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Putting the Basics into Practice …

We’ve all felt it before. You walk into that big room with tons of people that you don’t know, and we’re supposed to put into practice the latest “how to” seminar on “working a room.” The intimidation factor is huge. Everybody knows the feeling when you pan the huge expanse of people – the sense that there is an “in-group,” and we’re not part of it. They’re the big players, and they must know some secrets to success that we just haven’t been to the right seminar on yet. The latest book and theory on how to do well hasn’t hit the best seller list yet, and when that one does, it’ll be the one that will help me get that edge that takes me to the next level.

One of the observations I’ve been making lately as TCIA members sign up for our company Accreditation program in ever growing numbers is that the majority of our members know what they need to be doing to make that next leap – they just haven’t done it. They have a list of things in their head that they know they should have done to make life easier or that if they had committed to paper would have provided earlier realizations of tremendous opportunities yet untapped. It’s not the secret to business that tree care companies are missing; it’s taking the time to apply the basics of good business practice that is lacking.

What tree care companies are discovering is that the template to step into best practices is the guide that was missing; the opportunity to have one-on-one business counseling – while it has always been available at TCIA – is part of the formula and regimentation of the Accreditation program that is proving to be the golden key. Tree care companies are saving thousands on insurance; are putting business plans on paper and discovering that there are even greater heights to which they can scale. Owners are reporting feeling more organized, which removes stress from the management of the business and provides time to focus on the growth of the business.

The most important point to remember is that there is no secret to business. There are no short cuts – that’s called doing business illegally. It’s never easy. It always changes. How you look at it is what matters. If you see business as a challenge and decide to try to go around best practices, there is always a price to pay. If you see business as a sea of opportunity that requires strategy to navigate through, and then seek out tools and solutions that will help you captain your ship well, you can reduce the rough waters and spend more time in safe harbors.

Tree care company owners are known for working tremendously hard and enjoying playing just as hard. Smoother navigation will allow you to have more time to focus on the fun part of doing business, while the best practices templates take care of a lot of what you spend unnecessary time upon. In the end, that allows for many more chances to play hard.

Why spend so much time trying to find ways to put systems in place? Why carry the burden of having things in your head instead of where you and your entire team can easily access them? Why worry about a surprise OSHA or DOT inspection? Why wonder if you’re paying too much insurance and whether there are options for you to reduce your mod rates? Why expose yourself to bad PR and customer service complaints that explode way beyond issues that should be easily manageable? Why waste time looking for secrets to business success that just simply aren’t secret?

There is a very easy solution to help all tree care companies adopt best practices and realize an improved business environment. Accrediting your company will help you and your team to think through the processes and systems that need to be in place to ease your daily business life. TCIA has provided the back-up systems for each area and will help you through the process. What better way to spend your time – implementing best practices that already exist.

There is a very easy solution to help all tree care companies adopt best practices and realize an improved business environment. Accrediting your company will help you and your team to think through the processes and systems that need to be in place to ease your daily business life. TCIA has provided the back-up systems for each area and will help you through the process. What better way to spend your time – implementing best practices that already exist.

Why stand in a big room and wonder what secrets they have that you need to go find? We’ve let you in on the secret – it’s TCIA Accreditation – and there is no reason to feel intimidated. TCIA is here to help you every step of the way.

Yes, you CAN become accredited, and your company is worth it.

Cynthia Mills, CAE
Publisher
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Industry Almanac
Important regional and national meetings and activities.

Branch Office
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Positioning your business to ride the economic roller coaster.

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By Terrill Collier

The goal of this project was to assess and, if possible, preserve a 250 year old Oregon white oak at Oak Ridge Estates, a residential development. The Oregon white oak, *Quercus garryana*, was preserved due to its age (estimated at 250 years old) and large size (64-inch diameter and 120-feet tall). It is situated in a park on the homeowners’ association property.

During the summer of 2004, a large 28-inch-diameter branch failed suddenly, causing deep concern among the homeowners about the health and safety of the tree, which was located near a playground. The goals of this project were to assess the health and structural viability of the tree and recommend whether or not the tree could be safely preserved. Services were then performed on the tree to help prevent future branch failure and extend the life of the tree.

**What did you do on this project?**

We first assessed the tree by performing a health and hazard tree evaluation to identify the current and potential hazards, structural problems, root stability, and disease associated with this tree. We used an Air-Spade to excavate around the root flare...
for the identification of root rot or other root problems.

Secondly, a climber was sent into the tree to examine the wound and the large branch attachments to the main trunk. The wood at the base of the branch attachment was drilled in three different areas to examine for signs of advanced decay using a battery powered hand drill with a 10-inch long, 1/16-inch diameter bit. The wood was drilled to a depth of 8 inches. The wood shavings were examined for changes in color and texture, which would indicate the presence of decay or disease. No advanced decay, such as spongy weak wood, was encountered. But a large 30-inch remaining branch showed a high failure potential – cracks on both sides of the branch junction with the main trunk indicated a structurally weak attachment to the main trunk, and the large wound from the failed branch would start to decay and cause weakness in the area of the 30-inch branch attachment.

A written report was prepared documenting our findings, including recommendations to reduce any potential hazard found and to extend the life of the tree. If any more branches failed, such as the adjacent 30-inch branch attached to the main trunk next to where the 28-inch branch failed, this would compromise the tree structure and result in a tree removal recommendation. We recommended and installed five cables to help prevent future branch failures. The whole tree was crown thinned by 10 percent to reduce branch weight. The 30-inch branch was crown reduced for tip-end weight reduction.

Desirable and undesirable qualities of tree(s) on project

The oak has a diameter at breast height of 64-inches, is 105-feet tall and has a spread of 120-feet. The tree has greater-than-normal annual shoot growth, and the buds are healthy. Overall the tree is in a healthy growing condition. The root crown excavation did not reveal any obvious signs of decay or root rot problems, such as Armillaria. The tree had a large branch failure on the southwest side. The branch was lost at the junction of two large scaffold branches and the main trunk 35-feet above grade. The failed branch was approximate-ly 28-inches in diameter, leaving a large wound and an unsightly hole on west side of the canopy.

One large 30-inch diameter remaining branch growing toward the west is attached to the main trunk adjacent to where the other large branch had failed. Where the branch attaches to the main trunk there is a crack on the back/north side and also on the opposite side indicating a serious structural weakness. To remove this large branch would have caused even more structural weakness due to an even larger wound and more future decay.

History of tree(s) condition and care

Prior to the large limb failure in the sum-
The oak’s health is excellent with normal to excellent annual growth. For watering, the site received only natural rainfall with no competition from grass and other plants. The canopy was outstanding in shape and size.

History of site

In the early 1990s, a tree preservation plan was completed for The Oak Ridge Estates to preserve several groves and six to eight large mature oaks. With the success of the preservation, all the trees survived and are flourishing. The Homeowners Association has identified these groves and individual trees as the most important part of the neighborhood and has a dedicated budget for their care. This includes scheduled fertilization and inspections for hazards.

How the work conforms to ANSI A300 Standards

All pruning objectives completed on this oak were reviewed on the job site prior to the start of the operation. All climbing access into the tree was made without the use of climbing spurs and all saws and chain saws were properly maintained and sharp.

Substantial weight-reducing cuts were made in the crown of the 30-inch branch to reduce tip-end weight due to the susceptibility of this branch to failure. Reductions were brought back to lateral limbs that were at least one-third the size of the branch being cut to insure continued healthy growth of the main branch.

The crown was thinned by 10 percent by working throughout the outer canopy to reduce the density of live branches, making sure not to lion’s tail. Before each cut the climbing arborists identified the branch bark ridge and branch collar in order to make proper cuts to preserve the branch collars.

A wire rope system was installed instead of a traditional cable. This was due to the size and weight of the branches being cabled and the desire to install a system that greatly exceeded the minimum to insure longevity and maximum protection. All wire rope assemblies were installed with 5/8-inch threaded rod, washers and nuts. We then penned the ends of the threaded rod to insure the nuts from backing out. Turnbuckles were used that matched the wire rope strength to allow for future tensioning.

The tree was sub-surface fertilized using a slow release complete fertilizer in a 4-1-2 ratio.

Challenges involved in the project

Due to the large limb failure in the fall of 2004, the wound and large crack on the remaining west side of the canopy were sure to fail the following spring with a flush of new growth and added weight. Removing the remaining adjacent 30-inch branch with poor attachments was not an option because it would create an even larger wound and put the rest of the tree at risk for failure and ultimately the tree would need removal. Cabling the tree without reducing the west side was not an option either, due to the sheer size and lack...
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of sizable scaffolding limbs on the east side to attach to the west side. We were not able to use traditional EHS cable because of the size and taper of the anchoring limbs. The weight loads exceeded the recommended loads and would limit our ability to adjust the tension as the tree put on new growth.

Installation of the cables and pruning of the tree were a challenge due to the necessity of limb walking. An aerial lift truck was needed to aid in accomplishing the job, but prevention of soil compaction was also a priority.

**Overcoming the challenges**

With potential failure imminent, the recommendation was made to reduce the weight on the west side of the canopy drastically to reduce the load pulling down on the visible crack at the branch union. To do this correctly and save the shape and aesthetics of the tree, the arborist worked out at the far ends of the limbs by limb walking, or used a bucket truck under the canopy on plywood sheeting to protect the root zone of the tree and prevent soil compaction. The sheer size and the spread of the tree required six climbers to install the cables and do the pruning.

Four stainless-steel, \(\frac{1}{2}\)-inch wire rope strands were custom made, with turnbuckles at one end of each strand for future tension adjustment. These were installed in place of traditional cables, because of the constrictive weight ratios.

**Efforts demonstrate sensitivity to the species of plants in project:**

- Pruning was done prior to bud break to reduce the chance of a branch failure that may have occurred with the additional weight and wind resistance of new foliage.  
- Pruning maximized the amount of energy going into new growth.  
- Care was taken to improve the callus growth on the wounds created from pruning and cabling.  
- Placing plywood under our bucket truck helped reduce compaction to the root zone by dispersing the weight over a larger area.

**How does the finished project compare to the start of project. (How do they portray Excellence in Arboriculture?)**

From the start of the project after the large limb failure, the oak was a very serious hazard to people and property within the tree’s reach. With the passing of time and additional growth on the cracked branch, the hazard would only increase. With the exposed wound and the growing crack on the west side of the canopy, something had to be done. Removal of the tree would have been an easy but poor choice. The tree was a very important part of the site.

With the importance the HOA board members placed on this tree and their dedication to saving it, the pruning and cabling preserved this tree with better-than-expected success. After the pruning and cabling was completed, the crack on the west side closed completely and the installation of the wire rope system added mechanical strength and protection from future branch failures.

**Impact of finished project on the site, the community and the people who will be affected by the work**

At the time of the limb failure, many of the residents and HOA Board members were at a loss on what to do and how the limb failure would affect the oak tree’s long term survivability. Removal was not the preferred option, however it was a consideration. Our company has been involved with the Oak Ridge Estates since the initial tree preservation plan in the early 1990s. With our proven expertise and involvement at the site we have protected and preserved long-term safety and health of all the trees on the estate.

This tree is a very large signature tree and is one of the first trees you see as you enter the neighborhood. This tree sets the standard of how important trees are to the entire area. The recommended pruning and cabling was a great cost and represented a huge commitment on the part of the Homeowner’s Association and its board members. This tree could have been removed for less but, instead, everyone who lives or enters the Oak Ridge Estate can now admire this safe, healthy and preserved Oregon white oak for many generations to come.

Terrill Collier is president of Collier Arbor Care in Clackamas, Ore., a longtime TCIA member and a member of the TCIA board of directors.
Attendees recommend the Tree Care Industry Association’s Winter Management Conference, where tree care business professionals meet for five idea-packed days in a relaxing environment conducive to socializing, sharing information and making new friendships.

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**Firefly and Dragonfly new in arborist market**

New England Ropes has added two new products to its 11mm arborist climbing line category: Firefly and Dragonfly. New England Ropes was the first rope manufacturer to develop a lightweight, small diameter arborist climbing rope with the introduction of the Fly – the world’s first spliceable kernmantle – in 2003. Using the same proven kernmantle construction, Firefly and Dragonfly utilize two of the most popular high visibility colors on the market today – Safety Orange and Safety Green. Using these new colors in a smaller-diameter, lighter-weight climbing line raises the bar for safety in the arborist market. And all three products in the Fly lightweight category are designed to excel in today’s popular climbing devices. All three colors are now available for increased variety and the flexibility of color-coding when using multiple ropes in a safety system. Contact New England Ropes at (508) 730-4524 or via www.neropes.com.

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**FAE’s new forestry mulcher head**

At TCI EXPO in Columbus, Ohio, Nov. 9-11, FAE USA, Inc. will present what it is calling a “revolutionary” high-performance forestry mulcher head (patent pending) that can be attached to most skid steer models. The head is run by a 100 hp diesel engine mounted on top of the machine, the first self-contained engine unit of its kind. This unit can be also operated by skid steers that do not offer high flow hydraulics. The UML/SSL – DE 125 has a 48-inch working width, while the UML/SSL – DE 150 has a 57-inch working width. This attachment will be officially unveiled at 1 p.m. on Nov. 9 in FAE’s booth, #1551. Contact FAE USA, Inc. at 1-877-FAE-USA1.

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**Novozymes’ microbes added to Roots product**

With the addition of high-impact microbes from Novozymes Biologicals, Roots 1>2>3 + Condition now produces deeper roots, greater root biomass, greener color without rapid growth, and faster penetration of water and nutrients to the root zone in both turf and trees. Roots 1>2>3 + Condition is the dry, soluble version of 1>2>3 Premix Plus, containing Novozymes’ proprietary blend of patented microbial cultures, nutrients and biostimulants combined with a premium turfgrass wetting agent. A blend of polyalkylene oxide surfactants, the enhanced product is superior in promoting water and the 1>2>3 ingredients deeper into the root zone, where they will be most effective. It also serves as a rewetting agent, continuing to move water through to the roots and reducing hydrophobic conditions. Designed for tank mix, 1>2>3 + Condition may be irrigated in with normal cycle or left on the leaf blade if applied with contact chemicals. For more information, see www.rootsinc.com.

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**Plant Health fixes stressed trees**

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Crysteel Manufacturing has introduced the select custom dump body program. The program allows customers to design their own dump body without incurring the extra cost and time normally associated with custom designed products. Customers can choose between traditional square body styles or elliptical bodies, and then choose the best steel to fit their specific applications. Further options are available for tailgate design, side height, floor material and understructure design. A wide range of accessories compliments the Select body program. Contact Crysteel Manufacturing at 1-800-533-0494 or via www.crysteel.com.

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UAI, Davey Tree partner on GIS mapping

UAI, Inc., a leading provider of comprehensive GIS-based utility software solutions, and The Davey Tree Expert Company (Davey), one of the oldest and largest companies in the green industry, have announced a working relationship. It will offer utilities turn-key solutions for GIS mapping, outage, staking, maintenance, vegetation management, pole inspection and GPS data collection.

“With more than a century of experience in the green industry, Davey Tree knows that the secret to longevity is recognizing opportunity in the midst of change,” he said. “This alignment allows both of us to work from our core competencies and grow in the arena of asset management,” says Pat Covey, vice president and general manager of Davey Resource Group.

This relationship strengthens UAI’s field service capabilities and brings a powerful combination to the utility marketplace. UAI’s UtilityCenter® 2.x provides utilities with computer applications used by managers, dispatchers, design engineers, planners, and field crews tasked with outage restoration, staking, construction, maintenance, vegetation management, job orders, pole inspections and GPS data collection.

RedMax names sales manager for new business development

Taylor Grout has joined RedMax/Komatsu Zenoah America Inc. as sales manager for new business development. In the newly created position, Grout will be responsible for developing new markets for OEM Komatsu Zenoah products.

Before joining RedMax, Grout was a sales engineer for AGCO Corporation, a manufacturer of agricultural equipment. Before that, he was warehouse manager for Yancey Brothers Co., a distributor of Caterpillar earth moving equipment.

Grout, who lives in Atlanta, Georgia, is a graduate of the University of Virginia.

Plant Health Care and John Deere Landscapes to roll out 3 Year Protection Plan

Plant Health Care, Inc. and John Deere Landscapes have agreed to jointly roll out a program that provides a three-year warranty for select nursery stock planted with PHC® Tree Saver®, a mycorrhizal fungi and rhizosphere bacterial product that promotes plant health. The program, which is designed to minimize the risk of plant loss to landscape contractors, enjoyed a highly successful pilot program.

“We are pleased to offer this innovative 3 Year Protection Plan with industry leader John Deere Landscapes,” said Plant Health Care, Inc. president John Brady. “Using PHC Tree Saver significantly improves a tree’s ability to thrive, and that translates into substantial savings and more satisfied clients for the landscape contractor.”

