The Official Publication of the Tree Care Industry Association

Volume XVII, Number 10 - October 2006

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It’s not acceptable ...

From August 1 through September 6, I was notified of eight fatalities and two seriously wounded arborists. They included chipper accidents, a fall from an aerial lift, electrocutions, multiple other falls and a stump grinder accident.

There were egregious failures to follow established safety practices, to wear personal protective equipment, and to be aware of the surrounding environment. There is a critical moment of decision-making that leads to each death or injury.

For those of you who work so very hard to make sure that safety is part of every day; who have put safety before productivity; who have enrolled staff into TCIA’s Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP) credentialing program to establish a culture of safety in your company; who are committed to not having a death or a serious injury on your team – just think about that moment that you dread happening.

Now think about being on the receiving end of 10 e-mails – one every three days – telling you that in your arborist family someone else has died or been seriously injured. Stop and think about how that feels in the gut. After all – it’s your gut. It’s our arborist family. Everybody out there every day in this profession is one of us. There is not a TCIA tree care industry and another tree care industry – there is one tree care industry.

For those of you who say that it is happening more outside of the TCIA family, you may be statistically right. However, having that mindset or communicating that to your team can create a false sense that it isn’t going to happen to us. We’re the safe ones. It can, and it does, happen to you. With the number of people you have on your team, it only takes one of them to make that wrong decision in one moment for it to happen to you.

We have to train for that moment. Yes, everyone has to know best safety practices. Yes, everyone has to be provided with the appropriate personal protective equipment. Yes, everyone has to have a commitment that everyone on the team is coming home that day in one piece and alive. However, it is the individual arborist’s moment of decision-making that we must learn to instill within our culture of safety – that in that second when an arborist thinks, “I could do this” or “I’m just going to do that this once,” that we have educated, trained and instilled in them, that the answer is “NO! I’m NOT going to just do this just this once. Period.”

The other point is that just because the company down the street is a competitor, underbids you and doesn’t follow safety procedures correctly, does that mean that those employees, who may have no way of knowing what your team knows, don’t have the right to come home alive that day? Don’t you think you have a responsibility when you see practices and behaviors like that to intervene for the sake of someone’s life? I do. I believe that if we are going to say that we are a profession and that we are going to represent ourselves as a credible industry, we have the responsibility to try. That means that every single one of you has the responsibility when you see inappropriate safety practices occurring that you stop and offer assistance to the men and women on crews who may otherwise wind up dead or injured that day. It’s not about competition. It’s about what is morally right.

Further, on the business side of your work, those company owners who are not providing PPE, are allowing their employees to become injured or to die, don’t you think that they are also effecting your insurance premiums every day? Of course, they are. My hope is that you won’t make the decision to allow their employees to become injured or to die, don’t you think that they are also effecting your insurance premiums every day? Of course, they are. My hope is that you won’t make the decision to allow the employees to become injured or to die.

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Cynthia Mills, CAE
Publisher
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Man’s greatest invention may have been the wheel, but some would argue in favor of rope. In the tree care industry, certainly, rope remains one of the most important and versatile pieces of equipment an arborist can use.

“When you’re climbing on it, it’s fair to say that it’s a lifeline,” says Donald Blair, author, arborist and an authority on climbing and rigging for tree care.

Check out any manufacturer’s catalogue, and you can see the wide variety of state-of-the-art rope that can be employed for the varied, mostly rough uses of the industry.

“Climbing lines are extraordinarily strong, and the factor of safety is extraordinary with all of the ropes designated as arborist climbing lines,” says Ken Palmer, president and CEO of Willington, Conn.-based ArborMaster™ Training, Inc., which provides continuing education in the tree care industry. “You can’t even find ropes used for climbing that are less than 5,400 pounds (breaking strength) anymore. Actually, 5,400 pounds is the ANSI standard for the break strength in climbing lines.”

Better ropes provide greater safety, but despite the technical advances, both experts say that it’s the responsibility of the industry to set standards and the individuals to keep their work sites safe when dealing with rope.

“Tree work is among the most hazardous occupations in industry, and it’s been targeted by OSHA as an industry that needs to be watched, and worked with,” Blair says.

For several years, Blair has traveled around the world teaching rigging, climbing and safe work practices to those in the tree care industry. He’s also the owner of the Sierra Moreno Mercantile Company, which he terms a “research and development company for arborist supplies,” based in Hagerstown, Maryland, and Mountain View, California. The author of “Arborist Equipment: A Guide to the tools & equipment of tree removal,” Blair has written at length about those subjects. He was a founder of the “Tree-Trimmers’ Jamboree,” and is past president of both the Western and Mid-Atlantic chapters of the International Society of Arboriculture. He is also sometimes called as an expert witness for court cases involving fatalities related to tree care.

One way for tree care company owners and managers to protect their employees and themselves is by being sure to take proper care of the ropes used for climbing and rigging. As with most of their equipment, tree care companies put rope to work every day climbing and rigging, particularly shock loading. Bill Shakespeare, marketing manager for New England Ropes, notes that some tree care companies will use a rope as much in one day as a res-
cue operation will in one year. Even when climbers use a rope beyond its recommended life, a well-maintained rope will rarely break solely for that reason, he says, and with these advances in strength, many arborists will concern themselves more with a rope’s performance when determining which rope to use.

“If it’s a rope in good condition and it’s not misused, and you don’t cut it or something like that, you’re not going to have an accident,” says Shakespeare, who says his company introduced the trend to light, 11-millimeter climber’s ropes in 2003 with its Fly model. “With that issue covered, the arborist may consider other things, such as knotting ability or abrasion resistance, as he decides what rope to buy.”

The vast majority of tree care companies use half-inch diameter, 16-strand climbing rope, using a double-rope climbing technique.

“There are a lot of 16-strand ropes, but if you look at the top quality ropes they’re all very consistent,” Shakespeare says. “They don’t have looser strands or tighter strands. If you run your hand along it, it’s all going to feel the same. With all of the top manufacturers, our competitors, it’s going to feel that way. There are a lot of less expensive ropes that are still safe; they’re just not going to perform as well.

“It’s a good thing that now it’s one of those finer points of performance that an arborist can concern himself with,” Shakespeare says. “In the days of manila, you had to worry if the rope was six months old, was it rotted and was it going to break.”

Rope has evolved rapidly over the past 30 years, from the natural fiber of manila to three-strand synthetic ropes, to single-braided synthetic ropes, and then to double-braided synthetic ropes and rigging. The ropes have gotten stronger along the way.

“The climbers who started out rigging with manila, then advanced to three-strand synthetic, single-braid synthetic and then double braided ropes and rigging are probably still taking manila-sized cuts,” Blair says. “Every time they changed the construction of the rope to a stronger rope, all they did was increase the margin of safety. They weren’t proportionately increasing the size of the lengths they were taking. Somebody who went through that evolutionary process has very few problems with breaking their rope through overloading.”

While climbers raised on manila rope may still take pieces within the safe loading range of that rope because “it’s locked into their mental image,” Blair says,
younger climbers are more likely to push the strength to its limits.

Shakespeare noted that while some will select a rope for shock loading based solely on strength, a rope with better elasticity might be a better choice, because it will “give” and dissipate the energy of the load.

“The three-strand rope has a tremendous amount of elongation, so it winds up like a big bungee cord,” he says. “If you have room, where you can use the stretch, you can have a rope that’s much weaker that’s not going to break or be damaged. Whereas the higher strength rope doesn’t stretch so ends up seeing a much heavier load and gets damaged. And now you’re more likely to overload the tree. That’s something people aren’t aware of, using elongation properties of the rope in their favor.”

There are also some rigging methods used to dissipate the energy during shock loading, and some companies maintain records as a way of projecting “cycles to failure” for the rope. The lower the percentage is, the higher the safety factor, says Palmer, who encourages companies to keep records.

“By and large people either learn from peers or what they’ve gotten away with before,” says Palmer, who has worked in tree care for 31 years. “The problem with that is, and I don’t care what they say, experience is not always the best teacher.”

While the rope may pass the test, at times the tree may not.

“As they’re pushing the ropes to the limits, we’re finding there are a lot of tree failures, where the rope and load taken was too strong for the crotch or the leader that the climber was rigging off of, and the tree failed,” Blair says. “I have a rule that says the weakest link in a rigging system should be the rope. Which means that the sling holding the block should be stronger than the rope, and the load shouldn’t exceed the working limit of the rope. We’re finding that, in doing accident evaluations, that for some of the climbers who aren’t following that rule, the rigging platform which is the tree is now being subjected to the failure.”

Failures of this sort are happening with increasing frequency, Blair says.

“It used be a really rare occurrence,” he says. “Fortunately, it still isn’t an everyday occurrence, but we are seeing it happening with more frequency because of the strength of ropes that are available, and the lack of caution on behalf of the climbers working with them.”
Blair adds, “Lack of caution is simply looking at the tensile strength of the rope and focusing on that to the point, where they don’t see the big picture, e.g. how strong is the platform that we’re rigging from, (and) how strong is the tree we’re working with?”

When training arborists, the experts recommend that they consider the entire equation, including trying to determine the load that a tree can handle, which is not always the easiest thing to deduce.

“Unfortunately, trees don’t have engineering plates attached to the side of them so that you can see what they’re rated for,” says Blair. “There’s a lot of experience that goes into evaluating a tree. There are obvious signs: if you’re taking down a dead tree, it nice to know why it died. If it’s got no roots, maybe that’s not a tree you want to do a lot of high-impact rigging from.”

While tree failure is a trend to beware of, Blair pointed out that it’s still not the primary danger in tree care.

“The number one way that people are falling out of trees isn’t that their ropes are failing; they’re cutting them,” Blair says. Climbers are cutting through their lines by accident, with chain saws or hand saws.

“Some of the falls may be related to having pulled the tree apart with too much load on too strong a rope in too weak a tree, but there’s a higher percentage of falls related to having cut their ropes with a chain saw or even a hand saw; when it’s under a load, it takes less effort.”

For that reason, he preaches awareness and warns against getting too comfortable, or being in too big a hurry.

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Rope’s Fly line is called Blaze, according to Dick Hildebrand, vice president of marketing at Yale Cordage. Speaking to Don Blair’s comments on cutting yourself out of a tree, Hildebrand says, “Blaze is highly colorful, and has a tightly braided 24 carrier sleeve over the core. Our Fire is a 16-strand rope having all the characteristics of a well-manufactured climbing line, but was especially developed to enhance the rope’s visibility in a tree.”

A good inspection protocol for any piece of equipment should include initial, frequent and periodic inspections. Upon arrival, the user should make an initial inspection to be sure it’s exactly what was ordered, and make sure it’s in good condition. The user should inspect the equipment whenever it’s used, and the company (according to its policy) should have a regular schedule of periodic inspections as well.
heat or contaminated by chemicals. “Pine pitch, for example, doesn’t hurt fibers but can make the rope very stiff so it won’t handle very well when you’re trying to climb with it,” Blair says. When the rope gets narrow, like an hourglass, it can be an indicator that there’s damage to the fibers inside the rope.

“There are many new high tech fibers that have been gaining acceptance slowly,” says Hildebrand. “These fibers have high melt points and heat sink characteristics that wick heat (produced by kinetic energy being dissipated as heat under a knot in descents) away from the knot or hitch, protecting the polyester climbing line from being melted. We have introduced a product called BeeLine friction cord (that offers) an engineered solution as to how the heat may be dissipated with less damage to your gear. One of Don Blair’s points, number 8 (see “Commandments” sidebar), is keep your rope cool, and this is one way to get it done.”

“The climber’s control comes from the way that he is connected to the climbing line,” says Randy Nulle, sales manager at Samson. “Modern techniques have climbers using a variety of prusik cords and single braid ‘eye & eye’ tails to attach themselves to their climbing line. It is critical that the tail and the climbing line match well together for optimum performance. (As mentioned), heat can also be a

Yale’s Blaze highly colorful climbing line has a tightly braided 24 carrier sleeve over the core.

Yale’s Fire is a 16-strand rope having all the characteristics of a well manufactured climbing line, but was especially developed to enhance the rope’s visibility in a tree.

Things to look for include hard spots, excessive fraying, cuts, discolored fibers, or changes in diameter (narrowing). An inspector should look for anything to indicate that the rope was damaged through
factor on rapid descents. Samson provides a variety of prusik and heat resistant tails to provide the proper match for the type of climbing that is being done.

Blair recommends also having a replacement policy, as opposed to deciding when to replace the rope based solely on inspections. No matter how strong a rope is, every rope has a lifespan; which means that every rope needs to be replaced.

When he’s asked how often a climber should change his rope, Blair’s response is, “Before it breaks.” It’s a humorous response, but meant to convey an understanding of the unique qualities of rope and climber.

“No piece of equipment is subject to the same use from one user to another,” Blair says. “So, where a rope’s going to last years with one person, theoretically it may be worn out in three months with somebody else. There’s no hard and fast rule for lifespan for any piece of equipment. The outside life for a safety saddle these days, as recommended by manufacturer, is five years. That’s just to cut their liability.

When it comes to rope, I’ve always recommended that if it continues to pass inspections through the course of its life, an annual birthday isn’t a bad policy for a climbing line. Replace it once a year whether it needs it or not. It’s a cheap insurance policy.”

At about $1 a foot, depending on the brand, that’s money well spent for a 150-foot line. “You can hardly buy a trip to emergency for what a good climbing line costs,” Blair says.

Part of caring for a line is marking it properly, to be sure it’s used for the correct purpose. A simple method for separating the lines is to mark them with colored tape on the ends.

“It is vital that we do not use rigging lines for climbing, climbing lines for rigging,” says Palmer. “There are some lines originally built by the manufacturer as a climb line, but really do serve as very good light rigging lines. If they are, they should be marked as such. Once a rope has been used for rigging, it should never again be used for climbing.”
In an ironic use, Palmer noted that there are some climbers who will retire a climbing rope that they no longer trust, and then use it as a rigging line—where the forces will far exceed anything it will experience it as a climbing line.

