Here's why Disc Chipper users are going back to Drum Chippers.

More Dumping Fees.  
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More Downtime.  
More Fuel Consumption.  
More Overheating.

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The Asplundh Whisper Chipper saves time, fuel, and, most important, money.

Are you paying hydraulic mechanics more?
The chart below compares replacement parts for a Whisper Chipper with those of a popular disc chipper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whisper Chipper</th>
<th>Disc Chipper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blades</td>
<td>Blades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belts</td>
<td>Belts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutter Bar</td>
<td>Anvil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydraulic System</td>
<td>Hydraulic tubes, fittings, hoses, motors, filters, tanks, flow dividers, O-rings, seals, (over 30 hydraulic components alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed System</td>
<td>Feed wheels, feed teeth, bearings, bushings, feed wheel springs, feed wheel yokes, etc., etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whisper Chippers have far less downtime. That translates into more time making money and less spending it.

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COVER PHOTO:
An arborist takes wood samples to assess strength loss in a hazard tree. Photo courtesy of F. A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company.
I would wager that ever since man created a tool with which to cut a limb, people have been complaining about topping trees. It certainly remains a major issue today. Every place I go I hear about it.

I've had some interesting experiences with topping situations. Driving across the interior, rural part of a Midwestern state one time, we were able to determine the height of the aerial lift trucks in each town we passed through. This was the height at which the trees along the way had been topped. Some were 40 feet, others 45, and still others 50 feet.

Another time I was looking at jobs with an arborist in a major Midwestern city. The trees in his city included a large population of silver maples. His clients came from a culture where residential and street trees were a source of firewood. Cutting back large pieces was a standard practice for them but not for him. He refused to do it and his business suffered as a result.

On more than one occasion, arborists have called me to complain about competitors topping trees asking what I, they, we could do about it. We can point to all the available written educational material and seminars as a solution. Unfortunately, much of the time our educational sermons only reach the choir and the congregation who needs to know is not present.

In my opinion, the best solution to the topping problem is "Just say NO!" Explain to clients why topping shouldn't be done. Provide clients with articles that discuss topping. Educate clients. If that fails, let your competitor do it. Eventually, people will become aware of the quality of your work and recognize that as a professional you know how to prune trees properly.

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Much of the following article was excerpted from “Hazardous Tree Evaluation and Management,” an internal publication of the F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company. The manual was written by Dr. Bruce R. Fraedrich and Dr. E. Thomas Smiley of the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories. Bartlett people use this manual only after extensive training. Hazard tree evaluation requires a very thorough knowledge of tree biology.

If an arborist can be shown to have an obligation to a property, tree or client, then he has the responsibility to keep that site safe or inform the proper authority of a hazardous condition. If the arborist fails to meet this obligation, then he can be considered negligent in the event of an injury or damage arising from the hazardous condition. An arborist can be held liable not only for the recommendations or work he performs, but also for what he fails to perform.

For a tree to be considered unsafe, there must be a structural defect which predisposes it to failure as well as a “target” such as a structure, road, walkway, campsite or other area where property could be damaged or people injured. For example, a tree with a large basal cavity would not be hazardous in a forested area, but would be considered a hazard on a homesite or near a place of business.

Trees should be inspected annually and after major storms for structural defects. A more frequent inspection program should be established in high use areas or in areas with a history of tree failure. A thorough inspection of the entire tree and area around the plant is necessary to detect potentially hazardous conditions. As you will see, there are several factors that should be evaluated.
**Location**

Hazard trees are more likely found in certain locations including:

**Edge trees**—Trees bordering natural areas, roads, drives and parking areas are less protected and may have experienced root damage during the land clearing.

**Lone trees**—Trees standing alone, especially tall trees, are more prone to lightning strikes. If it is the only remnant of a previous wood lot, a lone tree may have a damaged or undersized root system.

**High traffic areas**—Trees in high traffic areas are prone to soil compaction, root wounding and root decay.

**Wet sites**—Trees growing on wet sites generally have shallow root systems. Trees on sites that have been altered suddenly by grade changes resulting in poor drainage and those in areas that receive excess irrigation are more likely to have root rot.

**Tree condition**

The following are common hazardous conditions:

**Dead branches**—Look for branches more than one inch in diameter. Pay special attention to dead branches and hangers over roads, drives, walkways and structures.

**Topping cuts**—Stubs left from topping generally decay. Sprouts (branches) from topping cuts are more prone to breakage due to their weak attachment.

**Weakly attached branches**—Branches with a narrow angle of attachment with included bark are more susceptible to breakage.