Eligible contractors who participate in the 3 Year Protection Plan must be trained and certified on the terms of the program and proper planting procedures. Should nursery stock that has been planted according to the plan guidelines fail, the plan
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**87 FORD F800:** 429 gas eng. 5 spd + 2 spd rear, 31 GVW, 66 ft ALTEC AM900 bucket, joystick ctrls, 14 ft steel flatbed. $24,500.

**99 INT 2654:** 275 hp, 8 spd +lo. +ho/lo, A/C, 12 ton HIAB 260-3 crane, picks 2,090 lb at 51 ft max reach, 3 hyd exts + flyjib w/ 2 hyd exts, radio remote ctrls, 20 ft steel flatbed. $89,500.

**87 MACK RD685S:** 235 hp. Maxitorque ext range trans (6 fwd, 5 rev), 21 ft steel flat / dump bed. 54 GVW, $39,500.

**97 MACK RD685S:** 235 hp, Maxitorque ext range tran (6 fwd, 5 rev), 21 ft flat / dump bed. $19,500.

**98 GMC C7600:** 210 hp CAT, 7 spd. A/C, 33 GVW with 6 ton PALFINGER PK14080 crane, picks 3,620 lb at 21½ ft max side reach, 22 ft steel flatbed. $34,900.

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**2000 INT 4900:** 250 hp, Allison 6 spd auto, A/C, 56 GVW. 77 ft ALTEC A77T bucket, articulating telescopic boom, 2 man basket, joystick ctrls, 120V inverter, 16½ ft utility body. $89,500.

**94 FORD LNT9000:** 280 hp Cummins, 8 speed +lo, +ho/lo, 48 GVW, 13 ton HIAB 300-3/19R. crane, picks 2.250 lb at 62½ ft max reach, remote ctls, 18½ ft wood flat / utility body. $49,500.

**99 STERLING LT8513:** 300 hp CAT, 8 speed +lo, 58,740 lb GVW, 17 ton NATIONAL 600C crane, 154 ft total hook ht, 2 section jib, cap alert / shutdown, 20 ft wood flatbed. $79,500.

**88 FORD F900:** 7.8L diesel, 13 spd, 48,000 lb GVW, 10 ton NATIONAL 6474 crane, 3 section hyd boom, 4 outriggers, 24 ft steel flatbed. $18,500.

**87 INT F1954 6X6: 210 hp diesel, 5 spd +lo, 46 GVW, with 7 ton NATIONAL N8542H1 crane, picks 3,000 lb at 25 ft max reach, 12 ft steel flatbed. $34,500.**

**6519**

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**89 INT 1954:** DTA466, 245 hp, Allison 5 speed auto, 35 GVW, with 65 ft ELLIOTT ECE368B PLATFORM LIFT. 40” x 60” steel basket, 21 ft flat bed. $38,500.

**88 INT 1954:** 300 hp CAT, 6 speed, A/C, 56 GVW, 210 hp, Allison 5 speed auto, 35 GVW, with 65 ft ELLIOTT ECE368B PLATFORM LIFT. 40” x 60” steel basket, 21 ft flat bed. $38,500.

**99 STERLING LT8513:** 300 hp CAT, 8 speed +lo, 58,740 lb GVW, 17 ton NATIONAL 600C crane, 154 ft total hook ht, 2 section jib, cap alert / shutdown, 20 ft wood flatbed. $79,500.

**88 FORD F900:** 7.8L diesel, 13 spd, 48,000 lb GVW, 10 ton NATIONAL 6474 crane, 3 section hyd boom, 4 outriggers, 24 ft steel flatbed. $18,500.

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Virginia Tech hosts Garden Club of America’s new Urban Forestry Fellowship

Zone VI of the Garden Club of America has recently established a new national fellowship in urban forestry for qualified U.S. students. The first awards will be presented in early 2006. With this fellowship, the Garden Club of America seeks to forward our goal of advancing our knowledge of urban forests and increasing the number of scientists in the field of urban forestry. Applications are reviewed by a selection committee at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University composed of practicing urban forestry scientists. Final selection is endorsed by the Garden Club of America.

The fellowship is open to both advanced undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in urban forestry, forestry, horticulture, environmental studies or a closely related field at any four-year college or university degree program in the United States. Recipients must be U.S. students who will be enrolled as juniors or seniors or graduate students during the fellowship period. The award is for $4,000 and recipients may apply for one additional year of funding.

For more information and online application forms, visit www.cnr.vt.edu/urbanforestry/scholarships.htm or contact Dr. Susan Day at gcaurbanforestry@vt.edu or (540) 231-7264. Application deadline is January 31.

McClurkin joins Liberty Financial Group

Philip McClurkin joined Liberty Financial Group, Inc. earlier this year to work specifically in the tree care industry. Liberty is a full-service national commercial equipment finance company providing competitive and creative financing products. Liberty prides itself on building long term relationships with customers and vendors in the tree care industry. McClurkin comes to Liberty from Communication Technologies, Inc. (CTI), a publishing company in Doylestown, Pa. where he was publisher of Emergency Number Professional Magazine. His emphasis on providing a quality product and establishing long term customer relations as well as having excellent hands-on service fits well into the Liberty’s mission. McClurkin has a bachelor’s degree in business management from York College of Pennsylvania and more than 16 years experience in sales and management.
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Three days after Hurricane Katrina rocked the South, Terrill Collier and two of his crew members were on a plane, headed from the great Northwest to the airport in Baton Rouge, La.

“We brought three new chain saws, in boxes, along with ropes, rigging and saddles,” says Collier, president of Collier Arbor Care, based in Clackamas, Ore. “We had more weight and gear than the airlines allow, but since we were with the hurricane relief effort, they checked us through.”

For two weeks after Katrina, arborist Bob Thibodeaux of Church Point, La, was helping folks in New Orleans with their cleanup.

“I just started my ‘Save New Orleans’ program,” he says, explaining that it included helping both people in need and pruning the area’s historic and beautiful trees “before the FEMA butchers got in there.”

Then he got a call from his wife back home. Hurricane Rita was coming, and Church Point was right in her path. Thibodeaux, owner of Bob’s Tree Preservation Co., returned to help his neighbors closer to home.

At the end of August and early September, the Gulf Coast took a severe and historic beating at the hands of two major hurricanes, Katrina and Rita.

The region was devastated by damage to houses and roads, uprooted trees, and heavy flooding. Along with the loss of thousands of lives, there was a major cleanup of destroyed homes, roads, uprooted trees, and other reminders of nature’s havoc.

The insurance industry estimates the total property loss for the two storms at $34.4 billion. The American Red Cross estimates that more than 350,000 homes were destroyed, while nearly 150,000 more sustained major damage.

As residents in the affected area tried to put their lives back together, hundreds of tree care workers from around the country mobilized to help with the clean up. They hauled off debris, removed trees from the middle of roadways and from the roofs of houses, and cut away uprooted trees or damaged branches that posed a safety hazard to those who walked or drove past.

For tree care workers, there are several lures for answering the call of a disaster. Companies can make a good deal of money working 12-hour days, six or seven days a week. They are following the action, doing challenging work in areas where headlines have been made. Most motivating of all, they say, is that that can do good things for people in a time of dire need.

“It’s an opportunity to help,” relates Eric Schneider, president of Schneider Tree Care in Taylors, S.C. He and his crew followed Hurricane Rita from Florida to Mississippi this year, where they spent their first few days unloading tractor trailers filled with food and relief supplies. Yes, he says, there is an opportunity to make money, but there is a greater motivator as well.
“We’d like to think we’re doing something noble,” he notes.

Every storm is different, says Schneider, whose company is the only accredited tree care business in South Carolina or several surrounding states. Last year, when an unprecedented four hurricanes passed through Florida, he managed the cleanup in West Palm Beach, with 80 trucks under his supervision.

This year he worked in Mississippi, where the Army Corps of Engineers had hired the tree care company Ashbritt to run the cleanup operation for the state, with five levels of other contractors working under them. In early October (the time of this interview), Schneider had the hauling contract for the small city of Petal (population: 9,816), and was awaiting the contract to begin pruning. At one time, there were 40 trucks hauling branches and debris away, but that number dropped to 10.

The scope of the damage and the amount of cleanup that needed to be done had slowed the management process, Schneider believes, though he notes, “The Army Corps of Engineers has done a phenomenal job in the face of a terrible, widespread disaster.”

He estimates that he and his crew members would be working in the state for another several months, possibly up to seven or eight.

The area of Mississippi that his crew was in, near Hattiesburg, did not take the pounding that towns south of there did, but Schneider was still struck by the amount of damage done by Hurricane Katrina.

“In the area I’m in, it directly affected four of five households,” he says. “There are trees in houses, or trees in their yards that are down. The complete utter devastation they went through south of here did not happen. For the most part, this town is intact. Other than hanging limbs, life is back to normal for some people.”

To the south, he saw where wind and water had completely destroyed motor homes, and left nothing but rubble where there had once been homes. “I just saw a picture of a boat lodged in a tree,” Schneider says. “The water had been 20 feet high.”

Schneider describes himself as “a typical storm guy,” traveling with some of his crew members to wherever a storm might hit, and trusting his foremen back home to keep his regular clientele satisfied.

“It’s challenging, which I like,” he explains. “The one constant in helping out with storm relief is change. Everything changes, and it changes without notice.”

Being able to handle all of the challenges that come with storm cleanup is one of the things that some tree care workers enjoy.

Ron Keith, CEO of the Shawnee Mission Tree Service in Kansas City, Kan., was supervising 30 crews cleaning up state roads for five counties in Mississippi.

“I like the challenge and I like the excitement,” confirms Keith, who has made storm cleanup a division of his business since responding to his first storm 10 years ago.

“It gets in your blood, especially when you see the need,” he says. “People are hurting, and their houses are smashed, and you can come in and do something to fix it. You’re doing a good deed. People can’t afford to get work done, and the government comes in and we come in and clean the mess up.”

Storm cleanup is hard work, with hours that are long and conditions that can be rugged. In the first few days after a storm, particularly, workers often work with no running water and no electricity; which means they follow long, arduous days with none of the comforts of home – like a shower or trip to the laundry.

For example, the six guys on Schneider’s crew (they had three subcontractors) were working 12-hour days and coming back to sleep together in trailers, four to a unit.

“We did everything we could,” says Schneider. “When machinery breaks down, Schneider says, “Everything is a field repair, because you don’t have a shop to work in.”

Cell phones often don’t work, and the work itself can be dangerous. Workers must be cognizant of kick back and of falling limbs. Trees that lay across the tops of houses are under a lot of pressure at
points, and cutting the wrong branch can lead to a serious accident, Keith notes. There is also frequently a concern with downed power lines.

“Everything you can imagine,” Keith says. “It’s all there.”

From a business perspective, there is profit to be made from a storm cleanup because the volume of work is so high but there are business pitfalls as well, including cash-flow issues and other expenses. Workers are being paid for long weeks, much of it at time and a half, and the tree care company may not receive its pay as promptly as they need to in order to pay their workers. Expenses can include a food per diem, lodging and other expenses. Also, business owners may find that it’s tough to satisfy their regular customers when they’re away.

“Many people leave and lose business at home, and then don’t make money from the storm because the expenses are so great,” Schneider admits. “There can be a tremendous amount of work, but expenses are so high that many people go home broke. It’s not all roses.”

Keith agrees.

“Things happen quickly,” he says. “You need to be really flexible, and accept a lot of risk. There is a huge risk with a storm of this size, because you’re out a lot of expenses. Depending on who you’re working for, it may take a long time before you see anything coming back.”

Schneider doesn’t encourage others to chase a storm unless they have prior contacts that will guarantee them work.

Consider the cautionary tale of Scott Richardson. The president of SMR Tree Service in Hudson, N.H., came down with a one-man crew in a tri-axle truck with a pup trailer, told by a contractor that they could use his help.

Once he arrived in Mississippi, he was told that the government had made a rule that 75 percent of the work had to go to locals, and there was no work for him after all.

“No I’m sitting around trying to find work from anyone we can get a hold of,” laments Richardson, who had telephoned the Army Corps of Engineers, to reach busy signals and voice mail boxes that were filled.

“I’m told that the state police turned back four miles of trucks from people who were willing to help down here,” relates Richardson, who figured he’d spent $1,000 in gas so far.

“There’s quite a bit of damage, too” he says. “Tons of (downed) trees.”

Because they arrived so soon after the storm hit, Collier and his crew members were among the first tree professionals on the scene.

When the flight from Oregon landed at the Baton Rouge airport, they found scores of displaced people sleeping on the floor, waiting for a flight out. They rented a truck and headed 40 miles east, to the little town of Ponchatoula.

Collier’s wife is originally from Ponchatoula, which sits north of Lake

A pruning crew from Bob’s Tree Preservation Inc. remove limb damage caused by Hurricane Katrina at a site used by the U.S. Forest Service as a base camp (tent city) for firefighters fighting fires in New Orleans in the days following Katrina.
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Pontchartrain, the source for water that led to major flooding in New Orleans after a levee broke. His in-laws still live in the town. With family in the area, the storm really hit home. Collier’s family was already in motion, ready to help others. One of Collier’s brothers in law is an assistant fire chief in Ponchatoula, and another is a deputy sheriff for the county. A third is a building contractor.

For the next five days, Collier and his men worked 12-hour days, along with his brother-in-law’s construction crews, to clear trees off of houses. The construction crews would use backhoes to lift the trees, and the tree crew would cut the trees while the roofers threw plastic tarps over the roofs to limit further damage until repairs could be made. Much of the work was for people who were elderly and/or unable to pay for other reasons.

The tree crews slept at the homes of Collier’s relatives. There was no electric power during their stay, and on most days they worked in 95-degree temperatures, with 95 percent humidity.

“We probably worked on 15 houses, and about 30 trees,” he recalls. Most of the trees were those that had fallen on houses, although some were trees that were blocking roads or other passages.

The two tree crew members got a couple of days pay from his relative, and Collier donated his time, working for something that meant more to him than money.

“We wanted to help,” he says. “When you hear about a natural disaster, you always want to contribute in some way. We’d been through storms before and have experience taking trees off of homes after windstorms. We had the expertise, and I had family there, so it was just the right thing to do. We just wanted to help folks out.”

Consistent with other tree crews in the region, Collier was struck by the extent of the damage that the hurricane had done.

In previous years, his company had cleaned up after storms in the Northwest, he says, adding that “in terms of the amount of destruction, there were a lot more trees down, and a lot more homes damaged by this storm.”

There were some big trees down, Collier reports, including southern pines that had been uprooted or snapped at the stems. Water oaks also failed, mostly those that were hollow in the middle.

“The live oaks seemed to withstand it better than other tree species,” he observes.

The damage was worse 40 miles to the east, closer to where the eye of the storm passed, to Mandeville, where another sister-in-law lives. Collier’s sister-in-law was flying north to Oregon as Collier and his crew were flying south. At one point, he traveled to Mandeville to check on his sister-in-law’s home, where four trees had fallen. (They had already been removed.)

Collier also took a trip with his deputy sheriff brother-in-law to New Orleans, a day or two after reports of heavy looting. Among the sites was the city’s convention center, where survivors hung around outside in the 90-degree heat, surrounded by trash.

“The scene was pretty amazing,” he reports. “The military was out and SWAT teams. It was a day or two after the bad looting, and it was like being in a third world country. It really struck me as we drove past the convention center. It was intense.”

Thibodeaux was also quickly into New Orleans, where some grateful folks let his crews sleep in their homes.

“And then here came Rita,” Thibodeaux says. His wife called, and told him, “You’ve got to come back here; the phone is ringing off the wall.”

Church Point, outside of Lafayette, was not supposed to catch the second hurricane, Thibodeaux says, “But we caught it, big time. There were gusts of 85 miles per hour.”

From then on, Thibodeaux had crews working from New Orleans to Orange, Texas, traveling for two hours in either direction from Church Point. He hired extra help from Florida, Dallas, and Kentucky, as well as taking on more local people, and said he could still use more manpower. Normally, he employs 23 to 25 workers, and was up to 62.

“I wish we had twice that,” he says. “We can’t answer the phones fast enough.”

However, Thibodeaux is looking for a level of training that not everyone involved in the cleanup cared about. “We’re looking for highly-skilled arborists who are going to make good wages while helping to protect our gorgeous trees. To prune them properly and not cut where they’re not supposed to.”

Thibodeaux notes that many of the subcontractors working on cleanup have little tree care experience and no standards.

“Arborists need to work closer together and help each other out,” Thibodeaux stresses, noting that in the cleanup for most hurricanes, “there are renegades all over, trying to capitalize on other people’s misfortune. They’ve got no skill, no training, no license, and rented equipment.”

That sentiment is consistent with Keith’s idea to build alliances within the Tree Care Industry Association, particularly with the accredited companies, and promote that as a selling point when selling post-storm cleanup job. His expertise, and that of his workers, is one reason that in addition to cleaning up Mississippi’s state roads from Hattiesburg to Columbia, the workers were able to save many of the region’s beautiful pecan and oak trees.