In addition to climbing and rigging, rope has a handful of other miscellaneous uses in tree care, such as bundling items up or tying them down. Frequently, rigging and climbing ropes that have retired from those tasks are used for a variety of other purposes.

“I’m going to suggest that if someone does that, they cut it to a shorter length so it doesn’t get mistaken for a climbing or rigging line and wind up back in the field,” Palmer says. “The main thing is to be sure it’s removed from the field as a climbing or rigging line. Cutting it into small pieces is a good way to do that.”

Palmer notes that when it comes to the uses of rope, not just in tree care but for other purposes as well, the many uses sometimes seem endless. “Rope really is fascinating,” says Palmer, who has developed climbing ropes and is working on developing a rigging line for Samson. “Rope is very much like trees in one way: the more I learn about trees, the more, I realize, there is to know. The more I learn about rope, the more, I realize, there is to know.”

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**Don Blair’s Rope Care Commandments**

Donald F. Blair, author and tree safety expert, proposes these “commandments” for rope use in tree care.

1. Thou shalt honor thy rope as thy would thy life.
2. Thou shalt keep thy rope away from all harmful spirits.
3. Thou shalt not consort with ropes that are unclean lest you suffer a fall from grace.
4. Thou shalt elevate thy rope above the downtrodden.
5. Thou shalt know the paths that thy rope has traveled.

6. Thou shalt be neither a borrower nor a lender of climbing line.
7. Thou shalt not treat thy climbing line as a beast of burden.
8. Thou shalt keepeth thy rope cool.
9. Thou shalt not associate with the coarse or the abrasive.
10. If thy rope offends thee, thou shalt cut it with a knife and cast it into the deepest pit.

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Michael P. Gierlach has acquired Alturnamats Inc., from the Aaron family. Alturnamats is a leading producer of polyethylene ground protection mats used in protecting turf from vehicle damage in various markets, including landscape, golf courses, tree care, utilities and cemeteries. Under the trade names Alturnamats and Versamats, the company has a broad network of distributors and also sales and rental arrangements with national retail chains.

In his capacity as president and CEO, Gierlach will direct all manufacturing and marketing operations and will expand the firm's presence internationally. He has been with the company since 1998. Prior to joining Alturnamats, he attended the University of Pittsburgh School of Business Marketing. Paul Gierlach has been appointed vice president and Vennie Gierlach as general manager.

Changes at The Davey Institute

Roger Funk, Ph.D., has been named chief technical officer for the Davey company. In the newly created post, he will focus on research, training, education, and public-speaking initiatives. Previously vice president and general manager of The Davey Institute, Funk will continue as a vice president, but will relinquish daily responsibility for management of the Institute.

Greg Ina has been promoted to general manager of The Davey Institute and will be responsible for all Institute functions. Reporting to Ina will be research and laboratories, technical services, education and training, environmental programs, and the new ventures/development group.

Ina began his Davey career in 1995 as a GIS intern and previously was manager of GIS/IT for Davey Resource Group. Ina has most recently been involved with a number of projects with United States Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service and spearheaded Davey’s involvement in an industry-wide urban forestry initiative following Hurricane Katrina.

“Roger’s new role means that his knowledge, intellect and services will be available to the company,” said Chairman and CEO Doug Cowan. “Greg’s recent work with emerging technologies helps us retain our reputation as the technical leader within the green industry.”

President and COO Karl Warnke said the transition is of great importance. “Part of what differentiates us in the green industry is our technical excellence,” said Warnke. “Merging Greg’s innovative skill set with Roger’s research background will result in a Davey Institute that is poised to not only seize opportunities as they become available, but to create new opportunities.”

Sleugh named product technology specialist at Dow

Dr. Byron Sleugh has accepted the role of product technology specialist for the vegetation management group within the U.S. specialties division of Dow AgroSciences. He will be engaged in field research and new product development, working with university cooperators and supporting the sales force in Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado. He replaces Dr. Bob Masters, who accepted another position within the company. Sleugh will work from an office in West Des Moines, Iowa.

Changes at SherrillTree

SherrillTree Supply Company recently named Clay Thornton creative director and Jamie Goddard national account manager. Thornton’s responsibilities include creative direction for the brand as well as managing the company’s many marketing efforts for providing quality tree gear to professional arborists and recreational climbers. Prior to joining SherrillTree, Goddard was arborist division manager at Yale Cordage in Saco, Maine. He will focus on national accounts in the U.S. as well as international sales.

“We are excited to have Mr. Thornton fill this vital marketing role,” said Alma Hill, president. “His work in this position will help us continue to promote, through our print and online materials, the fact that SherrillTree customers receive the best service and top quality products in the tree care industry.”
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**TIME Manufacturing expands aerial reach**

TIME Manufacturing’s new Versa-Arborist Series carrier-mounted aerials include 37- and 39-foot platform-height machines that respond to customer requests for small, telescoping/articulating machines that easily navigate into narrow work environments. In partnership with S.D. Pitman Inc., TIME has developed three new units: The Versa-Arborist RT-37, a rubber-tired, carrier-mounted aerial providing 39 feet of working height and 300 pounds of platform capacity; the Versa-Arborist Track-37, a track-based, carrier-mounted aerial providing 39 feet of working height and 300 pounds of platform capacity; and, the Versa-Arborist Track-40, a track-based, carrier-mounted aerial providing 42 feet of working height and 300 pounds of platform capacity. Each is designed for extreme flexibility and ease of use. Their 35-inch frame width allows the unit to quickly and easily navigate narrow entryways including a standard 36-inch-wide gate. Contact TIME Manufacturing at (254) 399-2100 or via www.timemfg.com.

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**Bandit Model 4000 grinder/mulcher**

Bandit’s new 275-hp, three-speed Stump Grinder Model 4000 is also a forestry mowing machine. The Model 4000 offers a highly effective, trouble-free hydraulic system and a cutter wheel that outperforms and outlasts most on the market. A hydrostatic drive system with a rotating planetary case motor eliminates the need for belts or gears to power the cutter wheel. The 40-inch-diameter cutter wheel is 2 inches thick and has 48 buck teeth with hard-surfacing in the highest wear areas of the head, as well as recessed pockets to prevent wear to the bolts. A three-speed track drive (creep, low and high) and push-button controls mounted on the joystick inside the operators cab increase maneuverability. The cab has a display panel with warning leads, plenty of window area, rearview mirrors, heat and air conditioning. Side panels give access to the engine and hydraulic pumps. The operator’s cab tilts sideways for access under the cab. A bolster the bellyband with hinged trap doors provides a means to remove debris. An optional forestry mower attachment adds efficiency. Contact Bandit Industries Inc. at 1-800-952-0178 or via www.banditchippers.com.

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**Oregon adds lightweight chain saw bars**

Oregon Cutting Systems, a division of Blount Inc., has expanded its line of professional, solid lightweight Power Match chain saw bars. Power Match® bars are now available in lengths from 28 inch to 37 inch, supporting two of the most popular chain saw bar mounting applications. Fabricated from high-strength alloy steel using advanced laser-cut technology and durable, bonded lightweight aluminum inserts, these bars are engineered to offer optimum cutting performance while being an average of 35 percent lighter than standard, professional bars of the same length. The bars come equipped with a replaceable sprocket nose, Lubri-Dam and Lubri-Jet oiling enhancement, and Cradle nose-sprocket design. These features improve cutting performance and extend the life of the bar. Additionally, these lightweight bars help reduce operator fatigue, improve safety and increase on-site productivity. Contact Oregon Cutting Systems Group via www.oregonchain.com.

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**The Vermeer BC1500 chipper**

The Vermeer BC1500 hydraulically fed, drum-style brush chipper has a 15-inch (38-cm) diameter chipping capacity, is powered by a 125 hp (93 kW) John Deere Tier 2 diesel engine, and boasts 341 ft-lb (462 Nm) of torque for high production chipping projects. The John Deere engine features an electronic throttle and easy service access with all service points at the front side of the engine. With a 45-gallon (170 L) fuel tank, the BC1500 provides up to 17 hours of continuous operation. An integrated clutch engagement and automatic throttle system allow the PTO to be engaged only when the engine is at low rpm to reduce clutch wear. Once engaged, the engine automatically throttles to full rpm. The unit comes standard with the patented SmartFeed system, a feed-sensing control that helps increase chipping productivity. Dual 20-inch (51-cm) spring-tensioned vertical feed rollers slide in and out to assist with processing bent or forked material. A solid, precision-balanced 22.5-inch (57-cm) diameter cutting drum is equipped with two double-sided, 5-inch by 8-inch (13-cm x 20-cm) steel chipper knives. The bottom-feed stop bar is standard on the BC1500. A hinged, lockable hood made of thermal plastic provides easy access to the engine, air cleaner, battery, fuel and SmartFeed controller. The hood also helps reduce noise from the engine compartment. An optional winch with a 150-foot (45-m) line can handle logs up to 2,000 pounds (907 kg) and automatically lift the log onto the feed table. The discharge chute rotates 270 degrees and is 104 inches (264 cm) in height. Contact Vermeer at salesinfo@vermeermfg.com or via www.vermeer.com.

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GreenPro’s Landscaper Pro rig

GreenPro’s Landscaper Pro rig can provide for all turf, tree & shrub care equipment needs in one unit. Designed to accommodate granular products and/or liquid products, it can change with your changing needs. Typical units include 250 gallons of water capacity and storage for two pallets of granular material. A five-minute conversion increases liquid capacity up to 650 gallons, or 4 pallets of granular product. The 12-footer can tow a large trailer with additional equipment. The 16-footer with fold-down ramp accommodates the ride-on spreader/sprayer equipment right in the truck. The sturdy FRP body becomes a permanent “garage” for equipment and tools. Choose any truck chassis style. Options: Hydrant & stream fill systems can load 250 gallons in under 10 minutes; Electric re-wind hose reels and electric start gas, diesel, or PTO-driven pumps, that can handle everything from tree fertilization to 100-foot high tree disease control; Compost tea, organic lawn applications, or total vegetation kill, are options; Positive pressure injectors can meter precise amounts of ingredients. Contact Green Pro Services at 1-800-645-6464 or via www.GreenProServices.com.

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Hiniker Scoop snowplow

The concave shape of the Hiniker Scoop Plow provides greater capacity, less spillage and faster plowing. The Scoop Plow’s 20-degree fixed-angle outer ends help the plow capture snow, making it ideal for clearing parking lots. Available in 8-foot and 9-foot lengths, the Scoop Plow features a high-impact polyethylene moldboard that creates a low-friction, corrosion-free plowing surface. A three-section trip-edge with a 9-inch high pivot point provides maximum protection from curbs and parking barriers. Contact Hiniker Company at (507) 625-6621 or via www.hiniker.com.

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STUCK IN A RUT? 
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Industry Almanac

Events & Seminars

For the most up to date calendar information, visit
www.treecareindustry.org ⇔ news ⇔ industry calendar

Oct. 2-4, 2006
Annual Field Day & Meeting
Virginia Tech & Mid-Atlantic Chptr-ISA
Virginia Tech Hampton Roads Ag Research & Ext Ctr
Virginia Beach, VA
Contact: (757) 363-3906; bazapple@vt.edu;
www.vaes.vt.edu/hampton

Oct. 3, 2006
Building With Trees seminar
National Arbor Day Foundation,
Columbus, OH
Contact: www.arborday.org; 1-888-448-7337

Oct. 4, 2006
ISA Certified Arborist Exam
Marriott North, Round Rock, TX
Contact: www.isa-arbor.com/certification

Oct. 5-6, 2006
ISA Texas Annual Tree Conference
Round Rock Marriott,
Round Rock, TX
Contact: Mike Walterscheidt; (512) 587-7515;
mbwalters@totalaccess.net; www.trees-isa.org/events/

October 9, 2006
Tree Hazard & Habitat
Risk Assessment & Ancient Tree Mgt: seminar
Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conf. Ctr, Sturbridge, MA
Contact: Safetrees, LLC, www.safetrees.com

October 10, 2006
It's All About the Water
Farmington Hills, MI
Contact: MGIA, (248) 646-4992

October 10, 2006
Building With Trees seminar
National Arbor Day Foundation, St. Louis, MO
Contact: www.arborday.org/bwtseminar;
1-888-448-7337

October 10-13, 2005
ArborMaster Training Programs
Two 2-day modules
Level 2 Climbing & Level 2 Precision Felling
Haddam, CT
Contact: ArborMaster Training, Inc; (860) 429-5028;
info@arbormaster.com; www.arbormaster.com

October 11, 2006
Tree Hazard & Habitat Workshop
Middleburg Community Center
Middleburg, VA (Washington, D.C., area)
Contact: Safetrees LLC www.safetrees.com

October 12, 2006
MOIA Compliance 2006 and Test-n-Tune
Shelby Township, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

October 13, 2006
Tree Hazard & Habitat
Risk Assessment & Ancient Tree Mgt: seminar
The Dawes Arboretum, near Columbus, OH
Contact: Safetrees, LLC, www.safetrees.com

October 14, 2006
Tree Biology Connections w/Dr. Kevin Smith
Plaingt Fields Arboretum,
Oyster Bay, NY
Contact: Long Island Arboricultural Association
(516) 454-6550; www.liaatrees.org

October 14, 2006
ISA Certified Tree Worker Examination. NJ Forest
Resource Education Center (FREC),
Jackson, NJ
Contact: www.NJArboristsISA.com; www.isa-arbor.com

October 17, 2006
Tree Hazard & Habitat
Risk Assessment & Ancient Tree Mgt: seminar
The Mountaineers Building,
Seattle, WA
Contact: Safetrees, LLC, www.safetrees.com

October 18, 2006
Identifying, Treating & Managing Hazardous Trees
Brea Community & Conference Center, Brea, CA
Contact: Ted Stamen (949) 454-2409

October 19, 2006
Tree Hazard & Habitat
Risk Assessment & Ancient Tree Mgt: seminar
Finley Community Center, Santa Rosa, CA
Contact: Safetrees, LLC, www.safetrees.com

October 20, 2006
Perennial Plant Conference
Scott Arboretum, Swarthmore Coll., Swarthmore, PA
Contact: Longwood Gardens (610) 388-1000 x507;
www.longwoodgardens.org

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**November 4, 2006**  
NJ Forestry Association Woodland Seminar  
Contact: NJFA (908) 832-2400; www.NJForestry.org.