**Unbalanced crown/leaning trees**—Trees with unbalanced crowns are more prone to failure than symmetrical trees.

Had this tree been inspected by a tree care professional, radial separations and open cavities in the trunk would have indicated extensive decay, the most common hazardous defect in urban trees. Photo courtesy of Don Blair.
A hazard tree must have a structural defect that makes it prone to failure as well as a “target.” This tree borders a popular shortcut to a high school campus.

Extensive decay or minor wound? Cracks, radial separations in the wood and bark, signal that further investigation is needed.

Lightning injury—Bark injuries extending in a spiral pattern from the top to the base indicate lightning injury. Wood affected by lightning decays rapidly.

Multiple stems from the root crown—Multiple-stemmed trees originating from stump sprouts often have extensive internal decay in the root crown area. Sprouts formed low on healthy stumps are less likely to be decayed.

Abnormal flare—Abnormal proliferation of the lower trunk tissues often is associated with lower stem and root decay.

Decay—Decay in the trunk or major branches is the most common hazardous defect in urban trees. Symptoms may be obvious, such as open cavities, or may be inconspicuous and require careful examination.

Symptoms of decay

Here are the more common symptoms of decay affecting the stem and support roots:

Open cavities—Cavities represent deterioration of bark, sapwood and heartwood.

Fungus fruiting structures—Any fungus growth, including shelf-like conks or mushrooms growing on live trees, indicates extensive wood decay. Often the position of the structure indicates the location of the decay. For example, mushrooms or conks growing on the root collar indicate extensive root deterioration. Mushrooms growing from the soil adjacent to trees may indicate a root pathogen or a beneficial mycorrhizal fungus. Positive identification of the mushroom away from the stem or root collar is necessary.

Cracks—Radial separations in the wood and bark may be associated with extensive wood decay or may be associated with minor wounds, rapid growth rate or sudden temperature changes. Cracks allow the wood beneath to dry and become more brittle.

Cankers—Cankers are localized dead areas on the bark of stems and branches caused by fungal and bacterial pathogens. Wood beneath cankers may be decayed.

Loose/dead bark—The final stages of root decay are often associated with loose or dead bark on the root collar.
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4. Use the following formula to determine strength loss:

\[
\text{Strength loss} = \frac{\text{(Diameter of decay column)}^3 \times 100}{(\text{Diameter of stem})^3}
\]

When trees have open cavities, the reduction in strength from the loss of the outer rings of wood must be entered into the strength loss formula. Loss in strength from open cavities is significant because the outer rings of wood provide most of the structural strength.

The Bartlett Company uses the following formula to determine strength loss in stems with decay and open cavities:

\[
\% \text{ Strength Loss} = \frac{d^3 + R(D^3 - d^3) \times 100}{D^3}
\]

\[d = \text{Diameter of decay column}
\]

\[D = \text{Stem diameter (inside bark)}
\]

\[R = \text{Ratio of cavity opening to stem circumference}
\]

Measure the stem circumference (stem diameter x 3.14) at the point of decay. Calculate the ratio of the cavity opening to the circumference of the stem by measuring the width of the cavity and dividing by the circumference of the stem.

\[
\text{Ratio of cavity opening (R)} = \frac{\text{Width of cavity opening}}{\text{Stem circumference}}
\]

**Root defect evaluation**

Up to 75% of all tree failures are root-related. The majority of failures occur when winds exceed 50 mph, but may occur under any wind conditions if the roots are sufficiently weakened.

Two types of failure fall in this category: root failure and ground failure.

- **Ground failure** is extremely difficult to predict and occurs when the soil does not have enough strength to keep the roots down. Soil and roots are exposed when the tree falls over. This type of failure can occur in any soil texture if the soil is wet. Failure is more common...
on sandy and very shallow (less than 2 feet deep) soils. Soil failure also occurs when trees are surrounded by pavement, which does not allow the root system to develop sufficiently to support the tree.

Root failure occurs when roots do not provide the necessary support. It occurs more readily on trees that have root decay or other root problems. Trees with extensive root decay often show few or no symptoms of decline. External indicators of root decay include:

a. Dead (loose bark) on the roots, root flare or lower trunk;
b. Fungus fruiting structures around the root flare. These include mushrooms, conks and bracts on or immediately adjacent to the tree;
c. Oozing from the root flare, lower trunk or wounds on the lower trunk;
d. Cuts or fill soil moved beneath the tree;
e. Cracks in the soil above or beside major roots.