“That would give us a big advantage,” Keith contends, noting that many of the cleanup crews were construction crews with no knowledge of trees. “We could (form an alliance of) good quality tree care people and promote tree care during cleanup, and not just cleanup.”

Dave Rattigan is a freelance writer living in Peabody, Mass.
Events & Seminars

November 9, 2005
Tree Care Workshop
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK
Contact: Mike Schnelle (405) 744-7361, mike.schnelle@okstate.edu

November 9-11, 2005
TCI EXPO
Tree Care Industry Association
Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, OH
Contact: Diane Morgan 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106; morgan@treecareindustry.org; or www.tcia.org

November 9-11, 2005
Tree Care Workshop
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK
Contact: Mike Schnelle (405) 744-7361, mike.schnelle@okstate.edu

November 15-17, 2005
Empire State Green Industry Show
Rochester Riverside Convention Center, Rochester, NY
Contact: Jill Cyr, (518) 783-1229; 1-800-873-9973; nysta@nysta.org; www.nysta.org

November 17-18, 2005
Penn State Golf Turf Conference
Nittany Lion Inn, State College, PA
Contact: (814) 238-2402; busofc@paturf.org; www.paturf.org

December 4-7, 2005
2005 ASCA Annual Conference
Palm Springs, CA
Contact: Angela Corio, ASCA (301) 947-0483

December 7, 2005
Ohio Turfgrass Conference & Show
Greater Columbus Convention Ctr, Columbus, OH
Contact: 1-888-683-3445; info@ohioturfgrass.org; www.ohioturfgrass.org

December 7, 2005
Urban Tree Care Workshop
Lake & Porter County Coop Extension Svcs
Hammond Public Library, Hammond, IN
Contact: Stan Simz (219) 755-3240; or Russell Hodge (219) 406-0431

December 8-9, 2005
Autopsy & Dissection Lab with Dr. Alex Shigo
Portsmouth, NH
Contact: Debbie Wilhoit, (301) 405-3913; deb@umd.edu; www.rauplab.umd.edu/Conferences/AdvLandscape

January 26, 2006
Advanced Landscape Plant IPM PHC Short Course
University of Maryland, College Park, MD
Contact: Debbie Wilhoit, (301) 405-3913; deb@umd.edu; www.rauplab.umd.edu/Conferences/AdvLandscape

January 8-10, 2006
WESTERN 2006 Annual Meeting & Trade Show
Western Nursery & Landscape Association
Overland Park Convention Center, Overland Park, KS
Contact: 1-816-233-1481; info@wnla.org; www.wnla.org

January 9-11, 2006
2006 GLTE Expo & MFPA Winter Conference
ISA Cert. Arborist, Util. Spec. Tree Wkr, Muni.exams
Deloss Place, Grand Rapids, MI
Contact: mfpa@accl.net or call (571) 337-4999

January 10-12, 2006
Eastern PA Turf Conference and Trade Show
Valley Forge Convention Center, King of Prussia, PA
Contact: (610) 238-2402; busofc@paturf.org; www.paturf.org

January 11-13, 2006
TTH Annual CSRA Ornamental Tree & Turf Seminar
Julian Smith Casino, Augusta GA
Contact: (706) 854-0926; www.empiretree.com

January 25-27, 2006
Iowa Nursery & Landscape Assoc. Conv.& Trade Show
Polk County Convention Complex, Des Moines, IA
Contact: (815) 233-1481; info@iowanla.org

The Penn-Del Chapter of the ISA presents
The 41st Annual SHADE TREE SYMPOSIUM featuring
Business, Utility, Plant Health Care & Climber breakouts;
Demonstration Tree; Retail Trade Show;
Pesticide & CEU credits; Certification exams Sunday Jan 29.

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details posted at www.penndelisa.org

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For the most up to date calendar information, visit www.treecareindustry.org/dealnews/industry/calender
January 26, 2006
Northeastern PA Turf Conference and Trade Show
The Woodlands Inn & Resort, Wilkes-Barre, PA
Contact: (814) 238-2402; busofc@paturf.org; www.paturf.org

January 27, 2006
Urban Tree Care Workshop
Lake & Porter County Coop Extension Svs
Lake County Gov’t Center, Crown Point, IN
Contact: Stan Simz (219) 735-3240; or Russell Hodge (219) 406-0431

January 29-31, 2006
41st Annual Shade Tree Symposium
Penn-Del Chapter of ISA
Lancaster Host Resort, Lancaster, PA
Contact: E. Wertz (215) 795-0411; www.penndelisa.org

January 31-February 2, 2006
New England Grows!
Boston Convention & Exhibition Ctr, Boston MA
Contact: Mary Simard (508) 653.3009; www.negrows.org

February 7-9, 2006
Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Conference
Penn State Conference Ctr Hotel, State College, PA
Contact: PLNA 1-800-898-3411; www.PLNA.com

February 12-13, 2006
2006 Winter Management Conference
Tree Care Industry Association
St. Kitts, West Indies
Contact: Deb Cyr 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106; cyr@treecareindustry.org; or www.tcia.org

February 12-17, 2006
Municipal Forester Institute
Lake Arrowhead, CA
Appl. deadline Oct. 15, Cost: $800
Contact: Society of Municipal Arborists, UrbanForestry@prodigy.net; www.urban-forestry.com

February 20-26, 2006
60th Annual Conference, Midwestern Chapter ISA
Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck, North Dakota
Contact: Jeff Heintz, (701) 222-6561; jheintz@state.nd.us

February 22-24, 2006
2006 ASCA Consulting Academy
Atlanta, GA
Contact: Angela Corio, ASCA (301) 947-0483

February 28-March 2, 2006
Western PA Turf Conference and Trade Show
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By Guy Meilleur

“I’d like you to take a look at this big old tree that they designed a development around. It looks OK to me, but …”

The town’s urban forester was only asking for a quick assessment, so little did I know this would be the start of a 12-year relationship with a gentle giant. It was 1993, and in a weak moment I had volunteered to sit on the town’s tree board. We made recommendations on the landscape ordinance and reviewed tree projects in and around the town. Rewards from this kind of volunteer work often come indirectly, paying off in unexpected ways for the time invested.

This old white oak was on top of a hill and surrounded by houses under construction. The crown looked good, leaves waving like a green flag, so I went straight to job No. 1 for the tree assessor, a trunk and root collar examination.

Walking around the 8-foot diameter trunk, I saw signs of minor infections by bacteria or fungus, and infestations by woodboring insects. These problems appeared to be treatable, a yellow flag. Tapping on the trunk with a rubber mallet [see photo 1] produced a drumlike resonance. This sound was a red flag. The hole in a primary buttress root threw up the crimson flag. It was on the side of the tree facing the original farmhouse, which turned out to be a useful bit of history. I strapped on an ergonomic trowel or “hand plow” and dug away the loose debris, avoiding root damage. The flashlight beam shone on no large occupants, so I took a look inside.

Holy Hobbit Party! This was not a cavity; it was a cavern that needed exploring. Arboreal spelunking? There was no Resistograph locally available in 1993, so I clipped the end of a tape measure onto the end of my four-foot-long tile probe and shoved it into the open cavity. After some poking and wiggling, 6 feet later it hit semisolid wood. Another hole in the trunk was much smaller, so a longer metal rod was needed. It also measured about 6 feet of decay. Unlike a Resistograph or other advanced tool, this poking method does not do a very good job of measuring wood that is weakened by decay but still intact.

The cavity was well beyond the 70 percent “hazard tree” threshold, but the other
buttresses seemed solid. An aerial inspection was carried out, inspecting the structure higher in the tree and checking the condition of leaves and twigs. No aggravating defects were found in the upper part of the tree, so removal was not recommended. Aggravating conditions in the lower part of the tree, the root zone, included soil compaction and other construction impacts around the dripline on the south and west side, and a cut to build the houses to the north and east. The owners, who lived to the south, wanted to know their other options, so a mitigation plan was drawn up and agreed on. I estimated that the tree could last safely for five or 10 more years, but gave no guarantees and attached a statement of Assumptions and Limiting Conditions. They got the contact information for three local competent arborists, but the owners asked me to do the work, so I transitioned from consultant to contractor.

**Mitigation plan**

1. Pest Control: Decayed areas were cleaned of frass and other loose material with carving tools. Air tools were not readily available then, so these areas were flushed out with water. Monitor semiannually and repeat per need.

2. Pruning: After the aerial inspection, the rope was left in the tree. A crown cleaning removed dead, dying and very diseased and damaged branches. Branches with minor defects like small cracks and little decay pockets and others with heavy ends that seemed prone to breaking, were thinned and reduced. Monitor semiannually and repeat per need.

3. Vertical and horizontal mulching: Situated on a hilltop, and with a history of raking, organic material had been constantly eroding from the soil. Plugs of soil pulled out with a soil probe showed a thin O and A horizons.

A pick was used to fracture the soil, and the holes packed with compost, aged pine bark, gravel fines and mycorrhizal inoculants. Four inches of hardwood chips were spread over the surface. Falling litter such as leaves and acorns were to be left in place, and any excess composted on site. Check and refresh annually.

**1994**

The tree looked a lot better the next year. There were more and greener leaves, and no dead branches showing. The pest attacks slowed, needing only a little attention in the next few years. The owners were encouraged that the work and prayers were paying off.

**1996**

A hurricane blew through at 70 mph after dumping 10 inches of rain. The tree stood strong, with minor tip damage. Three adjoining homeowners did not voice any concern, though their homes were close enough to get brushed if the tree failed. The neighbors to the west did not stand strong, however; they feared the next storm would topple the tree onto them. Their insurance company sent a letter warning the tree owners that they would be liable in case of damage. The owners’ insurance company requested a followup inspection and report. A Tree Hazard Evaluation Form was included in a return letter documenting that the risk of failure was not unreasonable but that there was no evidence of it increasing. The report verified that ongoing care was mitigating that risk.

The neighbors and their insurance company were not satisfied, and demanded that the branches overhanging their property be removed. A compromise pruning plan was implemented; the reduction cuts were made at sound, mostly upright laterals. Enough foliage was left to keep the branches alive, but the needless loss in photosynthesis was considerable for a tree this size and age. The sudden exposure of the soil under these branches to sun and wind added another stressor to the tree system.

**1998**

Over time the drainage patterns on adjacent landscapes were altered, and water was directed through a pipe. The owner directed the pipe toward the stem to irrigate it from 10 feet away, but white oaks are not well adapted to heavy watering in the late summer. Their stomata are closed to conserve water, so an excess can lead to root decay. A Y-joint was installed so the water would flow in two directions along the dripline. If that is where the water drips from the branch tips, that could be where root activity is the greatest.

**2001**

Branches in the top and on the western side were dying back. In the course of inspecting and cleaning the crown, it was apparent that most of the leaves had brown blisters on them. The pattern matched pictures of ozone damage. No direct treatment for this condition was known.

**2003**

A new vertical crack showed up on the western side of the trunk. In it was a fruiting body of *Laetiporus sulphureus*, the same fungus found in the largest white oak
in the country, the Wye Oak. *Laetiporus* is a brown-rotter, meaning that it consumes the cellulose in the wood fibers but leaves the lignin. This fungal activity causes the wood to lose much of its flexibility while holding onto much of its strength. The owners were advised that the new crack and infection had increased the risk of failure. The load in the crown had been lightened by branch removal, which was a factor in the owners’ decision to keep the tree, though it was clear to one spouse that it was time to start saying goodbye to the tree. Losing an historic tree is like losing a loved one, so the owners go through the same five-stage grieving process:

- **Denial.** “Oh, no! This tree looked fine when we bought the lot!”
- **Anger.** “Why didn’t our builder check out the tree before he sold it to us! Why did they have to damage the roots so badly?”
- **Bargaining.** “If I do all the right things for this tree, it may last a good while.”
- **Depression** “All my work and prayers were in vain. It hurts to lose this tree.”
- **Acceptance.** “The tree’s had a good life, and I am glad it was part of mine for so long. It’s gone, so it’s time to plan for a nice big magnolia in its place.”

**2005**

A moist summer was followed by a severe September drought. The entire top is dead, so the whole tree is structurally unstable. A bleeding lesion on the side of the trunk opposite the cavity signifies advancing decay. One spouse sees all the green leaves on the lower limbs, so he still wants to keep the tree. The other spouse recognizes the danger, and accepts the loss.

**Making the call**

The hardest job an arborist can face is assessing risk: deciding when and how to hold on to a giant old tree, and when to fold up the toolbag and tell it goodbye.

Utility right-of-way managers have one set of criteria for this decision, often summed up by the phrase “When in doubt, cut it out.” If a high-value tree can be maintained safely by pruning rather than removal, this is often a cost-effective strategy. However, given their primary mission of keeping the power flowing, utilities tend to take out marginal trees sooner rather than later.

Public safety is a top priority for municipal tree managers, but they are also charged with the task of maintaining the public benefits that derive from a healthy urban forest. Many of their constituents put an especially high value on public trees, so conservation of existing trees is higher on their agenda in areas where residents speak out about tree care.

The commercial arborist typically deals with one landowner. On private property there can be a much higher acceptance of risk, for both arborists in their recommendations and owners in their decisions. This giant had no place standing next to a power line, and could stay in a public park only with special precautions. In a big back yard it lived on for 12 more years after receiving what may have been fatal
construction damage.

Could this giant have lasted longer? Without the needless pruning and turf competition and the storm damage and the ozone and the severe drought it may have. The root damage during construction could have been avoided if the builder had worked with an arborist. More constant and intensive efforts to improve the soil afterward may have helped. If our company was closer, and organized and staffed to the level of a TCIA-Accredited business, the extra care may have resulted in extra years of safe useful life for the tree.

Now the tree is gone, and these lessons have been reinforced by the Monday-morning quarterbacking. A portable mill will come on site and transform scaffold limbs into benches. It’s time to focus on other tree work, like preparing this site for the magnolia that will take the giant oak’s place. The owners will sit on sturdy oak benches as they enjoy their new giant-to-be tree. I can smell the blossoms now.

Guy Meilleur is with Better Tree Care in New Hill, N.C. He will be presenting a discussion on this same subject, Tree Risk Assessment & Mitigation, at TCI EXPO in Columbus, Ohio, on Nov. 10.

Looking up the cavity from the center of the tree.
Riding the Economic Roller Coaster

By Mary McVicker


Where does your business go in the economy? That answer may also be an unknown – but you have some control in the result.

Economic news looks at the broad scope of business and consumers in the national economy. Regional economic news is obviously more focused, but it still has a broad scope. What we often lose sight of is the more focused picture. Two arborists in the same region aren’t necessarily dealing with the same economy.

Even in this age of global industries, global economic considerations, when businesses seem generic, every business still operates within a particular locality, region, neighborhood, and business climate. Every business operates within its own “micro-economy.” While the impact of the (national) economic roller coaster ride can’t be denied, what a business does within its own micro-economy is usually the deciding factor in its success or failure.

Positioning

How prepared is your business for continuing life on the money/economic roller coaster? How well positioned are you? In any business climate, positioning is to small businesses what location is to real estate.

The business’s solvency and flexibility are key elements of positioning. The term “solvency” appears somewhat out of fashion these days; more often you hear about “liquidity.” But solvency remains a valid term. It speaks directly to the business’s ability to meet financial obligations, to pay debts. You’re either solvent or you’re not; “solvency” doesn’t beg the question, and for that reason I like the term. Liquidity is a softer term than solvency.

Debt, of course is the issue with respect to both liquidity and solvency. To position a business for the long run, it’s absolutely essential to lessen the business’s dependency on debt. Ideally, you want to pay off the debt. This isn’t as easy as it sounds, of course.

If you don’t have that extra cash coming in, how do you lower your business’s dependency on debt? Many articles that advise people on how to get out of debt invariably begin with “pay off your credit cards.” Well, yes! As if readers had thousands of dollars sitting in accounts that they don’t know what to do with. Rarely do those columns address the real question, which is, “Pay off credit cards with what?”

Lowering your business’s dependency on debt can occur in ways other then paying down the debt. Making your business more solvent or liquid will help.

When there is a bit of extra cash, no matter how small that bit, use it to build up savings, so that incurring additional debt isn’t the only solution to a problem. Designate a level for your savings; once your savings balance reaches that level, use additional cash to reduce debt.

Consider negotiating to reduce the level of debt payments, so that some of the money now used for debt repayment can be used for savings.

Focus on broadening your customer base, and designate revenues from one or two new accounts specifically for reducing debt.

Marketing thrust

Some business owners find it increasingly difficult to spend money on marketing during a tight economy. Faced with salaries and operating expenses, they view marketing expenses as flexible – even expendable. Adding to the reluctance is the difficulty, if not impossibility, of measuring the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

As a result, marketing budgets are slashed. Yet, this is the time when marketing is most essential. Careful marketing, along with positioning, is what will get many businesses through a difficult economy.
The challenge is to convince customers – existing and potential – that they need your services. The key question becomes: how does tree care speak to your customers?