**November 7, 2006**  
Tree Care Workshop  
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater OK  
Contact: Mike Schnelie (405) 744-7361  
mike.schnelie@okstate.edu

**November 7-8, 2006**  
Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP) workshop  
Prior to TCI EXPO 2006  
Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD  
Contact: Peter Gerstenberger 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

**November 9-11, 2006**  
TCI EXPO 2006  
Tree Care Industry Association  
Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD  
Contact: Deb Cyr 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106; cyr@treecareindustry.org or www.tcia.org

**November 13-18, 2006**  
ArborMaster Training Programs  
Three 2-day modules: Level 1 Climbing, Precision Felling & Rigging  
Richmond, VA  
Contact: (860) 429-5028; info@arbormaster.com; www.arbormaster.com

**December 3-6, 2006**  
2006 American Society for Consulting Arborists (ASCA) Annual Conference  
Silverado Resort, Napa, CA  
Contact: (301) 947-0483; www.asca-consultants.org

**December 6, 2006**  
ISA Certified Arborist Examination  
Gero Park, Millburn, NJ  

**January 17-19, 2007**  
Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show (Mid-Am)  
Lakeside Center at McCormick Place, Chicago, IL  
Contact: www.midam.org

**February 6-8, 2007**  
New England Grows  
Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Boston, MA  
Contact: www.negrows.org

**February 11-15, 2007**  
Winter Management Conference 2007  
Tree Care Industry Association  
Hilton Cancun Golf & Spa Resort, Cancun, Mexico  
Contact: Deb Cyr 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106; cyr@treecareindustry.org or www.tcia.org

**February 14-18, 2007**  
19th Annual Northwest Flower & Garden Show  
Washington State Convention Center, Seattle, WA  
Contact: 1-800-569-2832; www.gardenshow.com

**February 20-23, 2007**  
ASCA 2007 Consulting Academy  
Hyatt Regency Sacramento, Sacramento, CA  
Contact: (301) 947-0483; www.asca-consultants.org

**March 6-7, 2007**  
MGIA’s 20th Annual Trade Show & Convention  
Rock Financial Show Place, Novi MI  
Contact: (248) 646-4992

**March 21-25, 2007**  
22nd Annual San Francisco Flower & Garden Show  
Cow Palace, Daly City, CA  
Contact: 1-800-569-2832; www.gardenshow.com

**April 16-18, 2007**  
Trees & Utilities National Conference  
National Arbor Day Foundation  
Tuscan Suites, Las Vegas, NV  
Contact: www.arborday.org/TUCconference 1-888-448-7337

**May 18-19, 2007**  
SAWLEX Sawmill & Logging Expo  
Columbia, SC  
Contact: (207) 799–1356; www.sawlex.com

**June 5-7, 2007**  
National Oak Wilt Symposium - Texas Chapter ISA  
Austin Hilton, Austin, Texas  
Contact: Mike Walterscheidt, (512) 587-7515, mbwalters@totalaccess.net; www.trees-isa.org/events/; www.isatexas.com/

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**Send your event information to:**  
Tree Care Industry, 3 Perimeter Road, Unit 1, Manchester, NH 03103 or staruk@treecareindustry.org
Please circle 52 on Reader Service Card
The employer is compelled to provide and maintain personal protective equipment, or PPE, when there is a reasonable probability of injury or illness that can be prevented by it. The employer must also train employees in the proper fit, proper use and proper care of PPE; and enforce a PPE policy so that there is compliance in the field.

OSHA defines PPE as protection for eyes, face, head, ears, hands and feet as well as protective clothing, respiratory devices, protective shields and barriers. Incidentally, OSHA does not yet require an employer to pay for PPE even though it must be provided. Tree care company policies vary, but by far the most common practice is for the employer to provide and pay for PPE.

Can your top climber wear that fancy helmet he picked up at TCI EXPO last year? Sure, as long as it has been deemed appropriate for tree work. Indeed, when employees provide their own PPE, the employer is responsible to assure its adequacy. Helmets for example must conform to ANSI Z89.1 and when worn near electrical conductors, must be designated Class E.

All personal protective equipment needs to be of safe design and construction for the work to be performed. See ANSI Z133 as well as the other ANSI standards it references for details.

Assessing PPE Hazards

Last month we said that the employer must assess the workplace for PPE hazards, perform a written certification of hazard assessment, then provide the necessary PPE and get employees to wear it. Your written certification must identify the workplace evaluated, the person certifying that the evaluation has been performed, and the date(s) of the hazard assessment. You should clearly identify the document as a certification of hazard assessment.

As a general rule, all tree care operations require the arborist to wear head and eye protection at all times. In fact, we can generalize about most tree care operations enough that it is possible to develop generic certifications of written hazard assessment. To develop your own certification you should take the following steps:

Survey. Conduct a walk-through survey of the job site(s) or the operation(s) in question to identify sources of hazards to workers. Consider the basic types of hazard that an arborist might face. Some examples of each are provided:
- Struck-by’s - from branch slaps, falling debris; flying wood chips, etc.
- Punctures/Cuts - from thorns, splinters, frayed cable, etc.; chain saw cuts; hand saw/pole saw cuts
- Crushing injuries - from logs, trailer tongues, heavy equipment, roll-over
- Chemical - inhalation/dermal exposure/ingestion of pesticides, solvents, gasoline, etc.
- Heat/Burns - ambient temperature and humidity, open flames, hot surfaces
- Harmful dust - eye or lung irritants
- Light radiation - welding arc, sun
- Poisonous plants
- Stinging/Biting Insects and Animals
- Vehicular Traffic
- Slips, Trips & Falls - ice, snow, mud, wet walking or working surfaces

Analyze your findings. Estimate the potential for injuries. Review accident data to help identify problem areas.

Select PPE

Select PPE that ensures a level of protection greater than the minimum required to protect employees from the hazards; fit the employee with PPE and give instructions on its care and use. Consider human behavior – your employee is much more likely to wear the PPE if it fits comfortably.

Reassess

You should reassess the workplace hazard situation as necessary, by identifying and evaluating new equipment and processes, reviewing accident records, and reevaluating the suitability of previously selected PPE.

Since the need for most types of PPE – hard hats, eye protection, saw chaps, etc. – is the norm rather than the exception in tree work, compliance can be incorporated into your written policy and documented training.

For “specialty PPE” such as respirators, nitrile boots or gloves, etc., hazard assessment and PPE assignment can be accommodated on a work order.

If employees are exposed to potentially harmful levels of noise and if their total exposure exceeds 90 decibels on a time-weighted average over an eight-hour day, then they must be provided with hearing protection that will attenuate, or reduce, the noise to acceptable levels.

As with any PPE, employees must be
trained in when to use hearing protection and how to use it.

Do the noise levels in your field or shop operations approach the threshold allowed by OSHA regulation? Only noise level measurements in the field can accurately tell you whether your chippers, chain saws or other equipment produces harmful noise levels, and even then your employees’ exposure to that noise will vary with the amount of time they are exposed to the noise and their distance from the source.

Most employers choose to “play it safe” by requiring hearing protection for operators of chippers, chain saws and other similarly noisy equipment. This is another “best practice” in the industry.

Full compliance with OSHA’s Hearing Conservation Standard is problematic at best for the small employer. To fully comply, you would have to: 1) measure field noise levels, 2) conduct baseline and annual audiometric exams for all employees with exposure and 3) follow the PPE protocols we have just discussed to ensure that employees’ hearing is protected.

In conclusion, the Tree Care Industry Association strongly recommends as the best of all possible practices, that your management and sales staff demonstrate 100 percent commitment to the company’s PPE policy by wearing PPE themselves whenever they are on a job site.

Tree care industry PPE standards are clearly spelled out in Section 3.4 of the newly-revised ANSI Z133 Standard. Do you need to order a copy of this comprehensive tree care safety standard? Call 1-800-733-2622.

Basic Training for Ground Operations in Tree Care; number 5 in series – Brush Chipper Operation & Maintenance

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Management Exchange

By Wayne Outlaw

Inn"stinctively we all know that “how well” we serve a customer makes a difference in our businesses. Years ago we saw platitudes on sign and posters, such as “The Rules of Customer Service,” which quoted “Rule #1 – The customer is always right. Rule #2 – In the event the customer is wrong, see Rule #1.” These are humorous and anecdotal approaches to service, but they are not sufficient to build a business today.

Today’s customers, including those in the tree care industry, are much more demanding and more astute than ever before. The approach that the customer is always right falls short of a real approach to building your business by the way you serve customers. What is needed is a system designed to deliver the level and type of service that builds loyalty and increases retention.

To boost loyalty, the first question we need to ask is “What causes customers to be loyal?” A tree care company owner I talked with today said, “Customers really don’t know what proper pruning is. They just know how they feel after they receive a service from us.”

In short, many times only a trained professional can tell whether the tree is pruned properly or not. However, regardless of a customer’s level of knowledge or expertise about trees, he or she can determine how he or she feels about the service received. They may make evaluations about whether it was done correctly more on how they felt afterward and was it as they expected rather than any professional expertise in tree care.

Regardless of what the customer uses to make distinctions, we know they make assessments, judgments, and evaluations that determine their level of satisfaction. There are various levels of customer satisfaction.

We all can recognize a dissatisfied customer when we see them during our normal work day and even in other businesses. They may be the ones complaining, but many times they may not be complaining. They may be unhappy but don’t tell anyone.

The next level is unsatisfied. Possibly nothing happened to make this customer unhappy; and conversely nothing happened to make them happy. It was just a transaction and may be perceived as transparent. For example, a customer may have a tree trimmed, it is done as expected and nothing goes wrong. The customer has very little interaction and the tree appears to be trimmed properly. It is almost unnoticed.

The next level is satisfied. Possibly nothing happened to make this customer unhappy; and conversely nothing happened to make them happy. It was just a transaction and may be perceived as transparent. For example, a customer may have a tree trimmed, it is done as expected and nothing goes wrong. The customer has very little interaction and the tree appears to be trimmed properly. It is almost unnoticed.

The fourth level is very satisfied. Some may use the term completely satisfied or very satisfied. This level goes beyond just satisfaction to having the customer “feel very positive” with the entire interaction. The customer has very positively reactions and it is memorable. For example, a very satisfied customer may be one who receives a quick response to a difficult request, his or her interaction with everyone from the company is very personable and helpful, the job is done early and better than expected, all debris is not only removed and any other problems are taken care of before the customer is aware or experiences any inconvenience. The crew leader or person responsible may talk with the customer to review what was done, why it was done a specific way, answer any questions, and see if there is anything else that can be done for the customer.

Every tree care company owner wants satisfied customers, but is that enough? Unfortunately a satisfied customer in today’s environment does not create loyalty.

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At Xerox, a company where I worked for a number of years, they found that only 3 percent of their very satisfied customers would change long distance companies even if they were called and offered a lower price. Thirty two percent of those who considered themselves satisfied changed to a different company. As you can see, “satisfied” is not enough to create true customer loyalty. For example, at the height of what I called the “telecommunication wars,” AT&T found that only 3 percent of their very satisfied customers would change long distance companies even if they were called and offered a lower price. Thirty two percent of those who considered themselves satisfied changed to a different company. As you can see, “satisfied” is not enough to cause customer retention.

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one out of seven who considered themselves “satisfied” would repurchase. In short, taking the time and effort to raise the satisfaction level from “satisfied” to “very satisfied” pays significant dividends. At Xerox, it meant going from a retention rate of 14.3 percent to a retention rate of 85.7 percent. In any business a boost of 71.4 percent, which Xerox got by increasing satisfaction level, in retaining customers is money in the bank. Opinion research in a survey of a variety of industries found that if someone considered himself or herself “very satisfied” or “completely satisfied” he or she was 42 percent more loyal than a “satisfied” customer. What would a significant increase in loyalty do to boost your business?

Since satisfaction level is so important, you are probably asking, “What do people use to measure, evaluate, or determine their satisfaction level?” Critical Service Factors are the elements that customers either consciously or unconsciously use to measure their satisfaction. In each industry and situation, there are predictable and definable Critical Service Factors. Many times the customer may not even be aware of what they consider Critical Service Factors and their importance to them; however, they are affecting their satisfaction level.

What determines someone’s satisfaction really rests on these series of factors that are fairly consistent with similar types of customers. These Critical Service Factors are the elements that customers use to measure their satisfaction. It’s important to note that, even without the awareness of the customer or the tree care company, these Critical Service Factors and how well expectations are met in each are having an effect on satisfaction level.

Each industry, and even type of customer in the industry, has his or her own Critical Service Factors. In office technology these factors may include frequency of breakdown, time required to repair, and even the amount of output produced before a repair is needed again. In other industries, such as distribution, Critical Service Factors include reliable on-time delivery, high order fill rate, easy order placement, accurate invoicing, and responsiveness when there is a problem or product shortage.

In the tree care industry, Critical Service Factors may be ensuring all debris is removed, all furniture and personal items are replaced, personal appearance of staff, positive, professional communication, accurate billing and payment credit, prompt response to customer’s requests, and keeping commitments. (See Side Bar for sample Critical Service Factors.)

Critical Service Factors may vary somewhat by type of customer the tree care professional is serving. Even the importance of each factor can vary significantly. For example, a customer having work done at a luxury residence may be much more concerned about being kept informed and receiving positive, professional communication than a commercial customer who may not have direct contact with those who perform the work. But remember, even if the customer does not see those who perform the work, it is expected that they will
be helpful, professional, and friendly. With some commercial customers it may not be as important as with residential customers since the decision maker doesn’t have direct contact with those doing the work. However, if there is a problem and others complain, dissatisfaction will occur.

To deliver the level of service needed and, very importantly, to focus the company’s resources on what’s most important, the tree care company manager or owner must know not only what is important, but also the relative level of importance of each of the factors to their customers. Recently while doing a customer satisfaction survey for a client in a different industry, we uncovered that they just spent a significant amount for a system to make price changes and inventory management easier for their retail customers only to find that it ranked very low compared to “responsiveness when there is a problem.” The client devoted significant resources to an area the customer did not feel was as important as others. Be sure to invest your time, energy and resources on what is most important.

