of choice, resulting in a custom forestry unit. FEVA mounts the Terex Hi-Ranger XT Series Over Center Aerial Device and LT Series Telescopic Aerial Device for tree trimming. Options are chip box or flatbed.

“For Class 7 trucks, we’d do the Terex XT55 with 55- to 75-foot working heights,” says Dray. “We are finding that the next new trend or phase is what’s called the ‘urban trouble truck.’ The big commercial tree care companies are buying mid-size trucks and mounting an insulated Terex LT40 on a Ford or Dodge, Class 5-rated chassis, and now even International Harvester trucks. They are looking for more versatility in a smaller truck, maybe 4-wheel drive with a small chipper. That means a small team can get in and out fast.”

“Now, we also are getting small to mid-size independent tree care companies wanting that 45-foot working height with insulation. The price point is under what we can do in a Class 7 truck and is comparable with some of ground self-propelled mini units,” Dray says. “We mount the LT40 also on track a track chassis to get through the 3-foot gate.”

“The cost of a trailer and self-propelled minis can be about the cost of a truck-mounted,” Dray says. “The question is, what can I use to get the most work done?”

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Cell Phone Danger: Cognitive Distraction Is Real

By Shelley McKown

Recently I was in a meeting at the headquarters for one of the largest transit authorities in the United States, where safety is their primary focus and is integrated throughout their company culture. One of the outside contractors politely excused himself early from the meeting due to another appointment requiring him to drive across town. He offered to rejoin our meeting from his car, proudly stating to the chief safety officer that he had Bluetooth capability and would be “safe while driving.”

Two years ago, this comment probably would have solicited a few uncaring glances. Present day 2010, this comment ignited an intelligent and controversial debate on how “safe” you really are as you drive while having a phone conversation using hands-free wireless technology. There are several varied opinions within this debate; however, the majority of opinion falls within two categories. There are those who support a partial ban prohibiting hand-held cell phone use while driving, and those who support a total ban prohibiting hand-held and hands-free cell phone use while driving. Phone use while driving.

In our meeting, one person stated that “if the car companies include hands-free wireless technology in their vehicles then it must be safe.” Soft murmurs and nodding heads followed this comment. Then one of my colleagues cleared his throat and loudly stated his support of a total ban. He believes the cognitive distraction of having a cell phone conversation while driving also takes your mind off the road, not just the physical act of handling a cell phone. He referenced several scientific studies supporting this thought, as well as the position taken by the Governors Highway Safety Association. The GHSA currently advises all drivers to not use cell phones or other electronic devices while driving, regardless of the current law. The GHSA does not support hand-held cell phone bans, as there is no clear indication that hands-free use is any safer than hand-held.

I was then compelled to add how U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood says he believes motorists are distracted by ANY use of mobile phones while driving, including hands-free calls, and his department has begun research that may lead him to push for a total ban. We ended the meeting without the contractor calling in.

As of December 2010, there are no states that have a ban on all cell phone use while driving for all drivers. However, there are several laws banning hand-held cell phone use or texting for specific driver groups, including teenagers. As the parent of a teenager driver, I am ecstatic how these laws have been passing at a frantic pace. My guess is as more research comes to light, we will see total bans soon enough. In 2009, 12 states banned texting while driving and another 11 states in 2010. Hand-held use is currently banned in eight states; California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, D.C., and the Virgin Islands. Except for Maryland, all states are enforced via primary law. This means a police officer does not need another reason to pull you over. In these states, if you are seen using a cell phone while driving, even just holding it, you can find yourself talking to a police officer as he hands you a ticket with a costly fine. For more information on cell phone laws in your state, you can visit www.ghsa.org or www.ihs.org.

With most controversial issues, people typically develop their opinions based on personal experience. I remember my first company-issued cell phone. The first generation BlackBerry was the size of a small book and, although considered petite for cell phones at the time, was bulky and awkward compared to my Droid phone today. When answering my phone outside of work, my friends would always mention how funny I looked holding this large flat object to the side of my head. One time, a friend of mine actually held his size 14 shoe to his ear pretending to have a phone conversation with it. We all laughed.

When asked of my opinion on cell phone use while driving, I have learned to explain how I arrived at my personal opinion first in lieu of just stating that I am in favor of a total ban. Without my story first, and along with angry or confused glances, I have been quickly accused of “loving big government,” “not making sense,” and my favorite one, “are you also going to tell me which radio stations to listen to?”

Well, if listening to the car radio while driving caused 5,800 people to die last year and 515,000 injuries, then yes, I would be happy to tell you that.