Root decay is difficult to assess since it starts on the lower section of the root and works its way upward so the most visible section of the root shows the fewest symptoms. When root decay is present in the buttress or flare roots, it is usually extensive.

If root decay is suspected, the first step is to perform a root collar inspection. Remove the soil from the root collar and major buttress roots, and use a pen knife to nick the bark on major root flares and valleys between flares to determine whether the bark is healthy.

The next step is to determine if decay is present in the roots or base of the trunk. Using a drill with 1/8-by-8-inch bit, increment borer or other method, drill downward into each major root issuing from the root collar. Consider the entire root decayed if any defect is found. Repeat the same procedures, drilling toward the center of the tree in the valleys of the root collar, to determine if basal decay is present. Often lower trunk heartrot is associated with root decay. Record the number of healthy and decayed roots.

Management of hazard trees

After a tree has been assessed for structural weakness comes the tricky part of hazard tree management. A decision must be made on remedial actions, ranging from pruning to removal and should be done as soon as possible to avoid liability problems. Sometimes the decision may be to do nothing if the hazard is negligible.

Here are some recommendations on what to do under the following conditions:

1. Dead trees—If a tree is dead or if more than 50% of its major limbs are dead with a history of decline, it should be removed.

2. Trunk decay—The amount of strength loss a stem can tolerate depends on many factors, including wood strength, severity of stress and exposure. The Bartlett Company has established a strength loss threshold—the point at which the tree is removed—at 33%.

3. Dead branches/hangers—Dead limbs should be pruned out. All deadwood one inch or larger should be removed.

4. Decayed limb/overextended limb—When strength loss exceeds the threshold, remove the limb. Otherwise, prune to reduce weight and/or install a cable to support weight.

5. V-crotches—If tree is young, remove or severely prune back one of the limbs. On mature trees, bolt and cable limbs. If decay is present, remove the affected limb(s) or entire tree.

Documentation

After the trees have been inspected and a decision made on the action to be taken, the client must be informed. All hazard tree reports that recommend further action must be in writing, and a copy of the report or letter must be kept in the client’s file.

Inspections and all tree maintenance/remedial treatments should be documented in writing and should include the name of the arborist performing the inspections, date of inspection, description of hazardous conditions, maintenance performed to correct unsafe conditions and date and names of individuals who corrected the condition. Written documentation of hazardous conditions is particularly important to avoid possible litigation.
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Keep it coming and thanks again to Don Blair and TCI.

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Recently the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that every community in the country can enact its own pesticide regulations. For the pesticide applicator, the ruling could result in a hodge-podge of ordinances, permit requirements and the myriad of paperwork that accompanies such requirements.

Meetings have been scheduled for those who have a vested interest in this situation to determine what action is needed. The tree care industry will be represented by the National Arborist Association.

In the meantime, new pesticide regulations could appear in your area in the near future. It is imperative that those who may be subject to such regulations monitor developments closely.

The court's decision came about as the result of a suit in Wisconsin, where the town of Casey enacted a regulation that limited spraying. The outcome of that case was that the town ordinance was declared void. Subsequently, the town and the Wisconsin Public Intervenor appealed the ruling and the case eventually made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court. On June 21, the Supreme Court found in favor of the town and the Public Intervenor.

In effect, the ruling struck down the long-held position of state courts and federal and state regulatory officials that pesticide application regulations were limited to federal and state agencies, as provided in the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). In its decision, however, the Supreme Court said that the wording of FIFRA prevails, not the act's legislative history and, therefore, FIFRA does not preempt local ordinances.

In looking at the rights of the local community, the Supreme Court stated, "The statute does not expressly or impliedly preclude regulatory action by political subdivisions with regard to local use. To the contrary, FIFRA implies a regulatory partnership between federal, state and local governments."

Despite the Court's decision, Justice Byron White points out: "Congress is free to find that local regulation does wreak havoc and enact legislation with the purpose of preventing it."

In June, Senators Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), Harry Reid (D-NV) and Dave Durenberger (R-MN) introduced S.1353, a bill that would amend the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. The proposed amendment would make it easier for the Environmental Protection Agency to remove pesticide registrations, cause registrations to expire after nine years, and require the registrant to reapply for registration.

The bill was filed as the result of concern over the length of time it takes EPA to cancel a pesticide, the amount of information EPA has regarding the potential toxic effects of some chemicals, and "the inadequacy with which this information is relayed to the consumer."

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) training would be required for certified applicators under the bill. Ironically, S.849, also introduced by Lieberman and Reid, practically precludes the effective use of IPM techniques.