Once you know the relative level of importance of each Critical Service Factor, you must know the customer’s satisfaction level with each. Remember, simply being satisfied is not enough to create loyalty. It is important that satisfaction with the Critical Service Factors is consistently measured and the organization focuses its effort on improving. At the end of each job, it would be important to determine the customer’s satisfaction level. It can be done with a simple card for the customer to provide feedback on, or it can be a more elaborate system where he or she logs on to a Web site to give more detailed feedback. To get a true measurement of the customer’s reaction and satisfaction level it must provide the customer with the an easy way to respond anonymously.

Don’t just treat each customer interaction as an isolated event. Compile information form each to create a “real time snapshot” of how customers are being served. As you work to improve the way customers are served, you can determine real progress by measuring changes in satisfaction levels with each Factor.

Each time the customer sees or hears something from the tree care company, it is an opportunity to build the satisfaction level or reduce it. Customer “Touchpoints” occur when there is contact with the company. Typical ones are when the customer calls the company, a person visits to evaluate the job, an estimate is given, when the crew arrives to do the job, while work is occurring, when the job is completed, and even when the bill is sent and payment credited. An important “Touchpoint” can be created when someone contacts the customer by phone, mail or e-mail afterward to follow up and ensure the customer was completely happy.

It’s important for Top Executives and owners of tree care companies to realize that simply having the desire to improve the level of service to build loyalty is not enough. To have any management direction carried out, or strategy implemented, the organization must have capable, talented staff who have been trained to serve the customer. Having a great culture of service begins with hiring those with the attitudes, values, and capabilities necessary to satisfy customers. Technical expertise in terms of tree care or pruning is important, but even if the job is done well, if the customer is unhappy about something that was left undone or the way they were treated, loyalty is eroded.
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Then a few discoveries (and a lot of money spent learning) changed my life. They can change your life, too. In fact, if you order my “FREE” Special Report... you’re going to learn, too...

How To Make More Money Each Week Than You Now Struggle To Earn In Your Best Month... And... Do It Easier Than You Can Imagine... And... You Will Even Start To Enjoy Being In The Tree Service Business!

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3. You detest “cheapest price competition” and would prefer to promote your tree service differently.
4. You do an outstanding job of operating a tree service, but you know you lack the knowledge, skills, savvy, and experience to properly market your tree service.
5. You are sick and tired of all the so-called advertising experts that sell advertising to tree services that never work.
6. The thought of another winter with no work makes you sick to your stomach...

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Thank you for your help.
Sincerely,
Dave D. Kelley
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Certified Arborist #60547

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Cedars Tree Service, Plato Texas

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Once the right employee is in place, the company leaders have to continually communicate to everyone the importance of service. Beyond that, employees must be taught how to deliver a high level of service. Setting specific expectations for behavior and communication is one step in imparting employee service skills. Once the employee knows what is expected, he or she has to learn the communication skills necessary to serve the customer. Customer service skills are specific skills, just as sales skills can be learned, and must be perfected with use.

Employees must be rewarded for serving the customer. Management at all levels must have a practice of rewarding the behavior they want repeated.

If you want to build the loyalty of your customers and boost your business, it begins with an understanding of what your customers need or want and how well you’re delivering it. Don’t assume technical expertise in tree care is enough. That’s a given! The real key is not how well the trees are trimmed, but how the customer feels they were trimmed and that the entire experience with the company was great.

Take the time to develop an organization that creates a very satisfied customer. Very satisfied customers recommend you to others. That is the true test of loyalty and predictability of retention. Building customer loyalty will boost your business.

Wayne Outlaw is author of “Winning the Value Battle: Selling Against a Cheaper Price to Improve Your Margins and Income” and “SMART STAFFING: How to Hire, Reward and Keep Top Employees for Your Growing Company.” He has presented at TCI EXPO and consults with companies to improve and increase their results. He can be reached via wayne@outlawgroup.com.

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By Thomas C. Dolan

With the market for firewood hotter right now than it probably has been since the energy cost hikes of the 1970s, no doubt many tree care companies are taking a hard look at what they are doing with waste wood. With an increasing demand for chips and mulch in recent years, larger operations with a great amount of wood to recycle – and the ability to invest in a grinding and processing operation – have a ready market. But smaller operations may do well to take a look at local firewood prices to see if there isn’t enough of a market to warrant the investment in a log splitter or firewood processor.

While wood pellets for boilers and stoves, logs made from drying and compressing wood waste, and other options are becoming more common, there is still a great and growing market for plain old firewood.

There are at least three ways to turn felled trees into firewood. The first involves a chain saw or hand saw, an ax or splitting maul, a few wedges and a lot of sweat. This is one we don’t recommend unless you are a believer in the idea that “he who cuts his own wood is twice warmed.” And that may be OK to heat your own house. But for a commercial operation you’ll want to invest in a wood splitter or a firewood processor. For our purposes, we’ll define wood splitters as those machines into which pre-cut lengths of wood are loaded. Wood processors are machines that pretty much lift, cut and split the wood for you.

Wood splitters

“In terms of wood splitters, I would say the general trend seems to be arborists looking for a heavy duty unit, one that can split firewood six to eight hours a day,” says Kevin Covert, sales and marketing manager for Rayco Manufacturing, Inc., in Wooster, Ohio. “Also, arborists are concerned with ease of operation. Splitting firewood is not a glamour job. You want to make it as easy for your guys doing it as you can.”

The Rayco machine comes with a 600-pound log lift. “You can roll the log onto the lift, hit the hydraulic button and the log will be lifted right into the splitting ram. It has a 10-second automatic cycle time, and is a 25 ton splitter, which comes with a two-, four-, or six-way wedge, says Covert. He adds that, for work on big logs, the wedge can be lifted with a hydraulic lever. The unit comes with a 13 horsepower Honda engine and can split up to 26 inch pieces of firewood.

Covert adds that, as far as he knows, the Rayco unit “is the only one that is powder coated. It uses the very best paints, such as those used on automobiles. It’s a very durable finish.”

Rayco has been making wood splitters
for only the past four or five years. “It basically complements our stump grinder and brush chipper lines, and gives our dealers another tool in their arsenal,” Covert says.

From his observations, Covert says there are a lot of similarities between different makes of log splitters. What he believes distinguishes the Rayco machine, he adds, “is that it’s among the heaviest duty machines. This puts it into the heavy-duty commercial grade, and is more geared for the professional log splitter. It may be overkill for some of the smaller tree companies.”

On the other hand, Covert says, this heavy-duty aspect “is a positive for arborists who are really serious about splitting wood. This is a splitter you can use and abuse and it will keep on performing.”

Covert also says he is seeing more and more arborists who appreciate this durability aspect. “I do hear from arborists who purchased a lighter weight machine on price a couple of years back only to have it end up in the scrap heap. When we got into this market people told us that if you’re going to build a splitter, build it so it will last.”

The Rayco splitter sells for $6,500.

“Arborists tend to start with wood splitters, and then, as their business grows, move up to a processor, says Peter Hincks, sales manager for Timberwolf Manufacturers, Inc., in Rutland, Vermont. “The processor does more. It takes on the whole tree.”

“The key is the power source or engine, you want to make sure you get a good one,” Hincks says. He adds that Timberwolf splitters feature hydraulic log lifts, “a real back saver,” as well as multiple split wedges that cut and split in one operation, the reducing the amount of time to do the job.

Timberwolf makes 14 different splitters, which go from homeowner to industrial applications. “We make a splitter that handles a log 10 feet long and up to 7 inches in diameter and cuts it into four pieces, run by remote control,” Hincks says. “What is unique about our product is that it comes with a self-contained tractor mount machine that has a pump that lets you know the tonnage and cycle time before you hook it up. Typically the pump runs off the hydraulics of the tractor so you don’t know the tonnage and cycle time until you plug it in.”

Timberwolf wood splitters range from about $19,000 to $50,000.

“What was a throw-away commodity has now become a key income generator,” Hincks says. “As the price of heating oil increases, the value of fire-
Wood increases. Arborists now produce it during the summer on rainy or windy days when they can’t get to the trees, and it’s a great way to keep employees working all year round through the winter without laying them off.”

“A couple of years ago, arborists would dump a lot of logs and blocks into landfills, but now landfills are charging much more,” adds John Smith, president of Built-Rite Manufacturing Corporation in Ludlow, Vermont. “Converting that wood to firewood keeps employees busy and brings in money.”

Built-Rite offers two basic commercial units, one with 11 horsepower that sells for $7,000 and a 24 hp unit that sells for $10,000. The large unit comes with a log lift and a multiple splitter head that can cut logs singly, or two, four, six, eight or 10 ways.

A newer unit, Smith reports, cuts blocks of wood 14 to 16 inches long, up to 14 inches in diameter, into 16 pieces, each no larger than 3 inches by 2 inches. “These are for bundle wood, which is sold in grocery stores and represents a growing market,” says Smith. This unit costs $11,500. Smith also sells conveyors to move cut wood to a truck.
Processors

Both Timberwolf and Built-Rite also sell processors. Timberwolf’s range from $45,000 to $60,000, and Built-Rite’s from $20,000 to $65,000.

Smith says that typically, because of the cost, splitters were sold more to arborists than processors. Also he comments that arborists are more often likely to be dealing with parts of trees or the stray tree that has to be removed. So unless they are involved in large land clearing work, they might not have as much need of a processor. Moreover, good long logs can usually be sent to the mill.

Nevertheless, Smith adds that, again because of the increasing value of wood, more and more arborists are purchasing processors as a viable investment.

A firm believer in processors over splitters, even for arborists, is Dale Heikkinen, president of Multitek, Inc. in Prentice, Wisconsin. “We actually pioneered the industry 30 years ago,” Heikkinen says. “The hand log splitters and hand saws still require a lot of manpower and are dangerous. One customer who purchased one of our processors said it was not only more efficient, it was much safer and really reduced his workers’ compensation insurance.”

The Multitek processors are fully automated,” Heikkinen says. Machines lift a log, up to 16 feet long, load it, clamp it, cut and split it with a four-way head, and then the wood is carried away on a conveyor. “You eliminate extra manpower,” Heikkinen says. “One man does it all, and it’s much safer.”

He adds that the multiple splitters can split from two up to 16 ways, and can handle any type of wood, from elm to eucalyptus. The machine can handle severe...
type hardwoods, in which the grains are crooked, as well as crooked tops. “The serious firewood market is the north, especially New England and going into Canada,” Heikkinen says. “But a lot of homes in the southwest have fireplaces in them, and the south loves hickory for the romance, for backyard barbecues, and how it enhances the taste of steak.”

Heikkinen adds, “I go to a lot of trade shows and demonstrations and notice that more and more arborists are accumulating a lot of wood and are trying to find ways to make it profitable.” He advises any arborist thinking of purchasing a processor “to make sure it’s durable and rugged.”

The Multitek processors suitable for most arborists range from $30,000 to $50,000. They can go up to $100,000, but these have air-conditioned or heated cabs so they can be run comfortably in hot or cold weather, as well as amenities such as a stereo system, and are designed for operators who are likely to be in them all day long.

A new Multitek product, the SuperAx splits only large diameter blocks, working off a skidder. “This is for people who don’t want to buy a processor but have a need for splitting large diameter blocks that are too big to otherwise handle,” Heikkinen says. “This machine drives up and splits the block down without a worker having to touch it.” This unit sells for $7,500. Multitek processors can be made mobile so they can drive from site to site, or remain stationary.

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“Our tree-lined roads are something special. They have become a trademark of Northeastern Germany, a trademark that was given up in Western Germany in the ’60s and ’70s.”

So said Germany’s then environmental minister, Jürgen Trittin, in 2002 at a symbolic planting ceremony along a main road near Lützow in the former East Germany. This planting was the kickoff of a concerted effort, which continues under the present environmental minister, Sigmar Gabriel, to save what the Germans call their Alleen.

The country once had a large number of these-so called “green tunnels.” Some of them were more than 200 years old, but the heyday of their creation was between about 1840 and 1930, before there was heavy automobile traffic. It was quite the fashion to beautify country roads by planting trees on both sides of them.

They remained largely in place until after World War II. But then there was a major assault on them in the western part of the then divided country. At least 30,000 miles of them were victims there of road widening, exhaust smoke and winter salting.

But they survived in large numbers in what used to be communist East Germany, where the automobile age was far less pronounced. Of the estimated 19,000 miles of allees in all Germany today, fully half are in the single former East German state of Brandenburg. Another 2,700 miles, as many as in all of the former West Germany, are in the state of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, another former East German state.

But reunification in 1990 signaled the start of the same sort of assault on the East German allees, and people became alarmed. Not only was a cultural heritage being destroyed, but also an important economic factor. Their beauty attracts tourists to the region.

So concrete steps were taken to protect the allees. (The word “allée” is actually of French origin, derived from an old word for “to go” and referring to a tree-line foot-
path developed as part of the garden art of the baroque era.)

Both Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-West Pommerania passed laws in the early 1990s aimed at saving them. The trees were not to be removed except in extraordinary circumstances, salting was restricted, protective planks were set up between the road and trees and speed limits were reduced on allees.

The touristic “German Allee Road” was established in 1992 connecting some particularly attractive East German allees with parts of West Germany as a symbolic act for the reunification. (Germany has many such “roads,” the Romantic Road, Wine Road, Half-Timber Road, etc.)

A private organization calling itself the Alleenschutzgemeinschaft (ASG, Allee Protection Association) was founded in 2001 in Berlin through the energetic initiative of Ingo Lehmann, of the Mecklenburg-West Pommerania Environmental Ministry. He is still chairman of the organization, which has the aim not only of protecting the old allees but also of seeing that new ones are planted in the whole of Germany. He has been particularly successful with the new plantings in his home state, which has actually added about 550 miles of allees since 1990.