People used to take trees more-or-less for granted. That’s changing, for a variety of reasons. For many property owners, trees are a valuable asset and add to the value of their property. But do these owners, particularly homeowners, make the connection that good tree care promotes healthy trees – trees that enhance their property’s value?

Do they make the connection between physical well-being and healthy plants, including trees?

Healthy trees don’t happen when trees are taken for granted and neglected. Yet, even in towns that pride themselves on their trees, where homeowners obviously have a disposable income, you often see trees neglected by those very homeowners who delight in their trees.

How do you sell people on the value of tree care? How do you convey that healthy trees make economic sense as well as environmental sense?

There are a variety of possible approaches, including:

▶ Write an article (or have it written) for community newspapers.
▶ Make sure your advertising emphasizes the contributions that healthy trees make to a community.
▶ Volunteer to give a talk at your local library about the essentials of tree care.
▶ Educate people on how to keep trees healthy, particularly in drought, heat and severe cold.
▶ Offer to give a tree walk for your park district.

The point is to educate people that keeping trees healthy is an investment in everyone’s well-being – and it doesn’t hurt property values, either!

Your customer base

How dependent are you on one or a few large customers? Do you have a solid base of rent payers, those customers who may not be your large accounts but are steady?
While it’s tempting, and certainly not a bad idea, to go after larger accounts, don’t overlook the value of having a variety of smaller accounts. The usual rationale for small accounts is that they may grow into larger accounts, but that’s not their only value. Many businesses have learned the hard way that taking those small-but-steady customers for granted or ignoring them because they’re not big is a costly mistake.

Conversely, not all customers are good for your business. Customers who are overly demanding, don’t pay in a timely manner, consistently give employees a hard time, don’t respect your work, and so on, carry a high cost. Their use of your resources isn’t commensurate with the return you get. While it can be hard to turn away a job, consider the fact that the resources that particular customer consumes might be better applied elsewhere.

Positioning, part two

Your employees depend on your business’s success. They have a stake in your ability to deal with the money roller coaster of the economy. Conversely, your business’s success to a great extent depends on your employees. Involve them in your marketing and in your planning.

Encourage them to read “Tree Care Industry.” Not only will this involve them more, but a particular product may trigger a response along the lines of “I think Customer X could really use this,” a marketing opportunity that might not occur to you.

Riding out a challenging economy when the direction is unknown or unclear requires a sharp, clear focus on the basics. This is the time to strategize about your business’s particular niche, your business’s solvency, and most of all, your business’s potential.

What kind of future do you want to create for your business? You don’t have any control over the direction of the economy. But you do have choices about the direction of your business.
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Knowing the danger of power lines, many commercial tree care companies have a simple warning for workers: stay away.

Nevertheless, OSHA statistics indicate that 95 percent of all electrocution incidents involving tree workers are the result of unsafe acts by workers. With numbers like this, it is overwhelming clear that proper training is a lifesaver when it comes to tree workers and power lines.

Where danger lies

In reality, the danger lies not simply in the power line itself: There are threats to human safety all around power line areas – from the sky to the ground – especially when far-reaching bucket trucks and long-handled arborist equipment are involved. The danger is from electricity’s propensity to flow to ground.

As the leader in arborist safety and training, TCIA is tackling this issue head-on with a complete overhaul of its Electrical Hazards Awareness Program (EHAP), which focuses on training tree care workers in dealing with the dangers posed by working around energized lines. Although EHAP has been around since 1975 – training a total of more than 12,000 arborists – and has had minor updates in the past 30 years, the time is ripe for the re-evaluation and overhaul that will exceed upcoming OSHA requirements as well as ANSI recommendations. OSHA and ANSI Z133 groups are in the process of reworking their respective guidelines regarding electrical hazard safety.

“The overriding reason that the EHAP program exists and needs to be revised is that electrical hazards have been and continue to be a leading source of very serious accidents,” explains Peter Gerstenberger, senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards at TCIA. “Typically a run-in with electrical hazards results in a fatality.”

“Since we know a lot more and can characterize the accidents a lot better – largely due to computers and the information age – we need to look at new ways of presenting the information, to make as much use of data as possible,” he adds.

As always, the target audience of EHAP is not the line-clearance arborist working for a utility, since utility line-clearance arborists usually receive extensive training from the companies they work for. Instead, EHAP is geared toward the tree care worker who is apt to find himself working near power lines as part of a contract job or a private job, but who isn’t an electrician and has inadequate formal training in electrical hazards awareness.

“This is a very serious hazard affecting not just line-clearance arborists but all arborists,” emphasizes Gerstenberger, pointing out that line-clearance arborists receive very specific training regarding electrical hazards. “I’m more worried about folks who don’t receive that (electrical hazards awareness) training and aren’t even aware of the magnitude of the hazard they are exposed to.”

What’s new in the upcoming EHAP

The updated EHAP program will encompass two major components: information update, and a format update. The information update will incorporate the latest knowledge, statistics and regulations regarding electrical hazard safety. The format update involves taking the new knowledge and presenting it in several different digital and print mediums so that the majority of arborists have easy access to the training and information.

Key in the content update safe line-clearance work practices; and emergency planning, preparedness and response. The new program will, as mentioned earlier, incorporate and exceed OSHA and ANSI guidelines which, EHAP will digest, inter-
The upcoming update of the EHAP program isn’t the only indication that electrical hazards awareness education is in demand. This past year, funding from the Susan Harwood Training Grant Program has allowed TCIA to organize more than two dozen EHAP workshops to train approximately 2,300 tree care workers nationwide in electrical hazards awareness, using the EHAP materials as a guide. The overwhelming response to the workshops has shown there’s an un-met need in the industry for non-line-clearance electrical hazards awareness training.

Far exceeding the initial goal of reaching 1,575 registrants, TCIA reapplied for the grant for 2006, but was not successful. In the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, OSHA directed the Susan Harwood funding toward storm damage-specific training. Nevertheless, there is large-scale demand for electrical hazards training that hasn’t been met. Some companies had entire crews travel several hours to the one-day workshops, illustrating the need – nationwide – for more EHAP training.

TCIA received more requests to do workshops than could be fulfilled in 2005. Many workshops sold out. Others filled up, within days, and still more people wanted to come.

Prospective local hosts were invited to request that TCIA come into their markets with the training workshops. As a result, representatives from state arborist associations, local ISA chapters, private companies, urban forestry programs, cooperative extensions, utilities and other groups stepped forward to make these workshops happen in their neighborhoods, jumping at the chance to start filling the need for training in electrical hazard awareness.

The addition of donations and in-kind donations from local groups allowed TCIA to direct the grant funds where they were most needed: getting qualified trainers to lead the workshops, and getting the training materials into participants’ hands.

The great appeal of the workshops is in part due to the fact that qualified instructors could bring the training closer to tree care workers by answering their questions in a personal, manner. Additionally, the audio/visual portions of the workshops made it possible to convey vital information to people who have literacy challenges.

Real-time Spanish interpreting was also available at workshops if there was enough of a need, and printed materials on hand were available in both English and Spanish.

EHAP takes awareness training and brings it to all workers, not just specialized line-clearance workers, offering the necessary training component for all workers on how to stay away from the hazards.

In 2005, TCIA could have conducted twice as many workshops and still wouldn’t have saturated the market. With this much demand and ongoing OSHA training requirements, it will be a real challenge to keep up. The potential to help improve safety in the industry is enormous. If your group, company, association, municipality or utility would like to host an EHAP workshop, please contact TCIA at 1-800-733-2622.

The module will show tree care company leaders how to run a seminar. It will also contain extended resources to better educate trainees, and will incorporate a renewal course to keep trainees fresh as time passes.

The updated EHAP program will offer training options using a printed manual as supplement and provide additional guidance.

Additionally, the updated content will include a Facilitator Training Program component – basically a teachers’ manual.
well as video, PDF and online formats. (The current EHAP program includes just a manual and two videos.) In conjunction with the success of this past year’s nationwide EHAP Training Workshops (see sidebar), one goal of revising EHAP is simply to offer the updated information in portable formats that make it easier to have information when and where tree workers need it, thereby increasing the effectiveness of safety training materials for the target audience. In short – an updated EHAP will train more tree care workers and save more lives.

**Partners in the revision**

Although the final product will be a TCIA program, the Association is hardly going it alone in this update. The assistance of the Utility Arborist Association (UAA) gives the updated EHAP program a more comprehensive knowledge base as well as the perspective of a group whose membership includes utilities as well as tree care companies contracting with the utilities.

With the UAA thoroughly representing both sides of the industry, the collaboration will help TCIA reach the targeted audience with promotion, making a huge impact in how many are trained and how they are trained. The UAA’s Training and Education Subcommittee is also providing technical review.

“We look at the EHAP update as an opportunity to get the message out to the commercial and small, private tree care companies about the importance of electrical safety,” says Ken Finch, director of the UAA. “There are significant hazards and risks that (tree care workers) need to be aware of.”

“Too frequently, across the country,” Finch elaborates, “we have found [untrained] folks working in and around the trees who are coming into contact with power lines. And they haven’t heard the message” about electrical hazards.
awareness.

EHAP, says Finch, can educate the tree workers to know how far away to stay from power lines, as well as to recognize when the scope of the work is beyond their abilities and training.

Partnering with the utilities is also a benefit to those companies, Kim Anastasiou, TCIA’s resource development coordinator, is quick to note. With serious power line-related injuries or fatalities, “The pointed finger comes out and says you – the utility company – didn’t inform us of all the information you should have.” A benefit of the EHAP update for utilities is to “protect their interest in reducing the amount of claims against them,” she elaborates.

In the case of this EHAP update, what’s good for the utility companies is good for the tree care workers, too.
By William J. Lynott

Many of the thousands of small businesses destroyed by the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina will never reopen their doors. However, many others are already back in operation and on their way to a healthy recovery.

The difference?

In most cases, say the experts, the fortunate ones are those who had a disaster preparation and recovery plan to guide them through that traumatic time.

Depending on your location and other factors, the odds of you being the victim of a catastrophic loss from wind, water, or fire may be greater or less than average. However, every tree care professional faces some degree of risk of a crippling disaster.

The key to minimizing that risk is a well-thought-out plan of action in the event that disaster strikes. Here are 11 steps you can take to help your business avoid or recover from a catastrophic loss:

1. Prepare a plan

“Every small business owner needs to have a disaster preparation and recovery plan, even if the business is located in a relatively low risk area for natural disasters,” says Gene Fairbrother consultant to the National Association for the Self-Employed and an expert in disaster planning. “Even if it is not formally written down, you need to consider how you will continue operating if disaster strikes.”

Your plan shouldn’t be a cumbersome, complex project. To be effective, it should be a model of clarity, fully understood by every employee.

Whether it’s in writing or not, it’s important to refresh your plan periodically. “Some basics of a disaster plan seldom change,” he says. “For example, your evacuation destination, or the first things you’d grab on your way out if you had to evacuate in a hurry. However, other things do change, like contact information on clients, vendors and places to find replacement equipment. Review your disaster plan at least once a year to make sure it still works for your business.”

2. Make your disaster plan company policy

“It’s important to make your disaster plan a permanent part of your business philosophy,” says Fairbrother. “However, it often takes another set of eyes and ears to point out the cracks in a plan, or to spot missing components. That’s why you should share it with someone else, especially your employees. They may find a flaw or an important step that you missed.

“Beyond the possibility that you might owe some employees a paycheck, a business owner has little or no legal obligation to employees if the company closes due to a disaster,” he says. “Still, you need to make your employees part of your disaster plan. Failing to do so will hinder your ability to get the business back up and running if the need arises.”

3. Maintain an off-site backup of records

According to one estimate, 90 percent of all business records are now electronic. That makes protection and recovery of vital business information easier, provided a careful system of backing up is in place. Most tree care professionals have learned the importance of backing up the business information on their computers, but not everyone does a complete job.

Stefan Dietrich, Ph.D., co-author of the book, Contingency Planning and Disaster Recovery: a Small Business Guide, stresses the importance of maintaining an up-to-date backup copy of critical data at an off-site location. "Unattended automated backups are better then using CDs," he says. “Typically, most people don’t follow through with creating CD backups. For that reason, automated online backups to a remote location via the Internet are much better.

“A decade ago, I chose to protect one of the most valuable assets of my business, its data, by taking the appropriate steps to make sure that it would be safe from a hurricane,” says Steven Rothberg, president of CollegeRecruiter.com. “Although the chances of a hurricane hitting Minneapolis are almost non-existent, I believe that such a strategy is a good investment for any business that depends on information. As a result, all of our data is automatically backed up every night via an encrypted Internet feed to California." You can obtain more information on internet backups at www.atbackup.com.

Regardless of the system you use, you must be sure that your backups are working properly. "You should test them regularly and be aware of typical recovery time," says Dietrich.

4. Store copies of important paper records offsite

Some of your most important business records may be in paper form. Scott Daugherty of the Small Business & Technology Development Center, University of North Carolina, suggests that you make copies of important business papers such as tax returns, financials, insurance policies, leases and contracts and store them in a separate location from your home or office.

5. Safeguard your most precious business asset

Put simply, your list of satisfied customers is the foundation for the continued health of your business. Of all your business assets, your customer list is among the most valuable and irreplaceable. You must do everything possible to make certain that you have access to that list in the event of a natural disaster.

“If you are out of business for a few days – or longer – you need to let your clients know what is happening,” says Fairbrother. “This means having an easily accessible list of customers and their contact information. As with other business records, it’s best if copies of this are stored offsite.”

6. Review your insurance coverage

“Carefully review your insurance policy to make certain it is appropriate for your needs,”
says Donna Childs, CEO of Childs Capital LLC and co-author of Contingency Planning and Disaster Recovery: a Small Business Guide. “You should have business interruption insurance to replace lost revenues if your operations are disrupted due to a disaster.” According to Childs, the failure to include business interruption insurance is the most common error in disaster planning for small business.

Childs suggests that you take digital photographs of your difficult-to-value assets and preserve them online where you can access them remotely. “This will be a great help in the event you have to file an insurance claim,” she says. “Also scan critical documents, such as your insurance policy, office lease and so forth and have digitized copies available online for the same reason.”

7. Is looting a possibility?

Looting in the throes of a natural disaster is an unfortunate and often unexpected phenomenon. However, in the sometimes-dark world of reality, looting of businesses crippled by a catastrophic event is not at all uncommon.

The most frequent victims of this behavior are retail stores, so your business is not a likely target of looters. Still, expensive office equipment represents a degree of risk. Also, heavy equipment such as trucks and chippers, or anything in your storage area that thieves could carry away, should be regarded as potential targets.

Your ability to plan for protection against looting will depend heavily on the configuration and location of your property, so the details will be largely up to you.

While advance planning may not eliminate the risk of looting entirely, it’s a step worth inclusion in your plan.

In the unfortunate event that your business is fully or partially wiped out by a natural disaster, your plan should include guidance on how to get it up and running again as quickly as possible. Since your services are one of those likely to be in heavy demand in the aftermath of a natural disaster, these basic suggestions should be part of your plan:

8. Provide physical security

In the aftermath of any natural disaster, security of business assets is almost certain to have been compromised. As soon as it is possible to do so, you should put any parts of your plan dealing with physical security of business assets into effect.

9. Know who is there to help you ... and let them know you need their help

“If you are involved in a major natural disaster, you should be prepared to make early contact with any organization that may be able to offer assistance,” says Ernest G. Vendrell, Ph.D., assistant professor of Emergency Planning Programs, Lynn University, Boca Raton, Fla. Some of these agencies include:

- Local offices of emergency management
- The Small Business Administration
- Local police and fire services
- The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA)
Your insurance carriers

In addition to a variety of educational and training guides,” says Vendrell. “FEMA also offers a number of disaster planning courses that are typically offered free-of-charge.”

“It’s important, too, to maintain ongoing contact,” says Fairbrother. “During a major disaster there is always much confusion and you don’t want your business to be the one that falls between the cracks.”

10. Submit insurance claims on a timely basis

“Don’t risk a possible denial of a valid claim for failure to give timely notice of the disaster,” says Childs. “Be sure to review all policies that may be implicated in the disaster, including expired policies and umbrella or excess coverages.”

11. Keep your clients updated on a frequent basis

If you have protected information on your clients as recommended above, you can contact them every few days with an update.

“Remember that your clients may be in urgent need of your services following a natural disaster” says Fairbrother. “In most cases they will work with you in your time of need. However, don’t lose sight of the fact that they have needs of their own and must continue to take care of those needs. Maintaining contact with them will increase the likelihood that they will stick with you instead of straying off to a competitor.”

Unless you are located in one of the hurricane-prone areas, preparation for a natural disaster may seem like an unnecessary demand on your time, but every year, thousands of unsuspecting business owners around the country find themselves victimized by floods, ice storms, tornados, earthquakes and wildfires. That’s why investing a little of your time in preparing a disaster preparation plan now will be a wise business investment.