Years ago, I had an extraordinary personal experience driving to work. After I pulled out of my driveway early one morning, I called my office from my BlackBerry. They told me I needed to hurry since one of our VIP clients, who spent millions of dollars every year with my company, was anxiously waiting for me in my office. After barely a minute of explanation from my assistant, my client actually took the phone away from him and began going down his long list of complaints specially prepared for me and my sales team. Unprepared and unable to hang up, with 10 more miles to go, I was launched into a crisis management situation where he was counting on me to remember every detail of the conversation so I could fix it upon arrival to the office. I searched for something to write on and found a napkin in my center console. Then I was on speaker phone, writing on a napkin in the middle of my steering wheel – while driving 45 mph in a 6,000-pound SUV. The two-lane road that wraps around Scottsdale Airpark is very curvy and narrow, with several stop lights and business office entrances along each side. Depending on the turn lanes, it can become three. I was 30 feet from the next light when I realized for me to turn left, I would have to actually move right. Do you ever have moments where your heart jumps to a rapid rate and simultaneously you feel amazement, relief, surprise and shock? You begin breathing as if you had just run a 10-
mile race? This was how I felt as it hit me that I had been driving on the left side of the road. Instantly I was dumbfounded. I had no idea how long I’d been driving on the wrong side of the road. If any oncoming traffic had been present, I would’ve caused a head on accident and probably killed someone. Either way, I would’ve caused a serious accident for certain.

I stopped at the light, thanking God and in complete shock how I could drive all that way and not see how, or remember when, I had crossed the line. I was stunned, thinking “not me,” I am a safe and aware driver. Other than one accident when I was 16, I have a great driving record. How in the world could I do that? Thankfully my children weren’t with me, and even more so that I didn’t crash into another car with children in it. I remembered I had been looking at the road and paying attention, so how did I not see it? Also I was on speaker phone and had stopped taking notes on the napkin a few miles back, so physically handling anything had little to do with my distraction. I was then convinced the cognitive distraction of my cell phone conversation was absolutely to blame for my unsafe driving.

The research on cognitive distractions while driving has been going on for a few years. In 2006, three years after the preliminary results first were presented at a scientific meeting and drew wide attention, University of Utah psychologists published a study showing that motorists who talk on hand-held or hands-free cellular phones are as impaired as drunken drivers. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, available research indicates that whether it is a hands-free or hand-held cell phone, the cognitive distraction is significant enough to degrade a driver’s performance. This can cause a driver to miss key visual and audio cues needed to avoid a crash. Earlier this year, the National Safety Council published a white paper called “Understanding the distracted brain…why driving while using hands-free cell phones is risky behavior.” According to this white paper, drivers using hands-free mobile technology to talk while driving, “have a tendency to ‘look at’ but not ‘see’ objects.” They also mention estimates show that these drivers fail to see “up to 50 percent of the information in their driving environment.” Those are amazing estimates!

Would you ever make a choice while driving your car that would delete half of what you’d see? For more information on this white paper, you can visit www.nsc.org.

From locking your doors at night to replacing batteries in your home fire alarms, most people fill their lives with preventative measures to feel safer. Society usually reacts to common knowledge and scientific findings. Now we know that laws are passing, loved ones are losing their lives every day and families are being ripped apart because people won’t turn off their cell phones while driving. I believe hands-free technology available in automobiles today gives people a false sense of safety when choosing to talk on the phone while driving. When making your choice whether to turn off the cell phone while driving, as my favorite sports brand would say, “Just Do It.”

Shelley McKown oversees the EHS Compliance Division for ICertainty INC and is a safety advocate who promotes her cause at twitter.com/coolsafetychic.


Lost Workday Accident Rates for TCIA Member Companies per 100 workers in a year.

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*The results are in.*
TCIA Member companies with employees enrolled in the Certified Treecare Safety Professional program are **10 times less likely** to experience a lost workday incident compared with non-CTSP companies.

*The numbers don’t lie…* safety-conscious tree care companies that get involved with the CTSP program experience fewer accidents, fewer injuries, and less lost time – **PERIOD.**

Join the ranks of **500** other CTSPs nationwide and help your company achieve a culture of safety!

*for the full survey results, click on the CTSP tab at www.tcia.org.*
“Almost all our access is by climbing,” Cory Petry, co-owner of Limbwalker Tree Service, says in explaining the company’s name.

Petry and Chris O’Brien started the Louisville, Kentucky, company in 2004. Their crews’ advanced climbing techniques allow them to work in restricted areas that can’t be accessed with heavy equipment. Climbing, instead of using this heavy equipment, also fits in with Petry’s and O’Brien’s interest in sustainability.

Their company grew quickly, in large part because of some severe storms that drove up the demand for their work early on, Petry says, and most of those early clients have stayed with them. Repeat customers and referrals account for 75 percent of their total business. Until recently, virtually all their business was residential. Commercial clients, including golf courses and country clubs, have increased and now account for 15 percent of their work, and residential still accounts for about 85 percent.

“One of our goals has been to smooth out the peaks and valleys of seasonality by increasing sales to commercial clients,” he says. “We had a big push last year to sell winter work.”

Removals in particular can be done in winter, and now account for almost half of the company’s work. Pruning is also nearly 45 percent of their work, and another 10 percent or so comes from the plant health care business O’Brien has been developing for the past few years.

The company has about 15 employees, 12 of them in the field. Eight are ISA-certified, including Petry and O’Brien, and two are CTSPs. They all excel in climbing.

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“We really encourage creativity and innovation,” Petry says, “and we’re very open to outside information. When we don’t know something, we’re very interested in knowing someone who does.”

They research innovative climbing and rigging techniques online and compete in tree-climbing competitions, where they network with other climbers. O’Brien has won the Kentucky Arborist Association’s annual tree climbing championship five times, and Rick Denbeau, a Limbwalker foreman, has won three years in a row.