The ASG now has joined forces with the
Federal Environmental Ministry in Berlin in a campaign to save the allees. Its slogan is “German allees – replaceable with nothing,” and its brochures and posters try to make this point with ironic pictures. One shows the trees “replaced” with cactus; another pictures a road lined with trees sized sprigs of broccoli.

Another tool has been the symbolic planting. The publicity from these, it is hoped, will illuminate the problem to the public and the politicians, inspiring them to save the trees and plant new ones along roads.

The first of these symbolic plantings was in Mecklenburg, on the road near Lützow where Minister Trittin made his remarks. Five sweet cherry trees, notable for their beautiful blossoms, were planted there to close a gap in an older cherry allee.

The next symbolic planting, again with Minister Trittin in attendance, was in the former West Germany, to demonstrate that

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The touristic “German Allee Road,” originally just in the east, was extended in 2000 all the way to Lake Constance, in the southernmost part of the former West Germany. As such, it is now 1,500 miles long. Photo courtesy of Jan Lipowski.
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the people there also have a stake in the allees. The road between Probsteierhagen and Passade, in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, had long been lined with stately elms, but they had to be felled, like many other elm allees, because of the Dutch elm disease. That supposedly won’t happen again. The 34 trees were “resistas,” or elms that are resistant to the disease, and the nursery owner who donated them promised that they weren’t subject to the scourge.

Another planting was in the state of Brandenburg. Sixty lime trees were set up on a road in the Spreewald. That’s an incredible landscape of lakes, islands, swamps, waterways and forests that has been declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. The new allee should make it even more attractive to visitors.

The touristic “German Allee Road,” originally just in the east, was extended in 2000 all the way to Lake Constance, in the southernmost part of the former West
Germany. As such, it is now 1,500 miles long and the longest of the touristic roads. Most of its zigzag length is still in the former East Germany, and many of the stretches in West Germany are not yet tree-lined. The aim, though, is to plant trees along the whole length.

The road starts at the Baltic Sea vacation island of Rügen, which is noted for its allees. It has some 40 miles of them, including a mile and a half lined with the rare Crimean linden. The road ends dramatically on another island, this time Reichenau in Lake Constance. It’s connected to the mainland by a tree-lined causeway built in 1838.

Most of the allees are lined with maple, lime, chestnut and oak trees. And various fruit trees are often popular for the spectacle they make in the spring. But Lehmann and his organization would like to see the use of trees that in their view are especially worthy of protection. He named hornbeam, copper beech, red beech, larch, and perhaps some flowering fruit trees of the old, historic stock.

New plantings are essential even on the well preserved allees. Lehmann points out that most of these are more than 100 years old, and won’t be around in another half century.

The organization fights laws that it feels will discourage the creation of new allees. In Germany, for example, they are discussing a requirement that newly planted trees must be more than 4.5 meters (nearly 15 feet) from the edge of the pavement. This, it is felt, would make a “green tunnel” impossible, since the foliage from the two sides of the road could never meet. Also, most of the land that far from the pavement is in other hands. Farmers might not like to sell their land for tree-planting purposes.

The ASG also feels it is unfair to expect the trees to disappear in the name of traffic safety. Let the people drive safely, which on the allees means “slowly”. The allees are for a pleasant driving experience. Let those who are in a hurry take the Autobahn. The state can help too, by setting speed limits in the allees and enforcing them. They might also make an alley one-way, or divert heavy traffic around it.

Ted Shoemaker is a writer/editor based in Germany.
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or tree care and landscape companies, entering the snow removal business requires dedication and perseverance. As with any business entity, the snow and ice management business needs to be managed effectively and profitably. Too often snow is considered an ancillary service to the “core business.” Sometimes the decision to enter the snow management business is dictated by attempts to increase cash flow during slower times of the year, or by core business customers who demand the service. A more appropriate reason to enter the business should be to develop a profit center that will augment the existing business.

Landscape and tree care contractors seem to have a natural “avenue” into the snow business as their warm weather customers often require winter service. Also, contractors have a good portion of the equipment already available. And the jump from two-wheel drive vehicles to four-wheel drive vehicles in the purchasing decision is not too difficult. The tree care/landscape contractor also usually has ready access to the personnel required for snow operations and has the maintenance facilities to service equipment when the inevitable breakdowns occur.

By John A. Allin

My involvement in the snow industry began back in 1978 with the purchase of a brand new Ford Bronco and a Valk plow. After putting out flyers in the local neighborhood and securing residential customers, I was off and running. The following winter we secured our first commercial customer through an advertisement in the Classified section of the local newspaper. Over time the residential business grew to include more than 600 homes and six subcontractors. I found that subcontracting was necessary as I did not have the capital to invest in equipment. Thus it was much easier to hire others with plow trucks to work with me in my quest to grow the business.

High stress

The snow business is usually a high margin business. However, sometimes all that money is clouded by sleep deprivation, angry wives, disappointed children and unfeeling customers. Before you start, make sure you have seriously considered your level of commitment to the endeavor.

Snowplowing isn’t for everyone. It takes long hours and lots of sleepless nights. Customers can be very demanding and really don’t care about how much (or how little) sleep you get. Snow falls at some very inopportune times and missing a family Christmas, New Years Eve, or even Thanksgiving is a very real possibility. Often customers will call just as the first Christmas gift is being opened because they want to get to a family gathering. I have had it happen where a residential customer called at 8 a.m. on Christmas Day demanding that we plow their driveway so that they could go to church services. 16 inches of snow was already on the ground and streets and no city plows, which would normally remove the snow from the city streets, had been dispatched. I plowed the drive-
way and then explained to the homeowner that they would only be able to make it to the end of the driveway.

After plowing out another resident (with much the same intention of going out to get a loaf of bread), I went by the first residence only to see their car stuck at the entrance to the driveway. I got no satisfaction from being right. However, this sort of attitude on the part of the residential customer is commonplace. It is frustrating, and often difficult to envision. This is part of the lives we have chosen when entering the snow removal business.

Commercial customers are no less demanding. Retail facilities are now open on most holidays and often demand that their parking lots and facilities be free of snow 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Regardless of your personal feelings, the customer must come first in such situations if you hope to achieve

**Working as a subcontractor**

If you already have the necessary equipment, there are several ways to enter the snow and ice removal industry.

One common method is to become a subcontractor for an established contractor in your area. It’s easy to work this way. You generate income for yourself, and you don’t have any of the headaches that come with self employment. You don’t have to sell yourself to customers. You don’t have to price out the jobs. You don’t have to worry about turning a profit from sales and service. You don’t have to deal with customers. You don’t have to collect money. You just do the work, and get paid a fair amount for your efforts.

Working as a subcontractor also provides several of the benefits that come with self employment. You can depreciate your equipment and deduct associated expenses. These deductions allow you to keep a lot of the money you earn. A loyal subcontractor can generate quite a nice income working under the direction of a larger contractor who is taking all the risks and finding all the work.

**Finding a contractor to sub for**

However, finding reputable contractors to work for is not as easy as it sounds. Unfortunately, there are a few unscrupulous contractors out there that will promise the world, and then not
“customer satisfaction” levels that are necessary to your business’s success.

Both residential or commercial snow removal can be very profitable.

What do you need to get started?

- A viable plow truck. It is not necessary to have a brand new vehicle, but a reliable truck is necessary. Cost for a good used truck – $8,000; cost for a new truck – $25,000

- A good plow. Used plows are easy to find, but usually have a “history” with them. Cost for a used plow - $600 to $1,000; cost for a new plow – $2,800 to $3,500. Keep in mind that with used equipment come necessary repairs, so a viable repair kit is necessary. Cost for necessary replacement items – $350 (estimated)

- A method to invoice your customers. A simple software program and computer will suffice for the start up operation. Cost of a computer – under $1,200; cost for software – $100 to $300.

Adding vehicles

To grow, the need for a plowing vehicle becomes necessary. All the truck manufacturers have their good and bad points. I have owned most types do not necessarily favor one over another. Specific manufacturers aside, there are some things that you should look for in selecting and ordering plow trucks.

Four-wheel-drive trucks are usually recommended for plowing snow. Two wheel drive trucks can work if tire chains are used, or if the truck is large enough or can hold enough weight to allow the drive wheels to have traction. (See Chapter 8, Snow Removal Equipment, in the author’s book for more information on snowplow vehicles.)

Plow time

The next investment is acquiring a plow for your truck. The options are fairly limited thus making the choice much easier. Straight Blades and “Vee Blades” are the most commonly used in the industry.
Subcontractor

(Continued from page 47)

live up to their own billing there is usually at least one in every market that operates this way. Ascertaining who these people are takes some effort.

When you seek out a contractor to work for, research them as you would any potential employer (although you will not be an employee when you work as a subcontractor). The best source of reference when seeking out someone to plow for is to talk with those who are already working for the plowing contractor. Usually you will hear who is hiring by word of mouth or through a newspaper ad in the “General Help” section of the local newspaper.

Once you make contact with a potential contractor, interview them as you would for any job you might apply for. Remember, the interview process is a two way street. You have every right to ask questions as you would any potential employer. Some of the things you want to know are:

- How do you route your subs?
- What kind of customers does your company service (residential, commercial, retail, industrial)?
- How do you pay your subs?
- What kind of insurance do you require of your subs?
- Do you take on gravel parking lots?
- How much can I expect to work during any given snow event?
- Do you run a “speed crew” for minor events and how will I fit into that scenario?
- What about breakdown time?
- What is your policy on travel time between jobs?
- Can I plow some of my own accounts, too (not while you are paying me, of course – but I do want to grow my business too)?
- What is your policy about who gets called out first?
- Will you let me talk to your other subs to find out about your company?

A viable and honest contractor should have no problems providing you with references. The references you want are those who already plow for this contractor. Some good signs are that subs stay with this contractor for a long period of time (as in years), the contractor has a generally good reputation among his peers, there are no unresolved issues with the local Attorney General’s office or Better Business Bureau.
Recently some variations of these blades have come on the market. These variations include plows that have hydraulically operated extensions on either end of the mold board, and even plows that “flip over” to create a back-dragging pull plow on the front of the truck.

Straight blade plows are built by numerous manufacturers and come in several “duties” depending upon the application and how much you have to spend. One should be very cautious not to purchase a plow that is too light duty for the intended use. Saving a few dollars at the outset can become very expensive in the long run.

Furthermore, repairing a plow during a wind-driven snowstorm with temperatures hovering around zero can be very uncomfortable. Be cognizant of such things as the size of the quick disconnects on the hydraulic hoses, the relative strength of these hoses, the size and location of the connecting pins, and the ease of operation from the cab of the truck. Plows now come with various quick-attach and quick-detach systems to allow for easy on, and easy disconnecting of the plow from the truck. Unfortunately, with more moving parts come more opportunities for things to go wrong.

To salt or not to salt?

Another service most snow professionals add as they grow is deicing services, whether that be a simple salt spreader mounted on the back of a pickup truck or a sophisticated liquid deicing application system.

Deicing can be quite profitable, but requires some expertise. Knowing what to use and how to apply it is necessary. Tailgate spreaders are a viable option for the contractor just starting out. These are relatively inexpensive and easy to use and install on a truck. Most contractors will use bagged deicing product, placing several bags in the bed of the truck, opening them when filling the tailgate hopper and charging “per pound” for product used.

V-Box spreaders that slide into the bed of the truck necessitate the use of bulk salt products in lieu of the bagged material. Bulk product is much less expensive than bagged product, but requires a skid steer or another type loader to fill the unit. Also, storage of bulk product requires some specialized considerations. There are environmental concerns when storing bulk product that must be dealt with. Bulk product must be stored on an impermeable surface (concrete or blacktop) and the pile must be contained in some fashion to prevent run-off if the material gets wet.

However, contractors all over the country readily admit that deicing services carry
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the highest margin of any service they supply (including plowing snow).

Staffing

One of the first considerations should be the staff of your existing business. Will they support such a decision? Better yet, can you get your staff to make the decision you want for you? If the support staff “buys in” prior to your issuing a mandate, it will make the entire process easier to implement.

The arguments ‘against’ such an endeavor (from the staff) usually result from ignorance of what is required to be in the snow removal business, what work is necessary, a lack of knowledge of pricing alternatives, and ignorance of the margins that can be achieved with proper planning and attitudes. As a result, make sure staff are properly informed and educated about the benefits, both for them and for the company, of beginning snow removal work in the winter.

The power of networking

Networking with other successful snow contractors, through associations and industry trade shows and events, can give you insight into venturing into snow removal, as well as generate excitement for the process and can quickly alleviate fears that are associated with any new endeavor. As an add-on operation, snow removal and ice control operations will most likely generate higher gross margins than the core business. However, snow and ice removal must be approached properly in order to achieve such results.

John A. Allin, president of Snow Dragon, LLC, is one of the foremost consultants in the country on snow and ice. He sold his company in 2004. His company was the largest snow contracting company in North America at the time of its sale. He has also been a speaker at TCI EXPO. This article was adapted from his book, Managing Snow and Ice.
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By Rick Howland

In our wrap-up of mower/mulchers in August, we failed to mention two manufacturers who definitely have something to offer in this area. A relatively new concept in brush cutting are high-powered units purpose-built and dedicated as mower/mulchers.

From the Loader Division of NMC-Wollard Inc., maker of the Swinger line of articulated loaders, comes the Swinger 3K Mower/Mulcher. The result of a partnership between NMC-Wollard and Fecon, the unit is comprised of a compact, 4-wheel-drive articulated Swinger 3K loader specifically re-engineered to carry Fecon’s Bull Hog fixed tooth flail mower.

The Bull Hog, with 30 fixed-position carbide tip cutting tools, can cut a 60-inch swath through brush and small trees. And replacement of the cutting tools is easy – just one nut and bolt.

On the one hand, it is a compact wheeled, articulated unit, according to Bruce Steingart, vice president of marketing for Swinger Loaders. But with the Fecon brush cutting head, its light and more maneuverable design, plus high visibility, the 3K is promoted as being ideal for clearing along transmission lines and rights of way, and for opening and keeping clear fireways where maneuverability, size and power are determining factors.

So, why a compact articulated flail machine?