“It is absolutely critical to have a disaster recovery plan, regardless of the nature of the business or its size,” says Daugherty. “Disasters come in all sizes and shapes, not just hurricanes like Katrina and Rita. They can all take their toll.”

All of the experts interviewed for this article agree: The last thing you will need if disaster should strike is to be caught completely unprepared.

Additional Reading

Contingency Planning and Disaster Recovery: A Small Business Guide, by Donna Childs and Stefan Dietrich, John Wiley & Sons 2002, $55.00. The authors take small business owners through every stage of disaster planning from preparation to recovery.

Emergency Management Guide for Business & Industry, published by the FEMA, this step-by-step approach to emergency planning, response and recovery for companies of all sizes is available at no charge, online at: www.fema.gov/library/bizindex.shtml


Simply Essential Disaster Preparation Kit (Simply Essential Series) (Paperback), by Catherine Stuart $9.95.

Get Your Claim Paid: A Pro-Active Guide for Handling the Most Difficult Part of Insurance, The Silver Lake Editors -- $19.95
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Common sense and standard business practice have always dictated that when you invest in a piece of equipment you spend enough to get the capacity, horsepower and adaptability that will allow you to grow into the equipment’s greatest potential.

Well, that still holds as a basic truth. It’s also a good starting point when you’re looking at skid steers and then to attachments, specifically grapples.

The new grapple reality – and it’s a good one for the arborist trade – is that design and technology are improving not only versatility but a diversity of price ranges starting at under $2,000. Ultimately, though, there’s the larger issue of your potential total return on investment. That will depend on a lot of things, including your main piece of equipment and the level and quality of tool you hang on it.

You’ve done all your homework and made your skid steer decision. You’ve considered its size, maneuverability and maximum capacity. You’ve decided on whether it’s to be wheeled or track-propelled, and whether it will have a straight or articulated body. But what about attachments?

An article in the March 2005 issue of TCI magazine took a look at the versatility of log loaders and grapples. This time the objective is to examine the purchase of a skid steer level grapple from a business perspective.

Will Callahan, president of ImpleMax Equipment Co. Inc., a manufacturer of attachments for skid steers and tractors, is a champion of designs that are both horizontally and vertically viable. He compares what’s happened in the skid steer class grapple today to what happened some 50 years ago in the farm implement business, when the three-point hitch began to be popular, as did the universal interchange of tractor implements – plows, harrows, post hold diggers, mowers, etc. No longer did the farmer have to purchase one brand of workhorse, then fit it with brand-specific and model-specific tools. They became interchangeable, which was important if the farmer had equipment from different manufacturers or wanted to upgrade to more efficient and powerful models.

“The adaptability of loader attachments, including grapples, is greatly increasing the utility of several classes of machines from the tractor to the skid steer to the large articulated type material handlers. Applications for skid steer grapples used to be in a narrow band. Now, interchangeability is making both the attachment and the equipment to which it can be attached more valuables,” explains Callahan.

Put another way, he is saying is that the interchangeability of such implements between “prime material movers” increases their usefulness and thus improves the potential return on investment on both purchases. For example, the skid steer is nimble in tight spaces and known for its lifting capacity versus its size. But its very design limits it “reach ability.” Swapping the skid steer grapple to a material handler with the capability to reach into and out of awkward places increases the work head utility and therefore the arborist’s capability.

For his ImpleMax tools, Callahan has

Attachments That Help You Grapple With Business

By Rick Howland

Mini Articulating Gehl loader and with a Top Notch Branch Manager Grapple. The grapple has a two-fingered attachment featuring a 42-inch pincer opening and a 6-inch bypass clamp plus a full swivel for flexibility.
designed even broader interchangeability via the creation of a five-module product for skid steers and front-end loaders (plus tractors with a three-point hitch). This modular configuration allows users to customize the grapple attachment to a design in the field that best fits the job at hand. His products range from simple gravity rotation and manual hydraulics all the way up to full 360-degree hydraulic rotation with electro hydraulic controls integrated into the operator’s cab controls. Callahan is now developing a mini walk-behind unit adapted from his six large and small articulated grapple designs, scaled down and not robustly interchangeable.

The trend, then, is away from the one-size-fits-all and toward investing first in the most fully functional powerhouse based on the arborist’s mission. Second is investing in the material handling challenge directly at hand, and then investing in interchangeable purchases that, in turn, create greater material handling potential.

Another example is the SSG Grappler made by Northshore Manufacturing and sold by Evans Equipment Company of Burton, Mich. This universal attachment system with quick-connect capability allows operators to use the same grapple on a variety of power units, including skid steers, but also the wheel- and track-type loaders and mini excavators.

Carl Neutzel Services in White Hall, Md., is a dealer in the Northeast for Nokka brand grapples, which are made in Finland. These grapples are designed for a three-point hitch on a tractor and, with a conversion plate, easily make the transition to a loader.

Carl Neutzel, owner, says, Nokka’s Model 200, which is the more popular of the two models he carries, features a 7-foot opening and can function well even on large skid loaders up to 50 horsepower. The larger Model 220, also known as the Super, opens a bit wider and is a bit heavier (660 pounds versus the 500-pound Model 200) and features a heavier duty cylinder. “Both of them close tight enough to grasp a four-by-four, and they can be fitted with a hydraulic winch.”

Stan Ogletree is owner of Beaver Squeezer Grapple, LLC, maker of skid steer grapples and winch attachments. He touts his BSG skid steer grapple attachment, rated at 8,800 pounds safe-working-load, and a BSG Junior, a smaller unit rated at 4,400 pounds. But Ogletree hastens to say that the safe working load rating is more a function of the skid steer’s weakest point – it’s elbow joint – versus the grapple itself. Ogletree warns that in the environment of interchangeability, even with equipment ratings, it is critical to check the ratings of both the skid
steer (or other equipment) and the grapple or other working head.

“If you put a small grapple on a 500 horsepower John Deere, something is bound to give,” warns Ogletree.

He adds that, “Even with such ratings, if you really want to find out if something works and its capacity, send it out with a tree crew for a week. Knowing that, we went overboard with frame design knowing they will max it out – it’s just the American way.”

Beaver Squeezer is a supporter of the concept of interchangeability. Ogletree says that if you have a grapple truck/loader setup, you can simply remove one of his grapples with a quick disconnect and attach it to a Bobcat and or skid steer and remove material from a back yard. That’s an especially important feature in the North Georgia region where Ogletree also runs a tree service company. Here, large homes tend to be built on small lots, very closely spaced. That results in very tight side yards and access, both of which can be overcome with the right grapple and winch arrangement.

A tree care veteran and TCIA member, Ogletree is high on today’s skid steer loaders in general, noting that seven or eight years ago they were notorious for tearing up the turf. Certainly some of that was due to the operator. Now, with turf tires and tracks and different handling characteristics, an operator would have to work hard to do a lot of damage, he says. Even back then, though, the smart guys would know how to use the skid steer so as not to tear up the turf with that little powerhouse.

Ogletree also recognizes that the tree care pro needs to maximize profits on every pound of product extracted from a job site. “Down here, pine logs are the most marketed woods, with the 18-foot pine log selling best; it’s used to make plywood by GeorgiaPacific. Say you’re...
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working in a side yard. In the past we’d have to cut the log in 6- to 8-foot sections. That means in and out of a yard up to five times for one tree (and a limited market for your by-product).” Now, with his grapple, crews can hoist a piece – horizontally or vertically (to the traveling axis of the skid steer – and ease it out in one, more profitable piece. At $40 an 18-foot section, that may not be much, but if one is doing 20 to 30 trees at a time, “that adds up,” he says.

“If you can do a job with less labor and less time, you’re going to be able to underbid a lot of other tree professionals. That can mean significant business and profits.”

David Nordgaard

Like Beaver Squeezer, Top Notch Equipment has developed several attachments for skid steer loaders, growing out of 20 years of experience by the parent company, Top Notch Treecare in the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn., area. (Top Notch Treecare recently achieved TCIA Accreditation, the first company in Minnesota to do so.) The company’s skid steer attachments are designed specifically for the tree care industry.

Top Notch’s Branch Manager grapple is a two-fingered attachment featuring a 42-inch pincer opening and a 6-inch bypass clamp plus a full swivel for flexibility. The “Beak” is comprised of two bottom forks and a one-tine grapple on top, providing a three-fingered grip on logs, brush or construction debris. The beak is removable so the lower tines can be used fork lift fashion, and the forks flip up to reveal a handy receiving hitch.

Owner David Nordgaard, who has operated his tree care company since 1982, says of his equipment, “If you can do a job with less labor and less time, you’re going to be able to underbid a lot of other tree profes-
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sionals. That can mean significant business and profits.”

The Top Notch grapple design grew out of what Nordgaard says he saw among the many bucket designs with smaller grapple openings. Those units didn’t allow a skid steer operator to get a good grasp on large and unruly brush piles. Many, he says, were designed to carry logs across the front of a machine, and that made objects longer than five or six feet long difficult to get through narrow spaces and openings on residential jobs. That conundrum requires extra work and multiple cuts to get the material to a truck, chipper or processor.

In typical do-it-yourself fashion, Nordgaard set about to solve his problem, and “The Beak” was born. Then, needing a tool to drag whole trees and debris away lengthwise, especially in tight areas, “I started scribbling designs on paper and experimenting with different concepts until we came up with something that worked – the Branch Manager Grapple.”

Each is optimized for use on mini skid steer loaders of all types and will work with full-size loaders.

Acknowledging the profits are in the pennies, Nordgaard made the attachments simple enough so they can be fixed at the user level, and compact enough to transport between the cab and chip box or to ride on the back of a chipper. “With the rising costs of fuel, this can save the expense of sending another truck and trailer to haul all your equipment to the jobsite,” he adds.

Nordgaard summed up the industry this way. “People look at bucket grapples because they’re affordable. Skid steer attachments used to run $6,000 to $7,000. Now, they’re $2,000 or so. Unlike a bucket grapple, which can do light dozing and can be used to take rakings – which you have to cut to bucket length – the grapple is more efficient and a money making investment.”
By Rick Howland

The Loader Division of NMC-Wollard Inc., manufacturer of the compact, four-wheel-drive, articulated Swinger Loader, and Fecon, maker of the Bull Hog fixed-tooth flail mower, have embarked on their first joint-effort. The Swinger 3K Mower/Mulcher is a mower mulcher with a 60-inch swath. Applications include brush clearing, small tree clearing, park paths, reforestation, and general mowing in rights of way and firebreaks.

“This Swinger 3K Mower/Mulcher works virtually anywhere natural growth needs to be trimmed,” says Bruce Steingart, vice president of marketing for Swinger Loaders. “A cutting plan may call for mulch. In this case the operator can simply move the mower over the tree and reduce it to fine ships for use on park paths.”

The mower mulcher head is a Fecon Bull Hog with 30 fixed position carbide tip cutting tools. Tool replacement is easy – just one nut and bolt. And it has high fluid hydraulic flow for flail and other attachments.

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Professional tree care companies are faced with many business challenges in providing quality services at a reasonable price. One predominant challenge is having highly skilled and competent workers to help meet the stated customer satisfaction goals. To be at the top of your customer’s list as a quality service provider, a strong commitment to training and developing employee skills is a must. Finding, training and keeping skilled and knowledgeable workers in an advancing industry such as tree care will continue to be difficult unless creative labor resourcing solutions are embraced and supported.

Unlike building construction where earnings can be influenced from a mix that includes materials and inventory, tree care company revenues are largely affected by the performance level of field workers. Indeed, we work in an industry in which a “labor intensive” work environment has a tremendous impact on the bottom line (profit or loss). And, when revenues depend largely on the performance of labor, coupled with work that occurs in a highly safety-sensitive environment, investing in employee training and development makes excellent business sense. Unfortunately, however, many small businesses that employ tree care workers lack the financial resources and the knowledge of human resource management practices necessary to effectively satisfy this common “key success factor” of the business.

The goal of introducing basic tree care in a high school setting is to have high-school students enter the workforce in a productive capacity or continue their academic learning by attending a two- or four-year college in a tree care or forestry-related program. Photo courtesy of Northeastern Iowa Community College.

Entry-level tree workers require a “training-intensive” on-the-job learning environment, and there is no guarantee that those entering the field will remain. In much the same way that other skilled trades are hurting for recruits, the skill shortage in the tree care industry is certain to grow even more critical without effective training and education intervention. An important question to ask, then, is: Where will we find our tree care workers of tomorrow?

Ten-year projections published by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in Occupational Employment Projections to 2012 indicate that such jobs such as grounds maintenance, typically requiring tree care skills, will increase anywhere from 13.6 percent to 31 percent by the year 2012. Landscaping and grounds-keeping workers were identified in the BLS report as one of the occupations that will experience the largest job growth during the 10-year period through 2012. As the demand for tree care professionals continues to increase, the industry must invent creative resourcing solutions outside the traditional labor supply channels on which the industry previously has depended.

Tree care businesses dedicate considerable time, energy and resources to training entry-level workers. The businesses then are faced with the difficult decision of passing on these associated training costs to the customer or to the employee in the manner of suppressed wages and/or reduced benefits. Certainly these are difficult decisions—often resulting in a strained business relationship with the customer or with the employee.

The recent trend toward performance-oriented contracts indicates that worker production and performance now are even more vital to the overall success of a project. Opportunities for meaningful on-the-job training often conflict with short-term production goals in a produc-
tion-driven environment that typically presents itself. Short-term production demands can make it difficult for experienced workers to commit a portion of their work time to training unskilled crewmembers.

Training costs associated with getting employees up to speed also are linked with the industry’s limited ability to grant wage increases at or near the annual cost of living. Additionally, many business owners and managers struggle with the probability that close to half of all new employees will leave the company sometime during their training phase as a result of turnover.

High turnover rates are nothing new to the tree care industry. Meaningful on-the-job training and development programs are costly for companies, and with industry turnover rates as they are, the risk is high for losing the training investment to a competitor or other employer. In other words, a long-range cost/benefit analysis for on-the-job training and development can show negative returns in a high employee turnover environment. This makes it difficult for some firms to quantify or justify the real benefits of extensive on-the-job training.

Meanwhile, because corporate financial statements do not directly account for the value inherent in a skilled workforce, it is a challenge for human resource or business professionals to benchmark and determine an accurate return on employee training and development investments.

With a large number of unskilled workers entering certain segments of the tree care industry, financial risk is not the only challenge, however. High numbers of unskilled workers filling vacant positions also increases the risk of on-the-job accidents. As the demand for tree care services far exceeds the availability of skilled workers in a dangerous profession, a formula for disaster could well expand and plague our industry – absent effective educational and training intervention.

We can, and should, acknowledge that some excellent organized “apprenticeship” and “in-house” training programs exist in the tree care industry that effectively train and develop employees. Most such programs are supported by a well-defined learning process and skill-based classification and pay system. In the short term, these programs serve well to train the existing workforce. But the question asked earlier remains: What measures are we taking to serve the long-term recruiting needs that will attract young workers to the world of tree care careers?

One industry initiative in its early stages that has been embraced by many is the introduction of a basic tree care worker “program of study” into the high school vocational setting. The goal of this initiative is: high-school students will learn the basic fundamentals of tree care so that they can...
may enter the workforce in a productive capacity or continue their academic learning by attending a two- or four-year college in a tree care or forestry-related program. This is the type of creative resourcing that we must embrace and support so that the future outlook for a well-trained and professional tree care workforce remains strong. Mark Garvin, Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) vice president of public policy and communications, stated this need well in “The Business of Educating Commercial Arborists” in the August 2005 issue of TCI magazine. The only thing I would state differently from what Garvin said is that we must market the industry to young people even earlier than at ages 16, 18 and 21. If interest in a high school program of basic tree care grows and is adopted across the industry, it ultimately could provide another meaningful resource for finding and retaining interested and talented workers in the future.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Career and Technical Education has shown a high degree of interest in bringing a professional arborist program to high school students. Two key areas of interest with these vocational educators are industry certification and jobs. The tree care industry offers both. Other factors important to the success of a business and educational partnership such as this include: future occupational need, characteristics of entry-level workers, improving the desirability of tree care as a career choice, the vocational education setting and targeting “at risk” student populations. Efforts toward this initiative in Pennsylvania have included building a network of educational advisors, speaking at industry forums, presenting the industry to school directors and teachers and formation of regional occupational advisory committees that support program curriculum and design.

As we move forward and complete our first model curriculum, businesses must commit to a partnership with educators who are willing to take the program into their schools. Industry, with the help of educators, must develop a strategy to market the industry to all levels of the educational population, perhaps even to students who are as young as 8, 10 and 12. An emphasis on selling tree care as an adventurous and lucrative career opportunity should be a primary focus on attracting the interest of students.

I am hopeful that creative educational and training resources will continue to be explored and supported by industry leaders and associations such as TCIA and ISA in helping to attract and retain future tree care professionals.