Limbwalker began an Arborist in Residence (AIR) program in 2009. They invite some of the tree care industry’s most respected climbers from around the world to visit and work with their crews for a short time.

“It’s an opportunity for them to see how we work, and for them to bring in techniques our climbers have never seen before. Some of them are world-class climbers,” Petry says.

As with all accredited companies, Limbwalker is very focused on safety. Climbers run new climbing ideas past the company’s safety coordinator before they use them, and when they’re working they look out not only for their own safety, but also for the safety of their co-workers and that of others around them.

One day a utility worker suffering heat exhaustion collapsed onto some communications wires while a Limbwalker crew was working on a tree removal in the same backyard. Denbeau was in a tree and determined that he had passed out. The ground foreman, Jeff Richmer, called 911. They hooked him up, lifted him off the wires and lowered him to the ground.

“As far as I know, we’re the utility company’s favorite tree contractor in town,” Petry says.

As part of the company’s belief in sustainability, they use a soy-biodiesel blend as the fuel mix for all their chip trucks and chippers. And the time a crew was swarmed — and stung — by a hive of wild honeybees after they felled a tree, they called a local beekeeper who had spoken at one of their company meetings. Five days later, the bees were all trapped and successfully relocated and Limbwalker was able to finish the job.

The company also donates wood chips to a local vermicomposting (using earthworms to turn chips into compost) operation, and soon they’ll be using some of the finished compost themselves.
They’ll brew it into compost tea and use it on the trees in their PHC program, which literally “treats the root of the problem,” Petry says. While their main intent is to provide their customers with an organic alternative to chemical fertilizers, they’re also planning to sell some of the tea at local farmers markets, partly as a way to let potential customers know about their PHC services.

Limbwalker does some advertising in the phone book, some with Google word search word optimization and some on public radio, and they received an Angie’s List Super Service Award for 2009 and 2010. But they focus most of their marketing efforts on being identified as a local company that is expert in all aspects of tree care.

“Louisville’s very big on local and community,” Petry says, “maybe more than organic or sustainable.” Limbwalker received a Critic’s Choice award for tree pruning from Louisville Magazine in 2009. They write articles on tree care for local outlets. And they’ve partnered with the Olmsted Parks Conservancy in Louisville, donating time to prune trees as well as to lead educational walks and informational programs in city parks.

The company became accredited in April 2010 and so far is the only accredited company in the state. O’Bryan developed the internal structure for the files and both partners created the documents. It took less than six months, in large part, Petry says, because of O’Bryan’s expertise in developing systems.

“Accreditation had been a goal of ours for a couple of years,” Petry says. “It forces you to get all your ducks in a row.”

They say it gives the company a systematic way to handle virtually any event, from an accident to expansion. It’s helping Limbwalker with hiring employees, training new climbers and keeping employee files. It’s especially helpful with decision making and conflict resolution, for example, when clients call in with a complaint.

“One of the big things we’ve learned is the value of open communication,” Petry says. Understanding clients’ expectations and needs and communicating what Limbwalker can provide for them alleviates most conflicts, but they do occasionally occur. Having a systematic way to deal with them eliminates emotional responses and judgment calls. “The systems aren’t just there for paperwork and bureaucracy,” he says. “The real reason is to have a real way to deal with issues when they arise.”

Petry expects the company to add another tree crew, increase their PHC department and, possibly, franchise in other parts of the state in the next five years or so. He also expects Accreditation to help.

“Accreditation gives us a systematic approach to the internal workings of the company,” he says. “And TCIA’s research into what is and isn’t important, for example, what is and isn’t in employee files, will absolutely be a huge aspect of our franchise model to replicate what we have here. We respect TCIA and all they do for our industry. I can’t say enough good about them.”

Accreditation from TCIA, the tree care industry’s highest credential. Accreditation sets the standard for making tree care businesses nationwide more professional, efficient and profitable.

Set your company apart. Get Accredited!

- Compete among the most professional companies in the field
- Attract career-driven, loyal employees who take pride in their work
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Call Bob Rouse today for your free consultation and to see what Accreditation can do for your business.

Tree Care Industry Association TCIA
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Communications Awards winners

Marketing in our industry is evolving at a swift pace. TCIA member tree care companies are keeping up with the changes well – as highlighted by the dozens of excellent examples of professional writing and design we received this year for the TCIA Professional Communications Awards.

Awards were presented and entries displayed at TCIA’s Winter Management Conference in Grand Cayman, in February.

These awards serve as a benchmark of marketing and communication excellence for this industry. And with more than 60 entries this year, the TCIA panel of judges had their work cut out for them.

For all of the categories, we balanced the budget with the final piece. Additionally, the entries were evaluated on their overall appearance, content quality, adherence to ANSI and OSHA standards, and their success in achieving the company’s marketing and communications goals.

With a diverse selection of brochure submissions, our panel of judges was impressed with the brochures that managed to effectively speak to their intended audience.

Ultimately, our panel of judges chose 14 entries that rose above the rest.

And the winners are...