The first reason is surface disturbance, or more accurately non-disturbance. Articulated machines don’t depend on wheel drag to turn, so they don’t tear up the ground as a skid steer does. The Swinger 3K has full-time four wheel drive with a 45 degree limited-slip feature that transfers wheel torque from a non-tractive wheel to

Supertrak, Inc.’s SK120TR custom skid steer mulcher with Fecon BH74SS Bull Hog® Head.
one that supports propulsion. The limited slip feature is plus when operating on turf or other sensitive surfaces. Both drive axles feature outboard planetary reduction which (1) places the engine operating range at usable mowing speeds, (2) amplifies torque at the drive wheels and (3) reduces driveline stress because the torque boost occurs at the wheels instead of upstream in the driveline.

"It all comes down to integrated engineering," comments Steingart. "The engine, hydrostatics and driveline are component-matched for profitable off-road operation in a variety of applications."

Because of the aggressive cutting mower/mulcher applications, the 3K is delivered with a guarded cab to protect from flying debris.

Supertrak

Supertrak, Inc. takes a slightly different approach, building what are essentially custom machines, again dedicated to mowing/mulching. According to Chuck Hussey, Supertrak sales and marketing manager, every Supertrak machine is designed to power a mulching head. Fecon is the specified and preferred mulching head of choice for the Supertrak carriers.

The approach Supertrak takes is to start with partial Caterpillar machines, install more powerful engines and upgrade the hydraulics specifically to bring more power (higher horsepower and higher gallons-per-minute of hydraulic flow) to the cutting head.

"Standard, multi-purpose machines are not generally set up that way," Hussey says.

A half dozen styles include two rubber-tracked skid steers (97 and 127 hp), each customized for mulching. After that, the line jumps to the SK 200 TR, a steel-track, 200 hp bulldozer unit with a mulching head that can be 6-way angled for irregular terrain just like a dozer blade version. The machine comes with a blade, but it's primarily built for mulching, Hussey says.

There is also a 400 hp, rubber-tired, articulated mulcher, the SK 400, and a steel track SK 400 TR machine based on the Cat 953 track loader. The SK 400 TR has a Fecon head with the capability of oscillation, "almost swiveling or tilting for slopes and grades," Hussey explains.

"We also do a lot of customization using excavators, self-contained, high horsepower types with one engine, and we also manufacture power-pack add-ons. One example is the SK 450 MX, a 450 horsepower, single-engine excavator."

“Our mission is to manufacture custom brush cutting machines built to exceed the mulching industry standards of overall performance and serviceability,” he adds.
**Tree trimmer, 32, killed when truck overturns**

December 20, 2005 – A tree trimmer was killed and two others injured when a truck they were working from overturned on the shoulder of Interstate 95 in Rosedale, Maryland. The three men were positioning a log truck with an extended lift for a tree-trimming detail, according to police.

The 32-year-old man was killed when the truck overturned, trapping him between the truck and the guard rail. A mother worker, who was in the truck’s bucket when it overturned, suffered serious injuries. The third man, who had apparently been thrown from the vehicle, was also injured.

After interviewing a co-worker of the three men, investigators believe that remote hydraulics, which control the bucket, malfunctioned, police said. Officials with Maryland Occupational Safety and Health were to conduct a separate investigation.

**Tree worker dies in chipper accident**

December 28, 2005 – A co-worker knew something was wrong when he heard a wood chipper running at full blast without the normal sound of tree limbs being shredded into mulch. The co-worker, 40 feet up in the bucket cutting limbs off a tree in Loveland, Colorado, lowered himself and saw his boss’ feet sticking out of the chipper. He turned off the machine and went to a nearby house to call 911. The 54-year-old victim appeared to have been pulled into a nearby house to call 911. The 54-year-old victim appeared to have been thrown into the machine for processing when the upper portion of the boom apparently came in contact with an 8,000-volt distribution line. The man was unconscious on the ground beside the truck when medics arrived and was declared dead at the Nebraska Medical Center.

Other employees working at the site were not injured.

**Falling branch kills man on tree-trim crew**

April 8, 2006 – A 47-year-old man was killed in Trenton, Michigan, when he was struck by a falling branch while he was working a tree-removal crew. He was part of a five-man crew removing branches at a residence.

The man was on the ground near a chipper that was being used to grind the large cottonwood’s limbs when the accident occurred. Workers had already cut through three branches with a chain saw and eased them down to the machine for processing when a 5/8-inch bull rope snapped and the branch gave way. Crew members yelled “headache” to warn those on the ground to get clear, but the victim apparently went back for his sunglasses. He died instantly when the branch fell on him.

The workers told police the ground was clear when they began cutting the branch after an initial check. The tree service company had no insurance coverage at the time of the accident, according to published reports.

**Three killed in chipper crash; driver charged**

April 13, 2006 – A wood chipper broke loose from the chip truck towing it and caused a car crash that resulted in the deaths of a 37-year-old father and two of his 4-year-old triplet children in Richland Township, Pennsylvania. The 34-year-old driver of the chip truck was charged with homicide by vehicle, involuntary manslaughter, aggravated assault and numerous vehicle code violations. The tree company that owned the truck was also being investigated.

The man charged reportedly did not properly hook the 6,050-pound wood chipper to his dump truck before it became detached on Route 8 in Richland. Witnesses told police that the truck picked up speed as it traveled down a hill with the chipper swaying in tow before it disconnected. Investigators were not sure what exactly caused the separation – whether it was excessive speed, a bump in the road or the hilly terrain – but according to published reports, the man charged told investigators he did not engage the required latch, pins or safety chains.

The wood chipper crossed the center line of the four-lane roadway and struck the driver’s side of a minivan being driven in the opposite direction. Only the minivan driver’s son survived, though he was critically injured. The wife and mother of the victims were not in the vehicle at the time of the crash.

Police said the truck driver was speeding and that the chipper was moving at 70 mph when it collided with the minivan. A subsequent investigation led to revelations that the dump truck had phony inspection stickers.
What is the best way to improve safety?

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The founders of Horticultural Asset Management (HMI) began with a question: If homeowners can insure their valuable jewelry, fine art and antiques, why can’t they insure their valuable trees and landscapes?

The reason was simple, says Doug Cowles, Chief Operating Officer of HMI, “Very few insurance companies will look at an individual tree and sell insurance on it, because there has been no standardized value.”

Although most homeowners policies provide some coverage for trees on a property, the amount homeowners receive to replace a tree that has been damaged or removed is based on the value of the property, not the value of the tree.

“Some companies will offer $5,000 to 10,000 on very high-end policies, but the vast majority only offer about $250,” Cowles says.

In July, 2003, HMI came up with the solution. “What we offer the insurance industry is the Kelly Blue Book equivalent.” One major insurance company has already committed to writing policies based on HMI’s valuations, says Cowles.

Roger Funk, Chief Technology Officer of Davey Tree Expert Co, which is a member of HMI, says, “It’s a unique concept. I’m surprised the industry hadn’t already thought of it. I think it’s going to take the real estate and homeowners’ industries by storm.”

HMI’s founders are a technology entrepreneur, Bill Glynn, a landscape contractor, David Argay, and a businessman, Tom Hendrickson. They joined forces with Dr. Michael Dirr, a professor of horticulture, who wrote the manual, HMI Horticultural Assessments.

HMI has member nurseries across the country, which provide HMI with wholesale pricing information on thousands of trees and shrubs. They also work with HMI to project trends and market factors that could impact wholesale pricing in the future.

Tree replacement value has traditionally been done by tree appraisers, who approach the process on the understanding that every tree and every situation are different. They base their judgements on the CTLA manual, which has been fine-tuned over many years by a collaboration of arborists, their understanding of tree biology, local laws, and even human nature.

“In no shape or form are we appraisers,” Cowles says. “We don’t provide the species rating or condition rating. It doesn’t matter if the tree is in an appropriate area.” HMI doesn’t evaluate hazard trees, although part of the assessor’s report is visual evidence of a problem that might require further inspection.

HMI members aren’t even called appraisers: they’re assessors.

HMI assessors determine the type, size and general health of the trees, based on

Business of Tree Care

By Janet Aird

Although most homeowners policies provide some coverage for trees on a property, the amount homeowners receive to replace a tree that has been damaged or removed is based on the value of the property, not the value of the tree. Photo courtesy of Adrian Juttner, Adrian’s Tree Service.
Dirr’s manual. The information is entered into a software program HMI created and patented, which contains pricing information from member nurseries.

The result gives property owners the current as well as the projected replacement values of their trees, shrubs and landscapes. It also recommends how to care for them and notes trees that might need attention, for example, lightning protection.

The valuations also can be used to determine the value of a loss for tax purposes. And in the real estate industry, they can provide a homeowner with an inventory, description, replacement valuation and instructions on how to care for the trees on the property. They can also help a seller support the asking price of a landscaped property.

According to Scott Cullen, a tree appraiser and member of TCIA, ISA and ASCA, “The CTLA guide suggests that when doing the replacement cost approach to value, the professional way is to get the replacement cost from three sources, for example three contractors or three nurseries, that give the cost of the plant.”

Appraisers can also rely on Regional Plant Appraisal Committees, which survey their markets and come up with representative replacement costs, Cullen says.

HMI uses, at a minimum, six sources for replacement value. “Our pricing data is far more robust,” Cowles says.

Still, a disclaimer on the HMI web site states that their assessments are not guarantees of the actual value of the property, and that actual values may differ significantly from the estimates, and that HMI does not guarantee that any estimate they provide will be true, accurate or accepted by any third party.

As is true with appraisers, “We can’t guarantee that any number that we create will be accepted by anybody,” Cowles says.

Another part of HMI’s unique concept is its membership system. To join at any of its three levels, an individual or company must belong to a professional organization, such as TCIA, ISA, ASCA, ANLA or PLANET.

A assessors at the Member level use HMI information to perform assessments. No training is required, and their assessments are not identified as ‘certified’.

Authorized Members have completed HMI’s training. Their assessments are identified as ‘certified’, which means they can be used for HMI insurance purposes. HMI may refer leads to Authorized...
Members in areas where there is no Premier Level Member.

Premier Level Members (PMI) have at least one staff assessor who has completed HMI’s training. They pay an initial fee and an annual renewal fee. They do site and horticultural assessments, and landscape maintenance and remediation.

There are different levels within the Premier level. At the highest one, HMI assigns members exclusive territory in which no other HMI member competes. HMI gives these members priority for referrals in their territory. If another Premier Level company has an existing customer in the territory, though, the customer stays with them.

HMI defines a territory as a county or geographic area with a given number of owner-occupied homes, says Cowles. “HMI gives one referral right (territory) for every 50,000 owner-occupied homes in a county.” If there are 100,000 owner-occupied homes, for example, it assigns two member rights. One PLM can buy both territories.

Some PLMs are partnering to work out referrals, says Cowles, since assessments are just part of the work HMI members do. There is also pest control, fertilization, light pruning, removal of everything from limbs to entire trees, and tree installation.

Territories are assigned on a first-come-first-served basis. If a company wants to get into a territory that has already been assigned to another company, “We can’t make them available,” says Cowles.

Davey, Bartlett and ValleyCrest have all joined HMI at the PLM level, Cowles says. Bartlett is already working in the Raleigh, North Carolina area. Davey is creating a training program for HMI. “When the program is in shape,” Funk says, “we’ll start doing assessments.”

So, what will happen to small companies?
“My personal view is that we’re a rising tide that’s going to float all boats in the green industry. I think there will be a far more positive effect over time – there will be an increase in the net revenue that many people will benefit from. I hope the negative effects will be minimized.”

Doug Cowles

“It’s our expectation that in major metropolitan areas, large companies will have an advantage,” Cowles says. “But there will be many, many smaller markets that they don’t cover. The large guys just aren’t there or they don’t have the resources.”

The American Nursery and Landscape Association has endorsed HMI, Cowles says. The American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA) is still considering the issue, says Beth Palys, executive director of ASCA.

Cowles says, “I know there will be some appraisers who say, ‘That’s what I used to do for a living.’” But, he adds, “Appraisers could use HMI ratings. What we could potentially be is suppliers of the information they need.

Cullen is cautiously optimistic. “HMI may increase the number of assessments that are done,” he says, and this could lead to an increase in valuation activity. It also may be an excellent data source.

As an appraiser and an appraisal educator,” Cullen says, “I like to look at any of these methods as alternative tools. My first reaction is not to consider them mutually exclusive. A good assessor will use the most useful tool for the assignment.

Janet Aird is a freelance writer who lives in Altadena, California.

My personal view is that we’re a rising tide that’s going to float all boats in the green industry. I think there will be a far more positive effect over time – there will be an increase in the net revenue that many people will benefit from. I hope the negative effects will be minimized.”
Clarification of “running bowline” photo

I find great value and accuracy of information in Tree Care Industry magazine, and I wanted to bring to your attention a photo that seemed incorrect in the June 2006 issue. The article “The Fundamentals & Fine Points of Footlocking,” describes, on page 9 in image 3, a “running bowline,” although the image looks more like an upside bowline (not a real knot).

I have enclosed an image of a running bowline, and have created a sketch that shows how it would be used to tie a static line in a tree limb. The image shows the knot being tied close to the ground. After the knot is tied from the ground, the knot would then be tightened up against the tree limb by pulling the standing part of the rope.

I have found the running bowline to be very useful when setting a rope for footlocking, and for tying off a static line for pulling trees during removal operations.

Doug Tucker
Prairie Grove, Illinois

No more free estimates

Cassidy Martorana made a good choice in speaking out on the subject of giving free estimates. (“Should arborists continue giving free estimates,” Letters, July 2006 TCI. I do agree with this arborist 100 percent and here is why!

The price of gas has risen to over $3 a gallon, men who are employed with a company expect a good salary for the hard and hazardous work performed, insurance goes up – never down, the cost of equipment used every day, and maintenance, and the
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Letters

list continues. If you continue to go for free and spend, say, 30 minutes trying to make a sale and then the person says they “are just getting quotes,” well, you just lost money – and to do that every day?