If passed, S.1353 could effectively reduce the number of pesticides available as reregistration deadlines would be difficult to meet and obtaining new information required for periodic examination of a pesticide may not be cost-effective. This is already the case under existing reregistration requirements as manufacturers look at the reregistration of dormant oil.

The bill is still in the initial stages; new developments will be reported.
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Pruning & Public Education

By Gene Pouly

We at the E.F. Pouly Company, like many other firms that provide landscape and tree care, are frustrated when we see improper pruning practices. We have seen street trees planted by our landscape division being improperly maintained by another company that had submitted a low bid for the pruning work.

We were particularly upset with the excessive pruning job done on a 300-year-old tree at a local library. We had been maintaining the tree as a public service known as "Adopt a Tree." The tree was severely pruned by a utility sub-contractor even though the library administrator had requested that the utility company allow our company to do the pruning.

Several factors may be responsible for allowing such practices to continue. In some instances, customers are lured by the low prices that often accompany inadequate or improper services. In others, companies buy into the old axiom that the customer is always right, even if what the customer wants is wrong.

We feel that there are several remedies to the situation. First, we see a need for measurable standards. Since we currently see only voluntary certification programs and a lack of consistency, state licensing might be a viable alternative.

Second is the need for customer education. Please don't insult your customers' intelligence by depriving them of solid arboricultural information, which may not initially agree with their pruning specifications. Once they have sound and correct information, many customers will change their minds and thank you for your interest and concern. Customers want service but they also need to be able to trust you, the arborist.

After a series of brain-storming sessions, our company initiated a public education campaign. Our tree care

As part of a public education campaign, the E.F. Pouly Company posted these signs to show the right way and the wrong way to prune a tree.
supervisor suggested installing “right” and “wrong” pruning signs in front of two trees to send a visual message. We selected trees in our nursery that were next to each other but were too large to sell. Our nursery and yard office are located along a well traveled road, and initially we put “right” and “wrong” signs in front of the two trees we had chosen. People began calling us out of curiosity wanting to know if we were referring to the trees. After explaining several times what the signs meant, we decided we had to make some changes. We added the word “pruning” to the signs to emphasize that pruning maintenance was an ongoing process on those two trees.

In another situation we installed a “To be pruned by” sign in front of a tree at a busy intersection, waited two weeks, pruned the tree and blocked out the words “to be” for a “before” and “after” effect.

In addition, our certified landscapers and arborists have been available for radio interviews and talks to garden clubs and other organizations.

Please don’t insult your customers’ intelligence by depriving them of solid arboricultural information, which may not initially agree with their pruning specifications.

Through these efforts we feel that we are not only educating the public but also improving the professionalism of our industry on a local level. Maybe some of these techniques can work for you.

Gene Poulton is president of the E.F. Poulton Company in Orrville, Ohio.

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Trees & Boundaries

Trees on boundary lines can often lead to lawsuits for a variety of reasons. Generally speaking, however, the courts regard such trees as common property and don’t allow either landowner to take actions that would injure or damage the trees. There are exceptions, such as when boundary trees prevent a landowner from using his property in a reasonable manner or when a boundary tree is a nuisance or causes damage.

There are several cases that support the proposition that boundary trees belong to the landowners jointly or as tenants in common. One case involves a row of cypress trees growing on the boundary that separated two adjoining orange orchards. One of the landowners in the case cut down eight of the trees and threatened to cut every alternate two trees until he had cut down one-half of the entire row. His neighbor took him to court. The judge found in favor of the plaintiff and forbade the first landowner to cut down any more trees.

In deciding the issue, the court ruled that if a tree stands so close to the boundary line between adjoining properties that portions of its body extend into each, then the tree is the property in common of both landowners. The court further held that neither property owner could cut the tree without the consent of the other, nor could either cut away the part which extends into his land if he thereby injures the common property in the tree.

Thus, the court said that the defendant’s estate in the cypress trees must be considered as that of a tenant in common in the trees themselves, with an easement upon the plaintiff’s land for the sustenance of such trees.

In a similar case, a landowner sued his neighbor over the neighbor’s right to remove a large maple tree, or parts of the tree. The court ruled that each landowner held a common interest in the tree standing on their common boundary, and that one landowner could not remove the tree without the other’s consent.

In yet another case, a landowner tried to prevent his neighbor from maintaining a row of willow trees that had been standing for more than 40 years on their common boundary. The court denied the petition and ruled that the trees had been planted and had served as a boundary line fence for more than 35 years.

As these cases demonstrate, the courts will protect the interests of an adjoining landowner with regard to a tree standing on the boundary line under a variety of circumstances.