Brochure category winners are:
- Allen’s Tree Service
- SavATree
- The Townsend Corporation

Newsletter

We had a large number of Newsletter submissions. The entries this year managed to combine content and design. The winners are:
- S&S Tree Specialists
- Almstead Tree & Shrub Care
- Urban Tree Services/A Tree Health Company, Inc.
- Arborist Enterprises, Inc.

Special Entry

The Special Entry category encompasses marketing and communications initiatives that don’t quite fit into the traditional categories. There were some compelling entries this year, highlighting the resourcefulness and imagination of our members. A salute to the winners, whose creativity rewards them this year:
- Preservation Tree Services, Inc. (for a “brand refresh” campaign)

Free – high-vis safety apparel guide and poster

The TCIA Member Giveaway for this month is the ATSSA (American Traffic Safety Services Association) High-Visibility Safety Apparel Pocket Guide and poster.

Tree crew members performing tree care operations near moving traffic need to wear reflective clothing. The High Visibility Safety Apparel in Highway Work Zones Pocket Guide states, “All workers within the right-of-way of a federal-aid highway who are exposed either to traffic, or to construction equipment within the work area, shall wear high-visibility safety apparel.” The Pocket Guide shows clear examples of acceptable and unacceptable visibility apparel, and guidelines on when the apparel should be replaced. This pocket guide is a handy tri-fold card of Hi-Vis apparel guidelines that can be stored in work vehicles for tailgate training sessions, or handed to each employee as a reminder to inspect Hi-Vis apparel for condition and possible replacement.

The poster is an 11-inch x 17-inch placard that describes the three classes of highway safety vests with minimum coverage and reflective material requirements to be used on traffic control sites. The poster can be hung in the company meeting room or common areas, such as the office or shop, or where all workers will have access to it.

These safety materials provide important industry requirements in a professional, high-profile display that are easy to read and review in regular training sessions.

TCIA members received free copies of these two items with their April Reporter newsletter. To order copies of the High-Vis Safety pocket guide or poster, as well as TCIA Hi-Vis shirts and safety glasses, contact Brenda French via French@tcia.org.
Using social media to help you!

TCIA is now sharing news about our member companies with our Facebook Headlines tab (To be sure that your news is being posted, send your updates and press releases to webmarketing@tcia.org). We’re recommending member companies and sharing educational links via Twitter. We’re educating consumers on the importance of hiring a professional via YouTube, rallying members on key government issues via LinkedIn, and more.

But how else could TCIA utilize social media to help you and your business? Contact Amy Tetreault, TCIA’s marketing and public relations coordinator, at tetreault@tcia.org or (603) 314-5380 and let us know!

And if you’re already using social media, we’d like to hear how it’s going! How long have you been using social media? Have you identified any business advantages of using social media alongside, or instead of, traditional media? Have the time and financial commitments paid off? Was it difficult to get started? Let Amy know!

Just as with any other membership benefit, TCIA’s social media should enhance your business. Let us help you.

Support TCIAF: Donate used cars and equipment

Your old car or truck can make a difference! Rid yourself of old cars, trucks and equipment* and give to the Tree Care Industry Association Foundation’s Cars for Cash program. Your donation is tax deductible, so you’ll feel great about helping an industry cause like TCIAF.

TCIAF’s mission is to advance professional development in the green industry, improve safety and reduce accidents in the tree care industry, and distribute information to practitioners and consumers about proper tree care.

America’s Car Donation Center has been the largest and most trusted choice for car donations for non-profit charities since 1992. They have streamlined the process, so from start to finish it will be quick, efficient and easy.

To learn more about how Cars for Cash will support TCIAF and its programs, visit tciaf.org or contact Sue Scacchi at Scacchi@tcia.org. For questions about donating a vehicle, visit DonateACar.com or call America’s Car Donation Center at 1-800-237-5714.

*Some restrictions on type of equipment.

Partners Advancing Commercial Tree Care

Supporting and Sustaining the “Original” Green Industry

TCIA would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the following companies whose commitment to our work is extraordinary.
In favor of colored mulch

In response to Rick Ray, who was not happy with “garish-colored decorative mulch advertised in your magazine. ("Doesn’t like colored mulch," Letters, TCI, March 2011). I would like to add another perspective to the use of dyed mulch.

While there are certainly some dyed mulch products that I personally find unattractive (beauty is in the eye of the beholder), we have found the use of brown dyed mulch on many properties an advantage to help reduce the buildup of mulch around plants that is a common problem in our industry. Regular shredded hardwood mulch will go down a nice brown color, but quickly loses that color, turning grey once it gets baked in the sun. When mulching occurs the following spring, it often requires more mulch to cover the older, grey mulch than if the dyed mulch is used, which still has the same color as when it was put down the previous spring.

I have found no difference in the initial color of the brown dyed mulch compared with the shredded hardwood mulch commonly used in the mid-Atlantic area when first put down. Not only does the dyed mulch look better for a much longer period of time (which clients love), but it helps to reduce over-mulching of trees and shrubs. While you can argue that you should remove all of the older mulch each spring before the new mulch is applied, that is a very time consuming, wasteful process, requiring more labor, time and disposal of the old mulch. Would it not be better to keep mulch where it is applied and not remove it each year? I have seen the use of brown dyed mulch for at least 10 years on hundreds of sites with great success and no adverse affects. It allows us to maintain a mulch depth of 1-2 inches while still keeping the same appearance. In addition, for some contracts that called for a spring and fall mulching (to give the site a “new mulched look”), we are now able to give them that same look with just one mulching per year – a big savings for them.