Ronald R. Rankin, PHR, is human resource manager for Penn Line Service Inc., and has been in the tree care industry for 26 years. Penn Line Service is a utility vegetation management contractor based in Scottdale, Pa.
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Limit 1 per customer or company. Use original coupon only. Copies not accepted.
As part of the marketing team at the St. Louis world headquarters of 7UP in the 1970s, during the wildly successful UNCOLA campaign, Ilan Shamir found himself immersed in the excitement around the advertising campaign for the bubbly lemon-lime soda. Perhaps you remember some of the commercials “UNcola Nuts” or “UNdeer” and colorful designs that made this one of the more memorable and successful advertising campaigns ever.

“I got a clear look at the power of business, and its ability to inspire and excite people,” Shamir says. “Yet something important was missing.”

Promoting soft drinks just wasn’t Shamir’s true nature. The decision to return to his roots came as he remembered the best gift that he had ever received.

“As a young child, my aunt and uncle in San Antonio gave me a 3-foot-tall magnolia tree for my birthday. I planted this pencil-diameter twig with such excitement,” recalls Shamir. “This tree became my closest friend and confidant. We grew up together! I felt connected and found comfort in its strong roots and spreading branches. I felt protected in the shade of its limbs. The answer was clear: I needed to take my marketing expertise and the power of business and combine them in a way that would honor trees and all of the wonderful natural gifts they offer.”

And combine it he did. The ideas just seemed to flow with ease as his message of “Advice from A Tree” began to spread to hundreds of thousands. Now more than 50 books, journals, posters, postcards, notepads and T-shirts celebrating trees and nature call us to “Stand tall and proud, Sink our roots deep into the earth, Go out on a limb and Enjoy the view!”

Your True Nature has tools to put into words the joy and connection that trees bring to so many people. So, green leafy childhood inspirations turned into a thriving business. Your True Nature products are found in national parks, bookstores, retreat centers, gift stores and nature catalogs all across the country.

“To use my marketing talents to promote the trees I love is a “tree-mendous” privilege and honor,” says Shamir jokingly, adding, “Trees have such a special place with most people. Trees are not just unnoticed objects in their yard or city, but a growing part of their lives often filled with wonderful memories. A job well done by an arborist is a work of art and an enhancement of something so valuable to people.”

With company goals charted out like a tree, Shamir continues to develop more fun and creative products and to make keynote presentations nationwide.

**Supporting Local Communities**

Your True Nature supports local organizations and helps enhance community and nature-related causes. Shamir co-founded the nonprofit tree planting organization Fort Collins ReLeaf that has planted more than 30,000 trees in northern Colorado. To help inspire and empower others to plant and celebrate trees, Shamir shares experiences in his book, *Tree Celebrations! Planting and Celebrating Trees with Ceremonies, Stories and Activities*, which highlights the various ways individuals can get involved with schools and communities to plant trees to enhance the appearance of the community and support local tree planting businesses.
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Reduced Stress Means Optimal Growth

By Dennis Pittenger

Water helps plants maintain structure and is important for many plant physiological processes. It is a key ingredient and an agent in many chemical processes and reactions that occur in plants. In photosynthesis, water and carbon dioxide are combined in the presence of light and chlorophyll in the leaves, enabling plants to produce carbohydrates or “food” for the plant.

Water flow in and through the plant is important for the process of transpiration, the loss of water from a plant. Transpiration helps cool the plant. Water is very important as a media for transporting and distributing minerals, nutrients, and other soluble compounds within the plant. As the water flows into the plant from the soil there are many dissolved essential nutrients in the water. Much of the uptake of many essential nutrients is accomplished by this intake of water.

There is a pathway called the soil-plant-air continuum (SPAC), by which water moves from the soil into and through a plant and eventually into the air surrounding the plant. This simply means that as the plant takes up water at the root, there is a continuous pull of water up through the plant and out of the leaves during transpiration. It is like a straw sucking water out through the plants.

Water moves out of plants through openings in the leaves called stomata. A stomate opens and water vapor is lost from the plant to the surrounding air. As each water molecule departs it pulls another one out with it, like a liquid being sucked through a straw, drawing water from the root tip all the way up through the vascular system to each leaf tip. This is how a tree that is 50 feet tall can extract water from the soil up to the tree top. It functions as a big straw.

How do plants respond to a lack of water or drought? Some species have the ability to partially close stomata in response to low soil moisture. However, some don’t have that capability and continue to transpire until they run out of water, at which point they wilt and may die. Certainly photosynthesis and transpiration will be reduced by drought because water is required for these processes to occur. Growth will be reduced because of reduced photosynthesis. Lack of water also reduces cell size, so the overall growth of the plant will be reduced if water reduction is long term. Leaf area can be reduced either because the leaves are smaller or through premature leaf drop. Some plants have the capability of responding to drought, shedding their leaves and their leaf area.

The effect of water loss on stem and trunk caliper growth tends to be a more immediate and reliable measure of drought impact on tree growth. This expression of growth may not be noticeable the first growing season; it may take a year or so to be measurable depending on when the drought occurred, how severe it was, and
how long it persisted. If water stress begins in the spring and carries into the summer, the current season’s and next year’s growth may be inhibited.

Drought increases the incidence of attack by insect pests and by diseases in tree species that are predisposed to these pest problems. Some insects are attracted to trees that are water stressed, such as the bark beetles that have decimated drought-stricken conifers in the mountains of southern California the last several years.

We can quantify or describe the total water use of a landscaped area by the term of evapotranspiration, or ET. ET is the combination of evaporation from the surface of the soil around the plants as well as the amount of water transpired out through the plants.

How do you estimate plant water use? It can be defined most usefully against a reference standard that is a reflection of local climate. If we do the research and can define the climate terms under which the standard plant was monitored, we know the standard plant lost so much water under this climate. If we take the same plant to Texas or some other climate, if it is climate dependent, as long as we can measure the climate there we can get a pretty good idea of how much water that plant is going to use in that climate as well. If our reference standard is climate-based, we can take it wherever climate-based information is available to us and get a pretty good sense of how much water we will use under each of those climates.

The reference standard most widely used is the water use of cool-season turfgrass (tall fescue) that is given unlimited water. The water use of this reference crop is a function of the local climate, and is known as reference evapotranspiration, or ETo. The water use of other plants can be expressed as a percentage of cool-season turfgrass’s water use, or as a percentage of ETo. Since ETo is a function of climate, it can be mathematically estimated from local weather data. Water use of a given species at various geographic locations can be estimated by multiplying local ETo by the species’ percentage value. Thus, if we know the local ETo and the percentage of ETo that an oak tree requires, the water needs of the oak tree can be estimated in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. The amounts of water will likely vary between these location because of differences in climate, but the percentage of ETo the oak requires will be constant.

However, what is most important to focus on is not how much water a tree or another landscape plant uses, but how much they need to fulfill a particular function. These amounts can be very different, and usually the amount needed is considerably less than what a plant will use. In a landscape we don’t have a crop yield to consider and we don’t usually desire a large amount of growth because this results in more pruning. We typically expect only that trees and other woody plants look healthy and provide shade or other aesthetic value, and this requires less water than if large amounts of growth are desired.

Where do we come up with information about plant water use?

There are limited quantitative, research-based estimates established with reference ET that we can use. What we have done over the years for a number of landscape plants is apply different amounts of water to them based on percentages of ETo and evaluate how each performs. From this work we have obtained some information to set broad guidelines for amounts of water needed to assure acceptable performance of established plants. What we discovered in California is that for acceptable performance, trees, shrubs and non-turf groundcovers can require anywhere from 20 percent to 80 percent of reference ET, depending on the species. Typically we found that 35 percent to 60 percent of reference ET provides adequate performance, adequate meaning that for an established plant it will look all right but may not grow vigorously. Therefore, at this time we suggest arborists start at 50 percent of reference ET and adjust irrigation amount as needed based on your expectations of plant performance.

As an example, we looked at several species of landscape trees in a planting for a period of about five years. We gave them either 80 percent or 35 percent of ETo. When we looked at the caliper growth of
deciduous species (see Figures 1 and 2), we found that growth varied by species dramatically. Some grew just as well if not better at the 35 percent treatment, but most showed a reduction in growth.

We learned from that study and some other work that 80 percent of ETo is probably enough for most landscape trees, and there are a number of species that could do well at 35 percent of ETo. So, we estimate 50 percent of ETo to be a good starting point for irrigation scheduling. Some trees will do a little better at 80 percent, but they probably will not die at 50 percent. Increase irrigation if a species is not performing to your expectations, and if it is doing well at 50 percent of ETo, you can decrease the irrigation slightly.

How do you translate this information into irrigating urban trees? If you are interested and able to use a reference ET based
approach, 50 percent to 60 percent of reference ET would be a good target point for established trees. If they are located where you can differentially water them from turfgrass, use this approach and think about re-wetting most of the root zone at each irrigation. I would suggest in the summer maybe every week and a half to two weeks, re-wet the entire root zone. In spring and fall, if you have a mild climate where you have active growth in the spring and fall you could probably extend that interval out but still apply enough water to re-wet that root zone at each watering.

When you have trees in turfgrass and are irrigating the turf well we usually find the trees don’t suffer dramatically. However, irrigation frequency, irrigation depth and drainage can be problems for trees in turfgrass. Trees only need irrigating to re-wet the root zone on a fairly infrequent basis compared to turf, so try to

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**Figure 2.** Caliper growth of tree species irrigated at 35 percent of reference ET at University of California, Riverside.
extend out those turf irrigation intervals as much as possible. Is supplemental water needed when trees are in turf? You may have to provide supplemental irrigation to some of the turf because it has a much shallower root zone, but established trees are usually satisfied with the turf irrigation. They are all competing for water but the root zone of the trees is deeper and if that root zone is re-wetted only occasionally then the trees are happy and often the turf isn’t.

If you have trees in parking lots and plazas, you may have a lot of reflective heat in the canopy. The increased heat will actually cause the stomata to close in some species, which causes less water use. They won’t grow very well because when the stomata close they are not photosynthesizing and transpiring very well, but it isn’t because they are lacking water, it is because of the heat load. You will have to do some judicious soil water monitoring.

Transplanted trees

With transplanted trees it is a different situation. All the information above is for established trees. With newly transplanted trees you want to provide light and frequent water. But never re-wet a root ball that is already wet. Whether it is balled and burlap or a containerized plant, that plant has a very small root ball that it is relying on for water for the first several months up to a year or so. It is going to use water at the rate the climate demands, but its access to water is much reduced so you need to make sure that you are re-applying water to that root ball each time it begins to dry out. It is going to dry out very quickly compared to an established tree with a root zone that is very wide and deep.

If you are putting trees in during the spring/summer time frame, where ET rates are beginning to increase, keep the root ball moist at all times. It may take a couple of gallons per inch of trunk per day. In the first month in warmer climate zones you are probably looking at daily irrigation in the hotter months of the year. You need to re-wet that root zone or at least be checking it every day to ensure it is moist. In the cooler zones of the country you may be able to get by with just a few times a week for the first month. The next three- to six-month period, you will probably be able to extend the interval between irrigations because there will be some root growth out into that soil. In fact when you are watering at this time, you want to make sure you are encouraging roots to reach out into the soil.
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In the next six to 12 months, when the tree is more established, you can probably extend irrigation to once a week.

If you are transplanting in the fall months, which we do a lot in the milder climates because the soil temperatures are warm enough to encourage root development and we don’t have as high an ET rate, you don’t have to be so judicious in water monitoring. The tree is less stressed because there is less ET. Initially, keep the root ball moist with at least a couple of gallons of water every day or two per inch of trunk. Within the first three months extend that interval out to about one or two irrigations a week unless there is rainfall to subsidize it. The remaining three to six months you can start irrigating weekly until the plant is established. We find that if we plant the tree in the fall, by the next growing season they are normally established.

**Irrigation**

When you are using sprinkler irrigation on a new site and there are other plants you are trying to establish, how are you going to get water down a foot deep to cover the tree’s root ball? It is very difficult with sprinkler irrigation. Take a soil probe out there to monitor it. You need to be able to put water on with relative frequency and depth to keep that root ball wet. In many situations irrigation is adequate for newly planted trees if other plant materials (except turfgrass) are planted around them because irrigation is probably going to be very frequent for transplanted groundcovers and shrubs.

Ideally you can temporarily put in some type of directed irrigation system that puts water on the root ball itself or closely to it. You could install a temporary drip system or set up a shallow basin to irrigation trees where you put a mound of soil three or six inches high outside the root ball and periodically flood that zone to get that root ball wet. I always recommend using mulch on plants. It helps extend the irrigation interval out because evaporation from the soil is reduced, and it keeps turf and implements from getting too close to the tree trunk thereby minimizing competition and possible injury to the tree.

Dennis Pittenger is an area environmental horticulturist with the University of California Cooperative Extension in southern California. Using applied research in educational programs, his activities center on helping the green industry and associated agencies resolve problems in managing woody plants in urban areas particularly in landscape water management, tree species selection and palm management. He has also worked with managing tree roots and ground covers.
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**North America’s top 10 invaders**

**Kudzu (Pueraria montana)**

Kudzu is a high-climbing, rapidly growing perennial vine that kills or degrades other plants by smothering them with a solid blanket of leaves and girdling woody stems and tree trunks. It can break branches and uproot entire trees and shrubs through the sheer force of its weight. Once established, Kudzu plants can grow as much as a foot a day and 60 feet per season, climbing to the tops of trees, shrubs, buildings, utility poles and fences.

Kudzu was introduced into the United States in 1876 and was promoted as a forage crop and an ornamental plant. It is common throughout most of the southeastern United States, and has been found as far north as Pennsylvania.

Kudzu is a difficult plant to control, spreading from seeds and vines, and has a large tuberous root system with tremendous resprout capacity. For successful long-term control of kudzu, the extensive root system must be destroyed. Kudzu eradication programs require a commitment to annual follow-up spray treatments for about three growing seasons. Herbicide applications are most effective between late June and early October, as long as the kudzu is actively growing and not under drought stress. The annual follow-up treatments should begin no earlier than mid-July, as resprouting may be slowed by last year’s treatment. A selective herbicide can be used to spray kudzu even as it grows up into desired plants.

**Understanding Invasive Terminology**

When talking about invasive species, there are a variety of words used. Here are a few definitions from The Nature Conservancy’s Wildland Invasive Species Team (tncweeds.ucdavis.edu) to help clarify what each means:

**Non-native** – Species that were directly or indirectly introduced to a given region by humans, were not present in the region before and would not have spread into the area without human interference. Synonyms include exotic, alien and non-indigenous.

**Invasive** – Species that spread into areas where they are not native. This includes non-native species that escape or otherwise grow outside cultivation. Not all non-native plants are invasive.

**Noxious** – Species or groups of species that have been legally designated by county, state or federal agencies as pests.
Cogongrass (Imperata cylindrica)

Cogongrass is a non-native, fast-growing perennial grass. It is considered to be one of the 10 worst weeds in the world. Native to the warmer regions of Europe, it was brought to North America as experimental forage, and has been spread through its use as packing material. It is currently reported growing in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina and other southern states. Cogongrass spreads primarily from rhizomes, rhizome fragments and wind-borne seeds. The plant is highly flammable, but the roots and rhizomes are remarkably fire resistant.

An effective eradication program requires a commitment to annual follow-up herbicide treatments for approximately three growing seasons. Foliar applications are most effective between June and early October, as long as the plants are actively growing and not under drought stress. Annual follow-up treatments should begin no earlier than mid-June, as resprouting may be slowed from the last herbicide treatment.

Bush honeysuckle (Lonicera spp.)

Bush honeysuckle is a rapidly invading shrub that forms dense stands that crowd and shade out many native species. They alter habitats by decreasing light availability and depleting soil moisture and nutrients. It is strongly suspected that this plant produces allelopathic chemicals that enter the soil and inhibit the growth of other plants. This is an aggressive plant that colonizes by root sprouting and seed dispersal by birds and animals.

Bush honeysuckle is from Asia and was introduced as an ornamental. Various exotic species of bush honeysuckle are generally found from the central Great Plains to southern New England and south to Tennessee and North Carolina.

Elimination of this plant requires follow-up herbicide treatments for two or more years. Foliar applications are effective when applied between June and early October, as long as the plants are actively growing and not under drought stress. For basal bark applications, an herbicide and basal oil mixture can be applied any time of the year, including winter, as long as the bark is not wet or frozen. Late winter and early spring applications often provide superior control.

Autumn olive (Elaeagnus umbellata)

Autumn olive is a non-native, rapidly growing bushy shrub or small tree with abundant fruit. It can out-compete native
vegetation and interfere with natural plant succession and nutrient cycling, and tax water reserves.

Found in the East along streams, fields and open areas, autumn olive seedlings are tolerant of shade and thrive in a variety of soil and moisture conditions, including bare substrates. It was introduced in the United States in the late 1800s and was planted as an ornamental, and subsequently escaped into the wild.