Yes, I am – and our company, City Forestry, is – in favor of this, and will start the ball rolling to see what happens. Unfortunately, when you’re in competition with over 100 names in the phone book, it may be a hard sell to ask for a fee when others (nonprofessionals) go for free and almost work for free!

Avalon M. Standstall, Certified Arborist, City Forestry, Melbourne, Florida

How not to use a ladder

I am the owner/operator of 4 Seasons Outdoor Services, a tree care company in Dutchess County, New York. I thought I’d seen all the pretty odd things in my 30 years in this business, but yesterday I realized I hadn’t.

One of my employees’ sons told him he had to stop by their church and see what one of the parishioners was doing, and my employee’s son thought it was dangerous. My employee also has between 30 and 35 years in this business. So, yesterday, Friday morning, Mike and I drove over to

Great effort had been made to lash the ladders to the tree. All photos courtesy of Doug Peterkin.
the church to see what was going on. When we got there I couldn’t believe what I saw.

This parishioner was in his 70s and had attached ropes to ladders and the ladders to the tree to cut out dead wood over the road and parking lot for safety reasons. Mike and I both believe we saved this man’s life. We told another parishioner we’d be back with my bucket truck to finish cutting the deadwood out the right and safe way.

This man, the day before, had already cut two large, most likely healthy limbs completely off because he could not get out on them to cut the small dead limbs off. So, luckily, we got back there before he started this suicidal tree pruning job again.

I’d like to share this with you and your readers for when you’re in the field and you see people doing dumb things, the right thing to do is to stop them. Or they might hurt themselves or others. We finished pruning the deadwood on the tree. They tried to pay us but I did not accept it. I did not do this for money, but to save a life and property.

Douglas H. Peterkin, owner/operator, 4 Seasons Outdoor Services, Dutchess County, New York

Editor’s note: Doug Peterkin’s brother, Don, is a TCIA member. We are trying to convince Doug to join.

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Seeking experienced climber/foreman with leadership abilities. Must be an experienced boom operator, CDL preferred. Year round work. Placing importance on safety, training and customer service is our commitment to our employees and customers. Top pay based on experience with assistance in relocation. Please call (631) 474-8084.

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Well established tree service company in Southern Rhode Island is looking for a tree worker with extensive bucket truck and climbing experience for full-time position (40-50 hours/week) to run a crew. Work week is Monday through Friday. Pay is negotiable and competitive. Great benefits package includes: health insurance, paid vacation and retirement plan. Start ASAP. Fax resume to (401) 294-6396 or e-mail to ameskaiser@cox.net. Check out our Web site: www.kaisertree.com

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For any questions, please contact: Ms. Debbie Wilhoit, Entomology Department, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 Telephone: (301) 405-3913. e-mail: debrar@umd.edu

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Continues to grow in the Western US & Canada immediate openings for Experienced Foremen, Tree Climbers, IPM Monitors & arborist reps in San Francisco Bay area, Phoenix, Tucson and British Columbia, Canada offices. Paid vacation, holidays, medical, dental, 401K, training and continuing education. Applicant must be safe, reliable, customer service & career oriented. CDL & ISA certifications are a plus. Fax or e-mail your resume to (415) 472-8651 or pandreucci@bartlett.com.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Number</th>
<th>Part No.</th>
<th>Knife Description &amp; Size</th>
<th>SALE Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC1000</td>
<td>KCH20109</td>
<td>Double Edge 9&quot; x 4-1/2&quot; x 5/8&quot;</td>
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<td>BC1800XL</td>
<td>KCH20112</td>
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<td>BC1220-BC1250</td>
<td>KCH20002</td>
<td>Single Edge 8&quot; x 3-1/2&quot; x 3/8&quot;</td>
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<td>BC1400</td>
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<td>BC1800-BC2000</td>
<td>KCH20103</td>
<td>Double Edge 10&quot; x 5-1/2&quot; x 5/8&quot;</td>
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**Morbark**

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<tr>
<td>100, 200, 290</td>
<td>KCH10001</td>
<td>Double Edge 7-1/4&quot; x 4&quot; x 3/8&quot;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10, 13, 17, 2050</td>
<td>KCH40001</td>
<td>Double Edge 10-1/2&quot; x 5&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
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**Brush Bandit**

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<th>Part No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>90XP, 280XP</td>
<td>KCH10004</td>
<td>Double Edge 5-3/32&quot; x 4&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>$21.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>100XP-250XP</td>
<td>KCH10003</td>
<td>Double Edge 7-1/4&quot; x 4&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>$19.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>250XP, 254XP after '01</td>
<td>KCH10101</td>
<td>Double Edge 7-1/4&quot; x 4-1/2&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>$25.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890 Intimidator</td>
<td>KCH20103</td>
<td>Double Edge 10&quot; x 5-1/2&quot; x 5/8&quot;</td>
<td>$37.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Asplundh**

<table>
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<th>Knife Description &amp; Size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12&quot; Drum</td>
<td>KCH30001</td>
<td>Single Edge 12&quot; x 3&quot; x 3/8&quot;</td>
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<td>16&quot; Drum</td>
<td>KCH30002</td>
<td>Single Edge 16&quot; x 3&quot; x 3/8&quot;</td>
<td>$19.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Please circle 42 on Reader Service Card
“Is it Hispanic or Latino?”

I am asked this question all too often. This question often puts me in a strange position. I am not comfortable being a spokesperson for so many diverse people from various backgrounds and countries who share a common language and religion that fall under a particular label or categorization, but I also cannot be seen as dodging this very popular question. So here goes.

I usually start my answer by saying, “On behalf of my people there is no ‘my or one people.’” I usually get a hearty chuckle from the audience.

To be Hispanic is to be of Spanish heritage and descent — your family roots can be traced all the way back to Spain. To be Spanish is to be someone who came to the U.S. directly from Spain. Yes, I am Hispanic, for my parents, Antonio and Irma (immigrants from Colombia, South America), have traced our family roots back to Spain through Colombia to the great Spanish painter Velázquez. I also speak Spanish because my parents insisted we be raised in a bicultural and bilingual home.

To be Latino is to be of Latin American, Central American or South American heritage and descent — my family is also Latino since Colombia is in South America. Yes, that would make me both Latino and Hispanic.

Now, let’s see if you can get the next question. Can you be Latino and not Hispanic? Think for a second before you read on.

Yes. What would that make you and your heritage and roots? Indigenous or Native South American, or “Indio” in Spanish.

What do Latinos call an Indio or native who marries a conquistador — the people who came over from Spain to conquer the New World? Mestizo or mixed heritage.

So, which term is more respectful or acceptable Latino or Hispanic? The answer to this question varies from person to person. Personally, I believe the term Latino is more inclusive and is broader and includes more people and more backgrounds. I also believe the term Hispanic has some negative baggage including the associated “Spic.”

When training or speaking publicly, I usually go back and forth between the two terms to be most respectful and inclusive. The same way I go back and forth between Black and African American. The safest bet, of course, is to address people by their name.

The numbers will set you free

Chew on these numbers and take into consideration the implications for you and your organization from the perspective of your customers and your employees — who you hire and who you sell to. You will see great numbers to keep in mind when positioning your company, your next office and your next marketing push. (Many of these numbers come from my work in the construction, landscape and business-to-consumer industries, which are industries that understood these numbers many years ago. Construction, landscaping, manufacturing and related industries are in the “trenches” and don’t understand why so many other industries are “not getting it.”)

Now I rely on construction demographics because many tree care and landscape contractors tell me they are losing good workers to construction and there is little demographic information focused solely on tree care or landscaping contractors and growers.) Net immigration into our country is way up (no surprise here)

- Hispanic residents are expected to double in the U.S. over the next half century, from 12 percent in 1999, to 24 percent in 2050 (crisis or opportunity?)
- Domestic migration (within U.S.)
will continue to move to states in the south and west

- Five states that will experience the largest population increases: California, Texas, Florida, Washington and Georgia.
- Hispanics are the largest minority group in 14 of 24 states west of the Mississippi, as well as Florida and all of the northeastern states and are the largest U.S. minority overall.
- Growth of foreign-born population from 1990-2000:
  - United States 57 percent (total 13 percent)
  - California 37 percent
  - N. Carolina 274 percent
  - Georgia 233 percent
  - Arkansas 196 percent
- In Durham County, N.C., 67 percent of all construction workers are Hispanic; in Gwinnett County, Ga., 65 percent.
- From 1996 to 2002, Hispanics made up 13 percent of U.S. population, but supplied 51 percent of new workers (Wow!)
- Hispanic workers held more than 17 percent of all construction jobs in U.S., but make up only 11 percent of work force.
- Percentage of Hispanic construction workers in selected states:
  - New Mexico 48 percent
  - Texas 45 percent
  - California 34 percent
  - Arizona 34 percent
  - Nevada 28 percent
  - Florida 21 percent
  - Colorado 20 percent
- 82 percent of workforce was white non-Hispanic in 1980, 73 percent in 2000, and is projected to be 53 percent in 2050

The first and second wave

When you talk about Hispanic-Latino immigrants, you quickly have to discuss the difference between immigrants and their children born in this country and their children’s children.

I am first generation American (first born in this country in my family) with a foot in both worlds - while embracing the U.S. or American culture I also wanted to honor my parent’s heritage, culture and roots. Here is what we know about Latinos like me.
- 12 million strong according to the U.S. Census Bureau
- In 2000, first generation Americans (or second generation Latinos) accounted for 28 percent of the U.S. Latino population
- Between 2000 and 2020:
  - The number of U.S. Latinos born to immigrant parents will grow 119 percent to represent 36 percent of all U.S. Latinos (119 percent increase)
  - This compares to just 45 percent growth among immigrant Latinos and a 71 percent increase in the Latino population overall, predicts the Pew Hispanic Center
  - Whites will only increase 14 percent in this same period

So there are two waves - the actual immigrants are the first wave, their children make up the second wave (understand the role of religion and tight knit supportive extended family)

So what are you going to do about it? I always say the demographic data does not lie and ignorance is not bliss. Remember - demographics are our destiny.

Are you swimming yet?

Do you think you can continue to run your business the same way you always have - status quo - and expect increasing returns? Hogwash. Get busy figuring out how to come out on top, how to see the opportunities upon us. Aren’t you an entrepreneur?

One of the hottest jobs in 2006 in any field or industry may be your director of emerging markets, manager of diversity relations, coordinator of multicultural markets or vice president of diversity and community relations - call it whatever you want, but it will be a person who is part futurist and part change agent for your company.

Study and embrace the Hispanic-Latino
emerging labor force and marketplace in your industry, and get there first because once your competition figures this out (and they will if they have not already), you know followers don’t capture market share, they get leftovers.

Immerse yourself in everything Hispanic-Latino. Start watching Univision, Telemundo or CNN Hispano. Join LULAC (The League of United Latin American Citizens) and National Council of La Raza and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Hire people with multicultural backgrounds and I don’t mean they have to necessarily be Hispanic-Latino, but professionals who are multicultural-savvy and comfortable and well versed in these emerging markets.

Pick up one of those Spanish newspapers, and please note that advertising on Spanish radio and in Spanish newspapers is still a steal. Are you reading Hispanic Magazine, Latina, OYE or Tu Cuidad or have you surfed the Web lately and visited Quepasa.com or MiGente.com?

Hire bilingual staff and post the sign “Hablamos Español” and get ready to see what happens. Don’t roll out your new Hispanic-Latino marketing and selling strategies in all of your units or offices all at once. Pilot it first in a particular area or region and just watch what happens and learn from your mistakes. Your team of professionals, your hires must be multicultural-sensitive and aware.

Study and understand the influence of family, language, culture and religion on the Hispanic-Latino experience. Come to grips with your own biases and preconceived notions that may poison your understanding of these free market forces at play. These socioeconomic forces will make or break your organization. I close with a best practice organization and I think this is a glimpse into the future.

I recently read an article about Wegmans Food Markets. I live near Washington Dulles airport in Herndon/Dulles area of northern Virginia, near Washington, D.C., and my family loves Wegmans. This is an area where Hispanics-Latinos can make up as much as 40 to 70 percent of the area depending on how you slice it and our region has one of the lowest unemployment rates (2.3 percent in December) in the U.S. At Wegmans in Dulles more than 200 of 650 workers do not speak English as their primary language. This store:

- Provides job training in English, Spanish and Mandarin (think safety here)
- Offers workers courses in English as a second language

Has a course in Spanish for managers

Shows on employees’ nametags whether they speak a language other than English to help non-English-speaking workers and customers

A spokesperson for Wegmans says, “Hiring immigrant workers makes good business sense, filling low-paying jobs that many U.S. born workers don’t want with employees motivated to move up through the ranks as they learn the language. Having a polyglot workforce can also boost sales and build loyalty among non-English speaking customers.”

Why would an employee who comes to work for Wegmans not give their employer 110 percent everyday? Think about how loyal these multicultural or multinational workers will be to an organization that truly cares about their personnel.

Make no mistake – this is do or die time. Diversity Training Group has been offering a new line of Spanish Translation Services where we are translating policies and procedures into Spanish and even doing the actual training in Spanish. Why? Because we saw the writing on the demographic wall and we are no fools – we see opportunity and this highway is paved with platinum.

Are you reading the writing on the wall?

Mauricio Velásquez, is president and CEO of The Diversity Training Group, Inc., and Spanish Translation Services, LLC. He will present two workshops at TCI EXPO in Baltimore in November: “Managing the Hispanic Workforce Today” and “Hispanic Workers: How to Succeed in the English Speaking Culture and Company.”
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Twenty trainers, safety supervisors and owners participated in the pilot workshop for the Certified Treecare Safety Professional program. TCIA will use extensive input from both the participants and the trainers to refine the two-day workshop.

"It was incredibly valuable for all of us to be able to work in a highly participatory, small group setting for two days," said Peter Gerstenberger, CTSP program administrator for TCIA. "There are challenges that we face universally as an industry in effective safety program management. We were able to address those challenges head-on, but do so in a way that was responsive to the needs of the individuals in the workshop and the companies they represented."

"The CTSP workshop ... gave us an opportunity to discuss the class material as a group and I was able to come away with many new ideas to incorporate into our company," says Eric Detweiler, Townsend Tree Service safety director.