Also, if anyone thinks that the cost savings on using a little less mulch is the impetus behind the use of dyed mulch, it actually is more labor intensive to spread mulch at a thinner rate than to just dump a lot around a tree or shrub bed and spread it thicker. Dyed mulch costs more, but the benefits of having a better looking product for a longer period of time, coupled with helping to reduce the unnecessary buildup of mulch around plants, has been a success for our company.

Steve Sullivan,
Certified Arborist, horticulturist
Brickman
Columbia, Maryland

Thanks for insect articles

Your articles on invasive and damaging insects are excellent and valuable. Yesterday I shared information about the January and March articles with about 30 Virginia Master Gardeners. I also handed out directions to your website so they can read these articles. I thank you very much for sharing your magazine with the public.

By the way, one of the things I teach them is proper tree care and I do recommend a certain arborist to maintain their own trees.

David D. Abbott
Virginia Master Gardener
Cardinal, Virginia

Injuries ready to happen

I read Sherman Anderson’s letter (“Thanks for the accident briefs”) in the February 2011 issue of TCI with interest.

I have seen home improvement shows on the DIY network and others as well that use chain saws with no personal protection equipment. These shows reach thousands if not millions of people who get the impression that chain saws are not dangerous. I have e-mailed the DIY channel with specifics about the show I saw, however, I have not gotten a response and have seen additional shows without PPE being used. Not a good education for occasional users of chain saws!

Karl Persons
ISA Certified Arborist
Village of Hazel Crest, Illinois

Twitter: tweets 4 Dr. Raupp

March 01, 2011 – treetopguy2028 (Sherman C. Anderson) Kudos to Dr. Michael Raupp 4 his article in March TCI Magazine on brown marmorated stink bug!

Aerial lift purchase proposal is a scam

From the editor:

One of TCIA’s members sent us a copy of a sham e-mail targeting tree care companies. This gist of it is that someone posing as foreign businessman, in this case Chief Galiga in Cameroon, says he found the
member’s contact information in TCI Magazine, that he is working on a government project and needs to buy 50 aerial lifts for a government project. If the member can use his contacts in the U.S. to influence the price so that the Chief can skim a little profit for himself, hinting that the member can make out as well.

“If you could influence the prices to my favour according to the budget of the project, with this I will be able to make personal profit at the end as the chairman. Do you have the possibilities to supply 50 units of aerial platform within 18 months from the date the contract is awarded and signed?” he writes. He then asks for a phone number so he may contact the member directly.

TCIA and TCI Magazine want you, our members and readers, to know that we agree that this appears to be a complete sham, and would encourage our readers to completely ignore any such solicitation.

Send letters to editor@tcia.org.

* Please circle this number on the Reader Service Card for more information, or go to www.tcia.org, click on Publications, then Advertiser Information and complete your request online. You may also type the following direct secure link into your Web browser: http://secure.tcia.org/magazine/advertiserList.aspx.
The call came in the evening. Cat in a tree, can you come get her down? So on a fine Sunday morning, with a fresh 4 inches of snow against an azure sky, I headed out to Gloucester, Massachusetts, to see if I could remove Milo from a maple.

When I arrived at the site, an entourage awaited – Sandy, from the local feline rescue, along with the cat’s owner, several neighbors and two photographers – were in attendance. Great. Visions of dropping kitty out of the tree ensue. A YouTube viral hit.

Most people have no idea who to call for a cat rescue. Gone are the days when the fire department took the call. Sandy got my name from Dan Kraus’s fine website, www.catinatreerescue.com. Kraus, a champion climber, is the cat rescue master. He has rescued more than 700 cats in a locale where the tallest trees grow, Washington state. Kraus realized long ago that arborists are the most qualified people to perform this service, if folks only knew how to find us. I encourage you to join his website and become part of a national register of feline liberators.

Milo was about 45 feet up a Norway maple. A fairly easy climb, with the added bonus of a neighbor’s 24-foot, ice encrusted ladder already set against the tree. I set my lines and ascended. Milo was a young cat and had been in the tree for two nights. He was very glad to see me and went into the bag with no trouble. I descended and presented Milo to his owner. Applause, laughter, good feelings all around. I have been in business for more than 30 years; you will not find a person more grateful for your skills than a rescued pet’s owner.

While not a huge feline fan at the time, my first cat rescue ended up as a co-habitant. Mao went on to become a fine tree climber, who was able to belay herself without any assistance. I have rescued dozens of cats since then, and have learned a few things:

▶ Cat’s have no trouble with up. It’s down that’s the issue. They must travel in reverse, and inexperienced cats are most reluctant to do this.

▶ Although I have found no reports of cat skeletons in trees, I am sure that they can and do die up there. I have rescued cats that were firmly wedged in crotches and too weak to get out.

▶ Unless extreme weather is a threat, it is best to leave them in the tree for a few days and see if they will come down on their own. They are less likely to climb further away from you when they are weak and hungry. Most cats will be glad to see you after a few days.