Elimination of these plants requires follow-up herbicide treatments for two or more years. Foliar applications are most often used.

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Garlic mustard poses a severe threat to native plants and animals in forest communities in much of the eastern and midwestern United States. Once introduced to an area, this cool-season biennial herb out-competes native plants by aggressively monopolizing light, moisture, nutrients, soil and space.

Introduced from Europe in the 1800s, most likely for food or medicinal purposes, garlic mustard frequently grows in forested areas under partial shade, shaded flood plains, rights-of-way, ditch banks, vacant lots, parks and natural areas.

First-year plants appear as a rosette of green leaves close to the ground. Rosettes remain green through the winter and develop into mature flowering plants the following spring. From these, numerous seeds are produced in erect slender pods that become shiny black when mature. Seeds lay dormant for two to six years before germination.

Because of the long life of the seeds in soil, successful management of garlic mustard requires a long-term commitment. The goal must be to prevent seed production until the stored seed is exhausted. Establishing a thick cover of desirable grasses helps discourage new plants. The optimum timing for foliar applications is April through June, when new plants have developed and the second-year plants are flowering. The second-year plants must not be allowed to set seed.

Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)

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significant threat to riparian areas, where they can survive severe floods and are able to rapidly colonize scoured shores and islands.

Japanese knotweed is currently known to exist in 36 states from Maine to Wisconsin, south to Louisiana, and scattered Midwest and western states. It was likely introduced in the United States in the late 1800s as an ornamental.

Once established, populations are extremely persistent, and complete eradication is difficult. No single treatment will provide complete control, so annual follow-up treatments are required for two or more years. Foliar sprays can be applied from June through November, as long as the plants are actively growing and not under drought stress. Cut stem treatments can be applied at any time, including winter months, except when snow or water prevents spraying to the ground line. The most successful, but time-consuming application consists of injecting herbicide into individual stems.

Japanese stilt grass (Microstegium vimineum)

Japanese stilt grass, also known as Nepalese browntop or Chinese packing grass, is an annual grass with sprawling habitat and can reach heights of 2 to 3 ½ feet. It threatens native understory vegetation in shady to full sun locations and may successively inhabit any disturbed location.

It is currently found in 16 Eastern states, from New York to Florida. Introduced into Tennessee in the early 1900s, Japanese stilt grass was used as a packing material for porcelain.
Foliar sprays can be applied successfully from summer until fall, as long as the plants are actively growing and not under drought stress. Elimination of this plant requires follow-up treatments. Previous targeted areas should be checked each year and new plants treated. Establishing a thick cover of more desirable grasses helps discourage new seedlings.

**Canada thistle (Cirsium arvense)**

Canada thistle is a herbaceous perennial that spreads rapidly by rhizomes, root segments and seeds. As it establishes itself in an area, this highly invasive thistle crowds and ultimately replaces native plants. It prevents the coexistence of other plant species through shading and competing for soil resources.

Canada thistle was introduced to the United States in the early 1600s, most likely by accident. It is now found throughout the northern United States, from northern California to Maine and southward to Virginia.

For successful control of Canada thistle, it is best to treat while in the rosette stage in the fall and early spring before plants bolt. Eradication requires follow-up herbicide treatments of all new plants. Selective herbicides are recommended to effectively control the thistle, while leaving desirable plants left to grow and reproduce.

**Purple loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria)**

Purple loosestrife is a beautiful, hardy perennial and an aggressive invader. Readily adapting to natural and disturbed wetlands, the plant’s highly invasive nature allows it to form dense, homogeneous stands that restrict native wetland plant species and reduce habitat for waterfowl.

New purple loosestrife forms dense, homogeneous stands that restricts native wetland plant species.
As it establishes and expands, it out-competes and replaces native grasses, sedges and other flowering plants that provide a higher quality source of nutrition for wildlife.

Purple loosestrife was introduced to the northeastern United States and Canada in the 1800s for ornamental and medicinal uses, and is now found in every state except Florida.

To effectively control purple loosestrife, annual follow-up spray treatments are required until all missed plants and those originating from the seed bank are eliminated. The most effective time for herbicides is between June, after the plants have formed flower buds, and early September during flowering. Timing is critical because seed set can occur if plants are in the mid to late flower stage when sprayed.

Tree of heaven (Ailanthus altissima)

Tree of heaven, also known as Ailanthus, Chinese sumac and stinking sumac, is a rapidly growing, non-native deciduous tree that reaches a height of 80 feet or more at maturity. It is a prolific seed producer, and once established, tree of heaven can quickly take over a site and form an impenetrable thicket.

Tree of heaven was first introduced from China in the late 1700s and is now widely distributed across the United States. Because of its abundant seed production and high-speed germination, elimination of tree of heaven requires follow-up treatments for two or more years following the initial herbicide treatment. Several application methods can be used to control the tree, including foliar sprays, basal bark and cut surface treatments. (See related Chinese sumac article, page 104)

This article originally appeared in Right-of-Way Vistas magazine (Vol.17, Issue 4, 2005), a publication of Dow AgroSciences, and is reprinted with permission. For more information on Dow products and services for controlling these and other invasive species, visit www.vegetationmgmt.com.
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This standard on their operations. The deadline for comments in the latest round of rulemaking was supposed to have been October 13. However, OSHA just announced a 90-day extension, giving TCI readers more time to consider the impact of this standard on their operations.

To put things in perspective, the Tree Care Industry Association, publisher of Tree Care Industry magazine, represents about 1,700 employers in the U.S. TCIA calculates that more than half of its members are directly affected by proposed changes to 29 CFR 1910.269. The Association worked closely with OSHA’s standards writers throughout the original promulgation of 1910.269, starting in 1982 and ending in 1994 when the standard began to be enforced. TCIA has been concerned and proactive about electrical hazards faced by workers in trees since long before OSHA addressed the issue with a standard. They educated arborists to this hazard for over 30 years and in 2005 alone, they used an OSHA-Susan Harwood grant to bring electrical hazards awareness training to more than 2,300 arborists in the field.

TCIA members are concerned with half a dozen issues in the proposed standard, but two issues emerge as having the broadest potential impact on the profession: aerial lift fall protection and mandatory AED use.

In the considered opinion of some experts in the industry, the proposed “fall protection” revisions create the potential for decreased safety. OSHA’s aim is to require aerial lift operators to wear full body harness fall protection with a proposed “option” to use a body belt and two-foot lanyard that in TCIA’s opinion is unworkable and unsafe.

There is a viable compromise consistent with accepted criteria for fall protection and more conducive to overall worker safety: Allow the operator to use a body belt with a three-foot, shock-absorbing lanyard.

The only fall protection issue arising in aerial lifts is failure to use any form of fall protection whatsoever. It is our industry’s experience that workers are not being injured by virtue of using body belts, and that lack of compliance with PPE use requirements is directly proportional to how hard or uncomfortable they are to use.

Looking strictly at the fall hazard, full body harnesses do add an element of safety by distributing fall pressure over the body and reducing arresting forces. However in line clearance tree trimming from aerial lift buckets, some TCIA members believe there can be a greater hazard created if the operator fell out of the bucket in a six-foot deceleration lanyard attached dorsally to a full body harness. The victim runs the significant risk of making contact with the conductors below.

Which provides a greater measure of safety in these instances—the full body harness or the body belt? Many safety experts in our industry feel that for the tree trimmer working directly over electrical conductors, a body belt represents less overall risk. Currently with the freedom to choose body belt or full body harness, 73 percent of TCIA’s members performing line clearance duties as well as 76 percent of non-line clearance members whose crew members have some exposure to an electrical hazard use body belts and lanyards in their aerial lifts.

Is a two-foot lanyard feasible? It can depend on where it is anchored. Most tree care safety experts strongly prefer a lanyard anchor on the boom for greater structural integrity. However, a two-foot lanyard connected to an anchor on any part of the boom makes it impossible to have any range of motion to perform line clearance tree trimming. In fact in some units the anchor point is far enough away from the operator that attachment of a two-foot lanyard would prevent him/her from standing normally on the floor of the bucket and would pull at him/her during normal articulation of the vehicle’s upper and lower booms. In fact, 80 percent of TCIA’s members that use body belts feel that they could not feasibly use a two-foot lanyard with their lift(s).

OSHA is also using the opportunity presented by the open comment period to request public comment on whether the standard should require the employer to provide automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and, if so, where they should be required.

TCIA maintains that AED use, if adopted, should not be applied to arborists affected by this standard.

TCIA has polled its members on the AED issue on two recent occasions. The statistical evidence as well as the anecdotal response we have gathered clearly indicate that AEDs would not address any identifiable need; thus the expense of equipping thousands of work vehicles with AEDs as well as maintaining the AEDs in working order represents a phenomenal waste of resource.

The comments of one member best summarize the Association’s position on AEDs:

“To my knowledge we have never had a situation for which an AED would be applicable at any jobsite or at any of our facilities. We did experience one ‘cardiac’ situation at a jobsite; however, the individual never lost consciousness and therefore AED use would not have been appropriate.”

“The cost of AEDs has dropped from the $3,500 range into the $1,000 range for sturdy models. At this price we would probably be looking at an initial investment of approximately $200,000 to provide AEDs at each of our facilities and on enough vehicles to ensure their presence on each jobsite. This does not include training for our employees and maintenance of the equipment. As we all know, bucket trucks and chip trucks are not hospitable environments for delicate electronic equipment. We would need to purchase units that are sturdy enough to be usable when needed.”

“We would rather invest our efforts and money in areas that we know will improve the safety and health of our employees.”

CPR and first aid training, already required by this regulation, addresses the workplace need more appropriately from a cost standpoint. More importantly, this training prepares the employee to be able to address a broad range of workplace emergencies that are much likelier to be encountered than a situation requiring defibrillation would be.

Peter Gerstenberger is senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards for the Tree Care Industry Association.
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The District of Columbia’s Department of Transportation, Urban Forestry Administration, is seeking experienced candidates to apply for the position of State Forester/Chief of Urban Forestry. This position serves in a senior management capacity and functions as the Chief of Urban Forestry for the District of Columbia. The selected candidate will have senior operational and strategic responsibilities for planning, administering, and supervising the work of the Urban Forestry Administration. Key responsibilities include protecting and enhancing the District of Columbia’s approximately 120,000 street trees, managing a budget of approximately $7 million annually and supervising 35+ FTEs. A successful candidate must have experience planning, directing, and coordinating a wide range of tree service operations at the municipal or state level. Annual salary ranges $85,000 to $100,000 depending on experience. Interested persons should send resume and cover letter to kevinj.donahue@dc.gov.

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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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC1000</td>
<td>KCH20109</td>
<td>Double Edge 9” x 4-1/2” x 5/8”</td>
<td>$29.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC1800XL</td>
<td>KCH20112</td>
<td>Double Edge 10” x 5” x 5/8”</td>
<td>$37.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC1220-BC1250</td>
<td>KCH20002</td>
<td>Single Edge 8” x 3-1/2” x 3/8”</td>
<td>$17.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC1400</td>
<td>KCH20110</td>
<td>Double Edge 8” x 5” x 5/8”</td>
<td>$33.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC1800-BC2000</td>
<td>KCH20103</td>
<td>Double Edge 10” x 5-1/2” x 5/8”</td>
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### Morbark

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<th>Model Number</th>
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<th>SALE Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100, 200, 290</td>
<td>KCH10001</td>
<td>Double Edge 7-1/4” x 4” x 3/8”</td>
<td>$18.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>10, 13, 17, 2050</td>
<td>KCH40001</td>
<td>Double Edge 10-1/2” x 5” x 1/2”</td>
<td>$30.55</td>
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### Brush Bandit

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<th>Model Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90XP, 280XP</td>
<td>KCH10004</td>
<td>Double Edge 5-3/32” x 4” x 1/2”</td>
<td>$21.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>100XP-250XP</td>
<td>KCH10003</td>
<td>Double Edge 7-1/4” x 4” x 1/2”</td>
<td>$19.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250XP, 254XP after ’01</td>
<td>KCH10101</td>
<td>Double Edge 7-1/4” x 4-1/2” x 1/2”</td>
<td>$25.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890 Intimidator</td>
<td>KCH20103</td>
<td>Double Edge 10” x 5-1/2” x 5/8”</td>
<td>$37.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Asplundh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Number</th>
<th>Part No.</th>
<th>Knife Description &amp; Size</th>
<th>SALE Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12” Drum</td>
<td>KCH30001</td>
<td>Single Edge 12” x 3” x 3/8”</td>
<td>$17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16” Drum</td>
<td>KCH30002</td>
<td>Single Edge 16” x 3” x 3/8”</td>
<td>$19.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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They’re retired, and while he golfs, she enjoys music, quilting, knitting, basketry and, most of all, gardening. The grounds surrounding their estate contain an orchard, extensive lawns, a pond, a scenic meadow, a groomed hedge, vegetable and flower gardens, and a woodland garden sheltered by century-old trees. She loves the calm, protected areas of the property and values the natural character and beauty of the forests and land for their elegant and comfortable accommodation. Her next project is to have selected areas of the grounds floodlit during the evening.

Cleanliness Next to Godliness
The demands of the property are significant. She used to employ a full-time groundskeeper that arranged all the contracting, but his health has forced him to retire and his son has moved away. She made a false start with a service recommended by a neighbor. The owner was pleasant and well dressed when he visited, but when his men came to work, three days after the promised time, they were slovenly. Their truck leaked oil on her drive, they left lunch wrappers behind and bits of twigs and brush on the pathways. When she called to ask them to come back, a young woman was curt with her. When she received a separate bill for the cleanup, she promptly fired them.

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Later in life, she has studied interior design, fashion merchandising and, luckily, the internet at a local technical college. She uses the Internet to research services in her area that can help with the maintenance. She wants to employ a well-established company that has a good reputation. One that will treat her fairly and whose employees take pride in their work. She wants a company she can trust.

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Participants had perfect weather for the championship of the inaugural ECHO Carving Series at the International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo in Louisville, Kentucky, Oct. 14 and 15. Nine sculptors competed against each other and the clock to carve objects out of wood and reveal “what's in the trunk” using only a chain saw. They each started with nearly identical logs. Echo Incorporated sponsored the carving series with the winner receiving the ECHO Carving Cup in Louisville. The champion was crowned Sunday morning preceding an auction of the sculptures. The nine competitors reached Louisville by placing at the top in any of three regional qualifiers held over the summer. The theme of the event was “America: The New World, Then and Now,” and Dayton Scoggins, second from left, of Heidelberg, Miss., took top honors with his carving, finished at far left, of an eagle atop a rifle and boots titled “The Price of Freedom.” Third from left is Bob King of Edgewood, Wash., and a member of the ECHO carving team, with his carving of the Statue of Liberty with Jesus. At right is Wayne Demoranville of Lakeville, Mass., with his carving of an Indian holding an eagle. Three photos above by Don Staruk, TCI managing editor.
From coverages such as pesticide and herbicide application to workmanship errors, our experience and knowledge of the arborist industry enables us to offer you the tailored, comprehensive coverage you need. To find out more, contact your local Hartford Agent or visit mb.thehartford.com/treecare.
How does someone plant a tree with heart? The answer can be seen by the connections some Massachusetts third graders make in a program called “Touch Trees.”

Every spring for the past six years tree biologist Joe Kowalski, of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Rachel Shea, a storyteller/librarian at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., present this educational program to third grade classrooms in the Wachusett Reservoir region in Central Massachusetts. This past year the program was conducted in Holden, Mass.

Kowalski’s goal is for the pupils to develop a special relationship with the tree they plant to create a greater awareness of themselves and of the world they live in.

This is done by interspersing basic tree biology, a little self-reflection, Native American (Lakota) traditional teachings and a hands-on approach to learning that there might be more to planting a tree than one might think.

Kowalski asks the children to contemplate how their own hopes and dreams can be realized if they foster them with sincerity, attention and care – similar to the attention and care a tree needs to grow.

According to Lakota tradition, the Sacred Hoop (Cankleska Wakan) is all about understanding the Circle of Life, how to be and live in a space of gratitude and the realization that giving is more important than receiving.

The “Touch Trees” program starts in the classroom with a discussion about the things (gifts) trees give to people, animals and the earth. These “gifts” range from those that you can touch, taste and smell to some of the more intangible but no less important gifts.

The discussion describes how trees can touch your “spirit” and have the unique ability to simply make you feel better being around, under or even in them. Trees give these things freely without ever asking for anything in return. It is a perfect example of how nature works at its best and how we should live our own life(s).

After these points are made, the discussion shifts to what the students can give to the tree they are about to plant so that the tree can continue the cycle and give back to them. The concept of giving is explained with the image of a circle or “hoop.” The lesson explains that giving returns to the giver in the same way that a circle or “hoop” returns upon itself.

The teachings explain that when one gives to a tree, a person or a community (their classmates), one never really loses anything but gains back many things in return, often something one was unaware of at the time of giving.