"The workshop laid the groundwork, giving (participants) the basic tools to do the job. The information I picked up there I’ve already used in my training," says Tim Walsh, practicing arborist, training and safety consultant, and a Ph.D. candidate in occupational safety.

The first CTSP pilot was held in Minneapolis in conjunction with the ISA Annual Conference. The next scheduled CTSP workshop is Nov. 7-8 in Baltimore, in conjunction with TCI EXPO, with more 2006 dates to be added soon. Class size will be limited, so act quickly if you or any of your employees intend to participate. Call 1-800-733-2622 or e-mail peter@tcia.org for details.

TCIA gets a visit from Washington

TCIA’s headquarters in Manchester, N.H., had its first Congressional visit on August 15, 2006. Congressman Jeb Bradley of New Hampshire’s First District requested time to visit with the TCIA staff regarding issues important to the tree care industry. Congressman Bradley, the first recipient of TCIA’s Legislator of the Year Award in 2005, also authored a letter of support for TCIA’s 2004 OSHA Susan Harwood Grant, which provided almost $200,000 for EHAP training around the nation. He has generously agreed to do the same for our 2006 grant proposal currently in submission.

The Congressman visited with us for an hour, met with the TCIA management team to cover both association and tree care industry legislative issues and took a Q&A ses-
sion with the entire TCIA team. This allowed us to discuss that, while TCIA is supportive of comprehensive immigration reform, quotas for H2-B visas absolutely need to be expanded. Our member companies could go out of business waiting for immigration reform, whereas the current system of legal temporary workers needs to be continued and expanded. Congressman Bradley also continues to be a supporter of association health care plans, which would go a long way to lowering one of the fastest increasing costs for tree care companies.

**Wage hike and Death Tax stall in Senate**

Just prior to leaving for August recess, Republican leadership attempted to push through a legislative package that would have extended tax breaks, permanently reduced the estate tax and increased the minimum wage. The House of Representatives passed the package, which had been dubbed the Trifecta, 230-180 the last week in July. Despite best efforts, however, Senate Republican leadership was unable to secure the 60 votes needed to end debate on the bill, with the closure motion failing 56-42 and two Republicans – Senators George Voinovich (OH) and Lincoln Chafee (RI) – defecting.

The package would have raised the minimum wage by $2.10 and permanently reduced the estate tax by exempting most estates under $1 million and cutting rates for others. Both sides believe the outcome will help them in the upcoming midterm elections, with Republicans labeling the Democrats as obstructionist, and Democrats claiming they were able to defeat Republican tax cuts for the rich.

**Congress passes pension reform**

Both the House and Senate approved a comprehensive pension reform measure before leaving for August break. The legislation makes sweeping changes to the rules governing defined benefits plans of private employers, with new funding requirements and other measures designed to ensure companies are able to deliver on retirement security promises. It also makes permanent the pension and retirement provisions of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (EGTRRA), which allowed increased contributions to 401(k) plans, among other things. The president is expected to sign the bill.

**Pence and Hutchinson breathe life into immigration reform**

With the House holding hearings throughout the summer aimed at poking holes in the Senate's immigration bill, it seemed unlikely comprehensive immigration reform would pass this year. Representative Mike Pence (R-IN) and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-TX) recently introduced a proposal, however, that may attract enough support from House conservatives to revive chances that immigration reform will pass this year. As with the Senate bill, the proposal would provide for a guest worker program to supplement the domestic workforce. The Pence/Hutchinson guest worker program, however, would only go into effect after the president certified the border is secure. Supporters of the proposal estimate it would take two years to certify security and trigger the guest worker program. The trigger concept was originally raised by Senator Johnny Isakson, who offered an amendment to the Senate bill that would have made the bill's guest worker program contingent on border security. While the amendment was rejected at that time, support for the trigger approach appears to increasing.

**Are you prepared for a business crisis?**

*By Terrill Collier*

Are you prepared for a crises? As owners and operators of tree care businesses we are all hit with crises of varying degrees every day. It can range from an angry customer call, to stolen equipment or an employee injury. But what about a crisis that really affects your bottom line and limits your ability to do business?

My crisis hit this spring in the form of employee unrest concerning salary and benefits. A former employee who left some months before to work for a competitor started calling our current employees and offering them jobs. Because they had insider knowledge of our wages and benefits, they were attempting to lure current employees away with promises of higher salary and increased benefits. While this was not necessary illegal, it was unethical in my mind to directly solicit my employees using this insider knowledge.

Malcontent spread quickly and we were faced with losing half of our trained climbers in a short amount of time. We had to do something fast, since we had invested considerable time and effort in training and grooming our employees.

(Continued on page 82)
I quickly turned to the TCIA wage and benefit survey and compared our company’s wages and benefits to our region and the nation as a whole. Actually we were right in the middle to upper end of the wage ranges. Hmmm, what to do now? Last winter everybody was happy and content to have a job at a living wage and was glad to be working. Suddenly our wages and benefits, at least on the surface, did not seem to compare to the competition. I had to do something quickly; we already had a substantial work backlog and the loss of employees would make it impossible to take care of our clients on a timely basis. Then there was the impact on the bottom line. I decided on raises to bring them in line with the new market realities, plus covering families with health insurance. I have come to the conclusion that my best employees tend to be married with families. They seem to be more responsible, show up to work on time, and have fewer unscheduled days off. Covering families is an expensive benefit but proved to be popular with the employees with families. So we changed the waiting period for family coverage from three years to three months. I met with each person in the pruning department, went over the raises and benefits, and also talked of future advancement opportunities.

The strategy worked. The employees stayed, morale improved, and the work is getting done. Additionally, the new wage and benefit levels allowed us to attract new employees, which helped us to get back to full strength. Finding employees is still my No. 1 business issue. The silver lining in this story is some of the employees who left were the ones who needed to leave, and morale improved considerably after their departure. The moral of the story is to keep your finger on the pulse of wages and benefits in your area. When TCIA asks you to fill out the annual wage and benefit survey, please fill it out as that information is a valuable business tool and assists everybody in the industry. Terrill Collier, president of Collier Arbor Care, in Clackamas, Oregon, is a member of the TCIA Board of Directors.

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Example: If you buy $2,000 in products from Midwest’s Web site, your company will receive a credit from Midwest Arborist Supplies that will reduce your next year’s membership dues by $50. Your credits will accumulate throughout the 12 months of membership and when you receive your dues invoice at the end of this period, you can subtract the credits from your dues. This excellent members-only program helps reduce your company’s dues and helps offset some of the costs involved with keeping this industry safe.

Requirements: You must be a confirmed TCIA member, and you must order supplies online at www.treecaresupplies.com/tcia_discounts.shtml.

To begin taking advantage of this member benefit, visit Midwest Arborist Supplies today.

To learn more about how your company can benefit from these and other TCIA affinity programs, please call 1-800-733-2622.

Are you prepared for a business crises?

(Continued from page 81)

I quickly turned to the TCIA wage and benefit survey and compared our company’s wages and benefits to our region and the nation as a whole. Actually we were right in the middle to upper end of the wage ranges. Hmmm, what to do now? Last winter everybody was happy and content to have a job at a living wage and was
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-Mary Edson

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Developing new oak, maple varieties for urban use

A project funded by the New York Farm Viability Institute, Inc. partners Cornell University researchers with nursery operators to evaluate a new growing technique and new varieties of oak and maple trees bred to thrive in harsh urban landscapes. Project leader Nina Bassuk of Cornell’s Urban Horticulture Institute and Cornell Ph.D. candidate Naalamle Amissah have developed a new cloning (clonal propagation) technique that allows oaks to develop their own root system rather than growers using the traditional and difficult grafting method. Nurseries participating in the project will evaluate the new propagation method for quickly getting the new varieties into commercial production. Bassuk says growers are interested in trees that are easy to establish both at nurseries and as transplants to consumer settings.

Jim Dickman, who runs Dickman Farms, Auburn, N.Y., a softwood propagation facility, received some 200 not-yet-rooted oak clones from Bassuk. “Our task is to root the new oaks out in a commercial setting with our watering system,” Dickman says. “This will be our first experience with hardwood propagation so we expect to learn along with the researchers as we evaluate the trees as they grow.”

Rootability is also a key evaluation point for the new oak varieties. Oaks are nearly impossible to root from cuttings – another reason commercial-scale production has been limited to grafting. Ornamental plant breeder Peter C. Podaras of the Landscape Plant Development Center, Mound, Minn., who works collaboratively with Bassuk, Cornell’s Urban Horticultural Institute and Cornell Plantations, says, “To realize the fundamental benefit from breeding better oaks, it is essential to be able to grow trees on their own roots.”

To address the rootability issue, Podaras has been crossing deciduous oaks with evergreen oaks to improve their rooting potential. He has also been cross-breeding native northern white oaks with white oak species from the Southeast U.S., Southern Midwest, North Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean. Some of the 200 combinations of oaks started at Cornell are already 6 feet tall.

“We have combined native cold hardy trees with much shorter southern and desert species that can tolerate heat, drought, compacted low oxygen soil, road salt, and the...
concrete-induced high pH soils common to cities. Smaller-sized trees require less long-term maintenance and do not interfere with power lines,” Podaras says. “We believe these new extremely vigorous hybrids have excellent potential as the ultimate street trees and for backyard landscaping.”

Maple trees are the colorful crowning beauties of New England’s autumn landscape. A selection of this popular street tree from a little-used species (Acer truncatum) native to China should produce a drought-tolerant variety with good color and of a shorter height to accommodate tight urban landscapes with overhead utility wires.

Maple clones now growing in Cornell horticultural plots will go to nurseries in Long Island, Western New York and Central New York this fall for field and nursery testing under different regional conditions.

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From the Field

The Bee Tree

By Mark Collins

Every pre-climb tree inspection checklist includes looking into the canopy for bees. A discussion usually follows about what to do about this rare occasion, as if someone in the group would actually know what to do. In 20 years of tree work in Atlanta, I’ve only run into bees, honey bees, in trees twice, the first in a pruning job where the hive was easily avoided; the second time, last week, in a removal. The bees were in a hollow about 25 feet up a cherry tree and I could see them massed outside to keep cool in the hot, humid weather. I had to do some research about this situation.

Being a conservationist who tries to find a use for everything, I immediately thought I would find a beekeeper to take the bees off my hands. I called an old friend whom I had not spoken to in a year or so and left a message asking if he still had bees and I was interested in this hive. The County Extension office gave me the names of several beekeeping groups and individuals I could call. My first contact assured me that a garden sprayer with soapy water would kill the bees and I should not have anything to worry about. He explained that it just was not worth the time to save the bees, that you could buy them from a supplier for less than $100. The second contact told me something similar but said he was interested if I would get them down then call him. And I was thinking I would find eager beekeepers enthusiastic for some free bees...

By this time I was thinking of Plan C when my old buddy called. After a few questions, he said he would love to have some wild bees to go with his domestic hives. He said he would drive to the site with me to check it out. Great! I could get some tips, borrow his veil and smoker and get the bees and the tree down with a crane. Only one thing – he was working out of town and could not be there, so he gave me some instructions:

1. Wear the netting over the face, tape the pants legs and wear long sleeves so the bees would not fly in and sting. Use cloth gloves, as leather signals invading animals.

2. Go early in the morning while the bees are inactive and cover the hole with screen and duct tape.

3. Obviously, be calm and do not wave your arms like an idiot as that will rile them.

He gave me more extremely interesting information that I would forget in 5 minutes, but I felt confident I could do the job.

The day of the job we went early, before the sun was fully up. The bees were passively resting on the outside of the hollow. I suited up, wearing a thick sweatshirt on a day when the high would be in the 90s, and taped up. At least I would sweat out all the toxins in my body and could replenish them later. The rest of my crew passed on the opportunity.

On the sage advice of those on the ground, I got the smoker ready, got a lift on the crane (following ANSI standards of course) and carefully inspected. I then began to puff smoke at them. The smoke is supposed to make them think there is a forest fire, at which time they go inside and gorge themselves on honey, bulking up in preparation for moving to another area. Instead, many of them flew away. Nevertheless, I calmly, though clumsily, taped the screen over the hole.

The bees did not really care about me; they seemed as docile as cows. They continued their hive work so I proceeded to remove the dead 75-foot-tall cherry tree. It was actually a fairly simple operation. I cut everything down to just above the hollow while the ground man played with the smoker, making the place smoky as a campground. As the last piece was being lifted away, I started seeing bees escape from a hole in the top. Uh oh, can’t let them get away. I covered the hole with my cloth-gloved hand. By this time, the chipper had been going for awhile and the crane operator had his hands full. As I stood on spikes, motionless, my hand over this hole, I yelled “Duct tape!” 100 times before anyone could figure me out. It seemed like it was 15 minutes; I think they thought I was asking for “lemonade.” By the time I got the tape, one of the bees inside realized there was a live hand inside the glove. When you get stung, you also get tagged and the other bees then know where the target is. If you and I were standing together and you got stung and ran away, I could stand still and watch the bees chase and sting you because you are tagged, you are “it.” The tagging is supposed to last just a few minutes, then you are clean again. Anyway, my hand was stung through the glove. Not in the mood to be “it,” I decided to take a break. I took off the glove, stuffed it in the hole and jumped onto the rope to the ground. Thank God for friction savers.

I had finally managed to make them angry, so we all took a break. After a while, I went back up, fully covered, and cut the section that contained the hive. The crane operator lowered the whole section into the back of the crane truck and I came down. I delivered it 2 ½ miles to its new home, glove still plugged up the hole. Once the hive was on the ground, I cut a small hole in the screen as instructed, to let out one or two bees so they could check out the new site and tell the others. We returned to the job site but the remaining bees were so upset they went after the crane and everything around it so we finished the job the following week. The bees are now happily making honey, which I look forward to tasting. Maybe I’ll even get my glove back.

Author’s Note: No bees were intentionally killed to make this story, and as my friend says, bee colonies are like trees. They can lose a few bees or leaves, but the organism carries on.

Mark Collins is president of Appleseed Tree Service, Inc. in Decatur, Georgia.

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