▶ Bring a lightweight, enclosable container for the cat that you can attach to your belt. I use a Weaver rope bag that unfolds to a 5-gallon bucket with a solid bottom.

▶ Position yourself to be able to use both hands. Grab the cat deliberately by the scruff of the neck and quickly deposit it into the container.

Everyone soon dispersed. I packed up my gear and Sandy helped me load it into my car, where she compensated me for my services. I charge a nominal fee, which everyone has been more than happy to pay. All was well with the world. A successful rescue, grateful cat owners, a story in the local rag, and cash in my pocket. Now if only I can find the car keys…

Howard Gaffin operates Gaffin Tree & Landscaping in Rowley, Massachusetts.

From the Field

TCI will pay $100 for published “From the Field” articles. Submissions become the property of TCI and are subject to editing for grammar, style and length. Entries must include the name of a company and a contact person. Send to: Tree Care Industry, 136 Harvey Road, Suite 101, Londonderry, NH 03053, or editor@tcia.org.
Educational Sessions with the World’s Top Speakers
Tree Academy Workshops
Saturday and Sunday, 23-24 July
Monday – Wednesday, 25-27 July
Workshops and sessions with:
Francis Schwarze, Ph.D (Keynote Speaker), John Ball, Jeremy Barrell, Mark Bridge, Kim Coder, Jim Clark, Judy Fakes, Neville Fay, Francesco Ferrini, Ken James, Brian Kane, Nelda Matheny, Graeme McMahon, Greg McPherson, Gregory Moore, David Nowak, Frank Rinn, Tom Smiley, plus many more.

International Tree Climbing Championships
Saturday and Sunday, 23-24 July

Outdoor Trade Show
Sunday – Tuesday, 24-26 July

Registration - $614* AUD member rate if registered by 19 July. ($689 on site 20-27 July)
*Includes admittance to Monday through Wednesday educational sessions, a welcome reception and gala dinner, two lunch and networking events, and the Trade Show.

Save the Date
23–27 July 2011

To learn more or to register visit

Circle 19 on RS Card or visit www.tcia.org
WHY HAUL IT...
WHY TRIM IT...
WHEN YOU CAN
CHIP IT?

On site, out of mind.
When it comes to your big tree
removals, it makes sense to chip
it on site and get on with your job.
No need to trim, no need to haul it
away. Our powerful 21” capacity
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<tr>
<td>1990 Ford F800 Crane Truck, Turbo Diesel Engine, 6 Speed Trans. 18 ft. Flatbed, 22,000 lbs. Capacity, 65 ft. Hook Height, RO Stinger Crane, Excellent Condition</td>
<td>$16,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996 Terex Stinger 19 Ton Crane 125 ft. of Hook Height with Jibs, Anti Two Block System, on a 1988 L8000 Ford Tandem Axle Turbo Diesel Engine, 10 Spd. Trans, Good Condition</td>
<td>$39,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) 1990 International w/ a Turbo Diesel Engine, 5 Speed Trans., 2 Speed Rear, 5,000 lbs. Capacity IMT Knuckleboom w/27 ft. of Hook Height, 11 ft. Flatbed, New Paint, Low Miles, Excellent Condition</td>
<td>$14,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008 Altec Envirotional 1419, 4.4 Liter Cat Turbo Diesel Engine, Self Feeding Disc Chipper, Hydraulic Winch, 385 Hours, 2 to Choose From</td>
<td>$28,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Brush Bandit 200-Plus Self Feeding Disc Chipper, Perkins Diesel Engine, 1500 Hours, New Paint, Excellent Condition.</td>
<td>$14,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Rayco Stumpgrinder RG 50, 65 HP Deutz Diesel Engine, 4x4 with Push Blade, With Trailer, Excellent Condition</td>
<td>$27,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to Choose From 2002 GMC Topkick Dump Truck, Cat Turbo Diesel Engine, Auto Trans, New Paint, Excellent Condition</td>
<td>$19,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Western Star Tandem Axle Crane Truck 23 1/2 Ton Terex Crane, 103 ft. of Live Hook Height Plus Jibs, Crane Smart System, Optional Front Outrigger, Cat 3126 Turbo Diesel Engine, 9 Spd. Trans, A/C, Low Miles.</td>
<td>$19,500</td>
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mohan@tcia.org, or www.tcia.org

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Want a good view of how the recent economic slide has affected new tree care equipment purchases? Let’s start with a hypothetical example.

It’s 2009 and you’re the GM of a company whose bottom line has shriveled. Residential orders have been drying up because fewer people want to spend the money to clean up dead branches on their back yard oak tree. They can wait for the limbs to fall.

But the 10-year-old bucket truck with 10,000 hours on it has become your chief headache. You’ve been nursing its many little ailments that naturally come with age. The leaking hydraulic pump is another matter. Now you’ve got a critical piece of equipment that needs more significant repair and that may ultimately cost you more in repeated attempts to fix it than leasing or financing a new rig.