In addition to the obvious needs of providing sufficient space, soil and water, another important thing that the students can give to the tree is honor and respect.
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Please circle 86 on Reader Service Card
This shows how the tree lives as an active part of this Circle of Life and that sometimes the things you can’t hold or see have the most value.

Giving kindness, politeness, courtesy or even a listening ear to your classmates, brothers and sisters and friends is a very valuable activity in and of itself, and is as much a part of the flow of nature as a tree giving leaves back to the earth in the fall. The concept of being virtuous is brought forth in a tangible way to the students’ young minds. “Living in a good way” – as a Lakota elder might speak.

Rachael Shea supplements this theme through the narration of a story. She explains that “Joe relates the basics of tree biology and the intellectual aspects of the giving tree and then the story I relate takes the same message into their hearts.”

Before the class goes out to the schoolyard to plant the tree, Kowolski establishes the “special” relationship between the tree and the students. Kowolski asks each student to choose a wish that is important to them and write it on a colored piece of paper that is shaped like a leaf. It should be a wish they choose to manifest in their lives.

“This is not a little wish like a trip to McDonalds after school or a birthday present,” Kowolski explains, “but a big wish, such as ‘I want to be an astronaut or teacher,’ or ‘I want to be more kind and generous toward my family and friends.’”

When the wishes are completed they are collected by a designated “wish collector” in a special “wish bag.”

After the classroom portion of the program, the children follow Kowolski and Shea out to the schoolyard, where a tree stands in the prepared planting site. Four 12-foot sugar maples were planted at the school this year, one by and for each third grade classroom. The four form a leafy line at the front of the school.

The students are given the opportunity to touch the roots and soil to gain an appreciation for the belowground landscape of a tree. Before the class helps add soil with student-sized shovels, the paper wish leaves are sprinkled around the root ball within the planting site.

That special relationship is now beginning with their wish-bearing tree. The hope is that when the children check back with “their” tree in the coming years, they will not only check in on its height, health and vigor but will also remember the wishes they planted with it, and they will have the opportunity to ask themselves, “Am I doing the things that I said I would in order to fulfill my wish?”

After the soil is added to the planting site the students water the newly planted tree from a fire hose provided by the local fire department.

Last but not least, the students honor the tree with a respectful group hug that sends it a collective silent blessing. There is nothing quite like lots of little hands and even bigger smiles to get the newly planted tree off to a good start.

Joe Kowalski is a tree biologist for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. If anyone would like more information about this program please feel free to email him at joe.kowalski@state.ma.us.
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Health

Myocarditis from the Chinese Sumac Tree

Michael F. Galvin, supervisor of Urban & Community Forestry, Maryland Department of Natural Resources- Forest Service, forwarded us a copy of a Letter to the Editor that appeared in the July 19 issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine Volume 143 • Number 2 159 (www.annals.org). It is excerpted here with permission.

Background: Myocarditis is commonly assumed to be infectious in origin in many patients who present to the emergency department with chest pain ... and a history compatible with a viral syndrome. Certain naturally occurring products, such as quassinoids in tree sap, may also cause myocarditis.

Objective: To describe a case of myocarditis likely due to exposure to sap from the Chinese sumac tree (Ailanthus altissima). [See picture in related article, page 78]

Case report: A previously robust, healthy 24-year-old man presented to the emergency department reporting three days of fever and chills associated with epigastric pain, substernal chest pressure that radiated to both arms, and shortness of breath. Up to the day of admission, he had been working as a tree surgeon on a team responsible for clearing heavy areas of Chinese sumac, also known as tree-of-heaven. ... Emergency department evaluation with computed tomography ruled out aortic dissection and pulmonary embolism, and the patient was treated with morphine and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for presumed pericarditis or myocarditis ... results of coronary angiography were normal.

The patient’s pain intensified substantially over the next 48 hours, but then rapidly abated. He was taking only low-dose ibuprofen when discharged ... On a return clinic visit, the patient reported that all of his co-workers had also been ill at the time of his hospitalization, many with gastrointestinal symptoms and some with chest pain. He expressed concern that they may not have exercised proper caution while clearing Chinese sumac, since, he said, “the sap on that tree will make you sick.” One year later, the patient’s cardiac function remains normal, he is taking no medications, and he has resumed his normal active lifestyle.

Discussion: Review of the literature shows that the sap of the Chinese sumac may contain proteins, called quassinoids, that can explain our patient’s cardiac findings, the illness of his coworkers, and the perceived need among arborists for caution while handling the Chinese sumac. The tree-of-heaven, as it is commonly known, is a tree of the sumac family that is native to China. Initially brought to the United States because of its ease of rapid growth and its medicinal implications, this tree has become very common in all areas of the country, particularly the northeastern states. The bark of the tree-of-heaven has been used as an herbal remedy for dysentery and, more recently, for malaria. Among its many implications derived from folk medicine, the Ailanthus altissima is thought to be a cardiac depressant and has been used to slow heart rate. ...

Conclusion: Because Chinese sumacs spread rapidly and continuously, they often need to be eliminated, posing a health concern for the professionals who remove them. Our patient was exposed to sumac sap through ruptured blisters due to rope burn, which resulted in loss of the protective epithelium. Recent literature indicates that this toxin may have mitochondrial mechanisms of action consistent with the pathophysiologic characteristics of transient myocarditis.

This case describes an unusual cause of myocarditis in a previously healthy person and illustrates the importance of taking a thorough occupational history from patients who work in the tree removal industry.

The letter was from John D. Bisognano, MD, Ph.D; Kevin S. McGrody, MD; and Abraham M. Spence, BA, University of Rochester Medical Center, Strong Memorial Hospital, Rochester, N.Y.
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We extend our sincere appreciation to the many companies and organizations that partnered with the TREE Fund in support of the 2005 Tour des Trees!

Many Thanks To Our Golf Outing Sponsors

Golf Outing: The 11th Annual Golf Outing sponsored by Asplundh was another great success! This year’s winners were: Tom Duffy of Sherrill, Inc., Jerry Brown and Ed Dodak of Bandit Industries and David Fleischner, President of Trees, Inc. Thank you to all of the sponsors and participants.

The research and scholarship grant programs that the TREE Fund provides are made possible through the generous support of ISA, ISA Chapters and their members, TCEA and TOA members, corporate underwriting, allied foundations, and friends like you who share our understanding that the future of arboriculture tomorrow depends upon research today.

The TREE Fund is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. You can support the TREE Fund’s efforts to identify and fund critical research initiatives by making a tax-deductible contribution today. Your donation will help to support research, scholarship programs, public outreach and education, and much more. To make your donation, please visit the TREE Fund website at www.treefund.org or mail your donation to: TREE Fund, PO. Box 3146, Champaign, IL 61826-3146.

Please circle 90 on Reader Service Card
Count Randy Finch, owner of Finch Tree Surgery in San Gabriel, Calif., as someone who didn’t think Accreditation was a good idea for the industry.

"Initially, I fought against the idea of TCIA implementing an Accreditation program," admits Finch. "I thought that we small tree care companies didn’t need another hoop to jump through. When Accreditation becomes the standard for tree care companies you either have to do it or fall behind. As the leader in our area, I knew we would have to do it — and I didn’t want another credential. I didn’t want to go through another program."

“Now, I would endorse it as a very worthwhile project,” he stresses.

A TCIA member company since 1985, Finch notes that his company has been a local leader in many ways – first member of the National Arborist Association in the area, first certified arborist, first ASCA registered consulting arborist. Accreditation seemed like the next thing to do to maintain his market lead. Finch Tree Surgery has 25 arborists in the field, four salespeople (including Randy), and an office staff of one. The company is almost exclusively high-end residential tree maintenance, pruning and removals in the Pasadena and San Marino areas.

“The staff is pretty excited about being the first Accredited tree care company in California,” notes Finch. “This is confirmation of what they already knew — they are working for a good company and other people think so, too.”

He initially signed up to be part of the Accreditation pilot program, but didn’t realize there was a time limit until he talked with other company owners at Winter

Tree Risk Management and Hazard Trees Guide

Urban Tree Risk Management: A Community Guide to Program Design and Implementation is this month’s free member giveaway. A fully illustrated, easy-to-read training manual, this CD should prove a real benefit to private tree care practitioners. The manual is designed to assist in the implementation of tree risk management programs, and train field staff to detect, assess, and correct hazardous defects in trees.

A team of experts in urban forestry, plant pathology and forest health collaborated to produce this manual. Consulting arborists, city foresters, and educators provided extensive review to ensure the information applies to communities of varying sizes and budgets. Examples of tree defects, risk rating systems, and species selection were chosen to depict tree species and conditions that occur in the Northeastern U.S.

The manual is presented in a three-ring binder format to allow readers to add or update information, or to remove entire sections for use in the field. The authors sincerely hope that readers will find this manual to be a useful resource to improve public safety and protect tree health by assisting them in the design and implementation of tree risk management programs.

Especially interesting for commercial arborists is the section on the seven categories of defects:

- Decayed wood
- Cracks
- Root problems
- Weak branch unions
- Cankers
- Poor tree architecture
- Dead trees, tops, or branches

The detailed descriptions on each are fully illustrated with clear pictures that should serve as informative teaching tools for field crews. Print out sections and use them as tailgate safety sessions. The photos alone will serve as excellent lessons.
Management Conference in Los Cabos, Mexico. When he returned, he started working in March to fulfill the program’s requirements and finished in August.

In going through the Accreditation process, Finch unearthed some things that he had overlooked in the past. Accreditation forced him to concentrate on business and regulatory processes he knew he needed to upgrade and to discover some things that he had overlooked. One of the requirements is a business plan that includes financial management guidelines with a monthly operating budget.

“I always had one in my head,” says Finch, “but never a written one. I formed two teams of two salespeople each. I had them talk independently, then we got together to formulate a plan on where we want to take the business. I incorporated that into a wonderful tool, Quickbooks 2006 Premier edition, which has a business plan tool that builds your financial information automatically.”

Another requirement of Accreditation is a written client complaint/dispute resolution procedure. Finch Tree Surgery had what Finch describes as “an aggressive resolution procedure” that always went right to the top. Again, it wasn’t formal or written down. He used to keep track of complaints with a note here, a slip of paper there, an e-mail stored on the computer. Now, he has a written complaint resolution follow-up log that can be seen by every employee in the company.

The company already had a written employee handbook, another requirement, which he got years ago from a TCIA member. At one of the very first Winter Management Conferences Finch attended, Lauren Lanphere of Forest City Tree Protection Company in South Euclid, Ohio, handed over his company’s handbook. Finch has been updating it ever since.

“I did discover two or three things that weren’t in it that needed to be,” Finch says.

They also had an employee training program, but it wasn’t as well organized at he would have liked. From the very beginning, TCIA’s Home Study packages have formed the training requirements for his company. His employee handbook defines training objectives based on those levels.

“The paperwork was always there, it just wasn’t as organized,” he says. “Now I can lay my hands on one folder for commercial driver’s licenses, one folder for training or customer complaints. Organization was the best thing that came out of Accreditation. It’s easy just to throw things in a folder. Now that everything is organized it is easier to maintain.”

“The CD Rom for the program is very well laid out. It has become not only a checklist but a tool to guide me and instruct me,” says Finch. “The program was more comprehensive than I thought it would be, and the CD helps me to do a better job. Specifically, it has forced me to focus more closely on my training programs. We tend to get a little slack when business is busy. Accreditation gave me an opportunity to do some things I had always intended to do, like monitoring who was qualified for various jobs, and how quickly they were qualified. I put together a new tracking program that helps me organize it better.”

Upon receiving Accreditation, Finch immediately added a banner notice to his Web site. “The CD that comes with Accreditation has marketing tools with it,” he notes, “like a banner ad, press releases, truck decals, brochures and other things.”

While Finch thinks a neater desk and a more organized office will help him run his business better over the long term, they weren’t the most useful parts of Accreditation. It was finding those two or three things that he had overlooked that impacted safety and regulatory compliance. The process gave him confidence that he no longer had any holes. It eased his worry that he might be missing something from the standpoint of safety or compliance.

In cooperation with the City of Pasadena, the Pasadena Beautiful Foundation maintains a list of arborists who are certified by the International Society of Arboriculture and are licensed to conduct business in Pasadena. In 2004, they added consulting arborists who may be registered by the American Society of Consulting Arborists and are also licensed to do business in Pasadena. This year they added TCIA accredited companies who gain this credential “through an audit of their adherence to industry standards, maintenance of trained staff and dedication to quality business practices” according to their Web site. Finch hopes other accredited companies will follow suit and inform community and local volunteer groups about Accreditation and what it means.

Finch advises those companies that are considering Accreditation – or have signed up but haven’t done much about it – to get moving or be left behind.

“If you don’t do it, you’re just doing what you did yesterday. If you want to progress you need to be moving forward, always forward,” he says.

New head of OSHA

President George W. Bush announced on Sept. 15 his intention to nominate Edwin G. Foulke, Jr., of South Carolina, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor (Occupational Safety and Health).

Foulke is a partner with the law firm of Jackson Lewis, LLP in Greenville, S.C. He previously served as chairman of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission. He is a noted friend of industry, having served as a member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Occupational Safety and Health Subcommittee of its Labor Relations Committee. He has also testified before Congress on behalf of the chamber on permissible exposure limits.

Foulke also served as an adjunct professor at St. Mary’s Dominican College in New Orleans, Louisiana. He received his bachelor’s degree from North Carolina State University and his JD from Loyola University. He later received his master’s degree from Georgetown University.
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More Images from the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina...

Two TCIA member tree care companies interviewed for the article about the cleanup in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (page 24) sent more pictures than could fit with the story. Here are a few more views of what they saw.

At left, the top and middle pictures show one residential site that received heavy damage from uprooted & wind-blown trees. Courtesy of Frank Thibodeaux, Bob’s Tree Preservation Inc.

Bottom left, pine on garage and car Ponchatoula, La. Collier Arbor Care.

Top right, blown down pine with trunk decay. Collier Arbor Care.

Dusty Marchello, left, and Roger Hedges, both of Collier Arbor Care, trying to help remove a tree from a home.

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**PPE was not a Buzz Word in Tree Work in ’43**

_By Elmer Pyke_

I started tree work in 1943, I don’t really remember any safety gear – there were no helmets, or face shields; some of us wore gloves, some didn’t.

I remember one climber who only wore gloves in cold weather, the rest of the year, he worked without gloves, and that included climbing. He had hands like horns. He used to come down his rope, using bare hands, no gloves. I used my gloves, taking them off, and doubling them, to save my hands. When you looked at his hands, you knew he didn’t wear gloves! Not me! I hated working without them, the slivers, the cuts, the blisters, and my hands drying out, skin cracking.

Helmets and face shields added a lot of safety to tree work. I started wearing glasses before I began to work in trees, so I had no idea how much eye protection they were providing me until just a few years ago. Climbing with no glasses, I used a chain saw – I had to stop because of the stuff being thrown at me by the saw.

Face shields, yes! After some years of being in business, paying the bills, and buying insurance, we started wearing face shields and helmets – the crew did that is – I didn’t always wear mine. I was the boss, you know!

I came to with the crew hovering over me, my head hurting like heck! And they were asking “Are you all right?”

Dazed I asked, “What happened?” They said, “You got hit on the head with a piece of wood!”

My reply “Oh that’s OK, I got a hard head.” I thought I heard somebody say “Yeah, we know!”

They took me to the emergency room. I was all right after a few hours sleep. I did have a headache for awhile.

I required everybody to wear helmets after that, and I wore mine consistently, but then I started forgetting it on some days, until again I came to with the crew hovering over me asking, “Are you okay?”

I said I was all right, but after that I was a pain in the neck about wearing a helmet– everybody including me had to wear them!

I did let the climber make the decision about wearing the face shield during the actual climb up the tree. Once he was roped in, then I insisted they wear the face shield and helmet. With my men its really not a problem, they want to wear the helmet and face shield, except during the climb, before they get roped in.

I climbed for many years, all kinds big and small, easy and difficult! I had the reputation of not turning any tree down, but I was actually very careful how I climbed and did these so called tough trees! I studied them very carefully before I started up.

I fell three times during my first five years working. My first mistake was using a dead limb to pull myself up into the tree. When it broke, I was left holding onto a lot of air! The next fall, I lost my balance again leaving me holding a lot of air! A lot if air! Those two falls taught me to know how good the wood is that I’m betting my life on. As for losing my balance, that fall taught me to keep at least one hand on the tree or ladder, or what ever solid object I’m depending on!

My third fall taught me an important lesson too. In that fall – 25 feet to the sidewalk – I broke both arms and my knee, spending the next 30 days in the hospital. I had been drinking and didn’t get much sleep the night before. I decided then that drinking is pretty stupid, and working the next day is dumb. I didn’t quit climbing and I didn’t fall anymore!

Elmer Pyke is the retired owner of Elmer Pyke Tree in Syracuse, N.Y. He is compiling tales from his days working with trees for a book that he hopes to publish.

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