So you talk with your local dealer and financial services company about your options. They both want to help you, particularly because they’ve been struggling as well. But credit is tight, and now you have to practically jump through a flaming hoop to get approved. You were late on a couple of payments because money was short. Sadly, your 650 credit score (which would have been rubber stamped before the Fall of 2008) is no longer good enough. And you don’t have the cash on hand to put down a big enough payment to get into a lease.

The next step is to order a new pump and get it installed. But there isn’t a pump within a thousand miles because the manufacturer had to scale back on orders with the pump manufacturer. The wait time to have one custom built is a month.

However, the dealer has plenty of new trucks to offer, if only …

Hypothetical as this example is, it is only too real for many in the industry. Tree care companies have faced tough decisions about whether to replace aging equipment when their revenues have dropped. Manufacturers and dealers saw sales drop, though demand for parts spiked soon after the real estate market plunge. Financial services companies also saw fewer loan applications because companies didn’t have the money to replace equipment. Those applications that did come in the door required much more work to process.

John Hushagen, president and owner of Seattle Tree Preservation, Inc., wrote in the November 2010 issue of Tree Care Industry Magazine that “From the unsustainable high-water mark of 2007, gross revenue is off 57 percent.” He is not alone.

That said, the cyclical nature of economies means that eventually, hopefully, there is an upside. Many in the industry who were bitten by the economy a couple of years ago now express optimism following recent early signs of increased residential tree care work, leading to more loan applications and increased equipment sales.

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veterans in the manufacturing, financial services and tree care sectors. They provide a compelling firsthand account of how the economic shift caused a chain reaction felt throughout the industry, and how that influenced the purchase and maintenance of equipment. They also shed some light on why they’re cautiously optimistic.

The early stages

When real estate prices collapsed, consumer confidence naturally fell as well. “Arborists were affected like other service providers. Need work was redefined,” says John Cosgrove, general manager at CAG Truck Capital, a financial services company in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. “Everything was affected, from public works projects [such as cleaning up parks] to homeowners who could let a tree limb lay in their yard for a year. That’s not normal.”

Joshua McClenahan, chief operating officer at S.P. McClenahan Co., TCIA member and a long-time arboriculture firm in Portola Valley, Calif., quantifies the sce-
nario for regular maintenance work. “You may be used to doing pruning every three years. Then it was every one to five years. There were other things people spent money on,” he says.

With existing overhead costs such as insurance and equipment payments, the decision of whether to fix or replace aging machinery in light of anemic revenues is straightforward for companies that don’t have a ton of cash tucked away.

One of the first lessons many tree care companies learned was “how to be more efficient and do good work with fewer resources,” says Jason Morey, marketing manager for Bandit Industries in Remus, Michigan. That’s not always an easy lesson to learn, particularly if you have mounting equipment issues.

With little extra cash, many companies decided to fix what they had. “They would Band-Aid the equipment to keep money coming in the door. Eventually, they’d be faced with a tougher decision — whether they want to stay in business,” says Jason Showers, sales manager for tree care products at Morbark, Inc. in Winn, Michigan. “They began to realize it was going to cost more money to beat the machine to death than to replace it. This is probably the biggest economic crunch in our lifetime.”

Moving parts
The increased push had an ancillary impact on manufacturers: demand for parts and service skyrocketed as tree care companies decided to repair vs. buy new. Dennis Beam, vice president of Altec Environmental Products, says, “We saw incredible parts sales revenue” in the months following the real estate market crash. Like other manufacturers interviewed for this story, he said that spike in parts sales played a crucial role in helping to offset some of the drop off of machine sales.

But the combination of the slow economy and lower demand for new equipment had a trickle-down effect on some parts as well. “We’re finding it harder to get some parts for the equipment we have now,” says Dan Mayer, owner of TCIA member Mayer Tree Service, Inc. in Essex, Mass. “In the past, if we needed a hydraulic pump, and the manufacturer didn’t have it in stock, they’d pull it off the assembly line. But sales have gone down so much, it’s put some suppliers out of business. It’s gone from ‘just-in-time part’ to ‘just-in-time custom.’” Something that used to take a half hour to get now takes three weeks or more because it has to be built from scratch.

Mayer recalls recently having to take a lock nut to a machinist to tweak it because he couldn’t find the exact matching part anywhere. The process cost his company time, money and some aggravation. He’s certain the part would have been available nearby before 2009.

As parts sales increased, so did customer demand for service. “People in our rebuild-
ing department didn’t have as much time to refurbish equipment [for resale],” says Morey. “They had to focus on units customers were bringing in first. If we had a preference, it would be focused on refurb” because of added revenue.

Counting the hours

Another effect was the increased demand for used equipment. Of course, the laws of supply and demand apply to this industry as well. Companies that had some cash could buy a crane at auction with maybe 1,000 hours on it for pennies on the dollar because the previous owner defaulted on the loan. “During the last few years, there has been a flood of used equipment,” says Showers.

He points to a recent ice storm in Arkansas that caused the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to hire several contractors to clean up the mess. The contractors used federal money to buy new equipment to do the job over a period of weeks. When finished, some of the equipment was sold at auction because the contractors didn’t have the money or the need for it.

Opportunists snapped up these bargains fairly quickly, and though the prices for used machines escalated, most interviewed for this article agree that the used market has slowed compared to 2009 and 2010.
Credit crunch

The credit market began seeing some dramatic changes only a few months after October 2008. The two most significant to influence new equipment purchases in the tree care industry soon after the crash seemed to have opposite effects. First, the interest rates, which had already been historically low in the buildup to the housing bubble, were lowered even further to make it easier to borrow money. Second, underwriting banks burned by countless defaults on home mortgages toughened the guidelines for securing credit financing.

In essence, the cost barrier was lower, but getting approved for a loan was much harder.

Joann Cucciare is owner of Northern Atlantic Financial, LLC, a financial services company in Souderton, Pennsylvania. She has seen her role transform in the wake of the economic slide from loan processor to financial counselor, helping tree care industry and other applicants understand and navigate the complex credit market.

“We used to be able to get a lower credit score like 620 approved if [the applicant] put money down or had other collateral,” she says. “Now underwriters want almost 700. We hardly ever turned anybody down [when credit was available before the fall of 2008]. Now, as a finance company, we have to work twice as hard to get somebody approved. That affects our business.”

According to her, another change stemming from the collapse requires applicants to show either tax records or an other audited financial statement.

Northern Atlantic Financial has seen more applications for financing on used equipment than usual in the past couple of years. However, Cucciare says the dynamic is changing. “There is a limited amount of stock out there. We’re doing more deals with customers who haven’t bought anything in three years.”

Tax incentives

Indeed, many of those interviewed for this article agree that the incentives to buy now are increasing in number and overall benefit. Morey at Bandit pointed to the federal government’s doubling of the Section 179 tax expense deduction to $500,000. That means a company that has expense deductions of $500,000 in that year and is in the 35 percent tax bracket would have a tax savings of $175,000. Those expenses can include new or used equipment for everything from furniture, to computer software, chippers, trucks and cranes.

Also, businesses investing more than $500,000 in new equipment can now deduct 100 percent (the rate increased from 50 percent) depreciation value of the equipment they purchase (from Sept. 8, 2010 through 2011) all at once, rather than amortized over a period of years. Called Bonus Depreciation, this incentive provides further tax relief to encourage companies to purchase that new grinder they’ve been waiting for. Together, for example, these tax incentives for new equipment purchases totaling $650,000 ($500,000 from Section 179 and $150,000 from Bonus Depreciation) would yield a
net tax savings of $227,500 based on a 35 percent tax rate.

Experts’ tips

Those interviewed had some helpful advice for tree care companies considering their purchasing options these days. The most popular tip was to straighten out your financial picture. “Make sure all bills are paid on time. So much relies on the credit scores, you have to pay attention to the paper work,” says Cucciare at Northern Atlantic Financial. “Once you have a late payment on your record, it takes a long time, sometimes five years, for it to go away.”

Mayer says his policy when purchasing new equipment is to put at least 20 percent down. “Make it hurt a little on the front end … so you have a little bit of equity. If you do have to sell it, you can get something for it,” he says.

Like Mayer, John Marquis, owner and president of TCIA member Marquis Tree Service in Burlington, Mass., favors buying new over used whenever possible. “The cost may be a bit higher, but you know what you’ve got. There are no hidden maintenance costs,” he says. The longer warranty also helps.
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McClenahan advises companies to make sure that they keep their name, reputation and visibility intact even as long-time customers hold back on routine maintenance. “When they do decide to come back, you want your name to be right in front of them,” he says.

Both Cosgrove and Cucciare point to the Section 179 and Bonus Depreciation tax incentives as compelling reasons to consider buying new now rather than wait.

**Looking ahead**

Those interviewed almost universally expressed optimism about the market’s direction based on recent results. Showers, at Morbark, says he recently surveyed his dealers to get a sense of what they are seeing on the front lines. “One in Chicago said a year ago, customers wouldn’t spend a dollar. Now they’ll come in and ask when they can have it.”

Todd Roorda, environmental solutions specialist at Vermeer also sees the tide changing. “It feels like things are turning around. Some things we track, like first quarter sales, are certainly better than last year [at this time].” As with most manufacturers, Vermeer’s new machine sales dipped after 2008. Roorda attributes that in part to the extending of the trade cycle (the period between a new machine’s purchase, use and resale or refurbish) by a year or so. With fewer jobs, companies held on to their machines longer before deciding to replace them.

“It has really been an unstable time for the past couple of years,” he says. “But we’ve recently had an uptick in sales by a good percentage and there were positive vibes at the recent ARA [American Rental Association] show in Las Vegas.”

McClenehan says he has seen signs that the tree care maintenance cycle is starting to condense as the residential market is picking up. “We’ve had retention of existing customers and addition of new ones. We hope that continues,” he says.

John Marquis, who recently purchased a 75-foot bucket truck, says, “2008 was pretty scary. We would have upgraded some stuff, but the fact that some residential work was drying up made us nervous.” However, he’s seen a steady increase in work. “We’re feeling pretty confident. The economy seems to be getting better.”

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Mayer agrees. “I’m an optimist. Trees continue to grow. Dead trees are getting deader. Whether you’re a municipality, commercial owner or homeowner, the problem [some of your trees have] will never get better. You never see that cavity close.” As business continues to pick up, he tells his crew and others in the industry, “Get ready.”
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