There seems to be a common sense rationale behind these rulings. If each landowner were regarded as the absolute owner of that part of the tree standing on or over his land, it would lead to a division that could result in the death of the tree.

Sometimes such cases have a twist. In one such case, a property owner was sued by his neighbor for causing the death of a large oak on the boundary line. The tree’s roots were exposed while excavation was being done so that a residence could be built, resulting in the death of the tree. The court ruled against the neighbor, saying that the first property owner was exercising his right to use his land in a reasonable way, i.e., building a home.

In another example, a property owner sought to remove two trees that had
been planted on a common boundary line. In reviewing the facts, the court found that the roots of the trees had extended so far as to damage the foundation of the property owner’s home. The court allowed the property owner to remove the offending tree, but not the second tree, which was not regarded as a threat.

So much for removal. As for trimming, the courts have allowed the limbs or branches of boundary line trees to be cut or trimmed within certain limitations. In several cases, the courts have allowed property owners to trim branches of boundary line trees hanging over their land so long as the common property of the tree is not injured.

In somewhat different but related cases, the courts have said that a property owner can cut branches off a tree even if the trunk of the tree is completely in his neighbor’s yard and is not considered a boundary line tree. In such cases, the courts have ruled that a landowner’s property rights extend indefinitely upward and those rights are protected from invasion to the same extent as surface rights.

Most cases have taken the view that where a tree is located near a boundary line, the tree’s roots and branches are considered a nuisance and the adjoining landowner can cut them. The underlying principle is that a landowner owns both the ground below and the air above his property and he has a right to protect it.

This article is based on information supplied by Victor D. Merullo, an attorney in Columbus, Ohio, and author of The Law of Trees. It is not intended to replace advice from legal counsel in dealing with particular situations.

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People Pressures  
---And How They Affect Trees

By Steven Jakobi

For most homeowners and city residents, ornamental and landscape trees provide beauty, privacy, shade and relief in the often congested urban scene. Yet, many of these trees suffer from a variety of stresses associated with human activity. Trees may be subjected to neglect and abuse and to pressures often unintentionally created in their man-made environment. When weakened by these forces, trees may develop a host of problems and sometimes are unable to cope with insect pests and diseases.

Scientists have long debated whether air pollutants such as acid rain, smog and ozone seriously affect trees. While most experts agree that local and regional pollution sources can seriously injure trees, the long-term effects are not well understood. Far more significant and immediate impact is created in urban environments by individual human activity.

"The top four most important problems related to human activity are the selection of the wrong species for the wrong site, soil compaction, confinement to small spaces and mechanical damage," says Dr. R. J. Stipes, a Virginia Tech plant pathologist and consultant. These factors, singly or in combination, may seriously reduce the growth rate, vigor and life span of urban trees.

Site selection

Selection of species or cultivars without regard for the growing site can have

Bronze birch borers often attack heat stressed and improperly placed paper and white birches.
Multiple problems of soil compaction due to heavy traffic, and bark damage as a result of vandalism on oak at a playground.

subtle or dramatic results. Recently, a client called about several dying paper birch trees on his property. Eight young trees were planted several yards apart from one another the previous spring. They were located near the house and were surrounded by concrete walkways and a heat reflecting sandy groundcover in the courtyard, where air circulation was poor and summer temperatures sweltering. In nature, paper birches occur in dense forest stands, often near water, and they do not tolerate heat stress well. The dying birches were suffering from a very serious bronze birch borer problem. These insects specialize in locating and infesting stressed paper and white birches, and often girdle them in the process of tunneling under the bark.

Site selection can influence tree health in other ways, too. Often, fast growing trees like Norway, red and silver maples, and yellow poplar (tuliptree) are planted under power lines or near buildings and other structures. Such trees will require frequent future shaping and pruning, resulting in excessive wounding and crown loss. You can enhance the vigor and health of the tree if you are familiar with the growth rate, temperature tolerance and other site requirements (soil acidity, moisture, light preference, etc.) of the species before planting.

Soil compaction

Dr. James Sherald, of the Center for Urban Ecology at the National Park Service, agrees that soil compaction is one of the most important problems facing trees in the urban landscape. Compaction reduces aeration of the soil and “starves” roots of oxygen. It can also create erosion and water runoff so that the roots are deprived of moisture as well. The first symptoms related to root problems are noticed in the crown. Leaves in the uppermost branches will show early “fall coloration” and gradual dieback of branches occurs due to the lack of absorption of water and nutrients from the soil. Where compaction is common, such as near playgrounds, camping areas or street plantings, the soil may have to be loosened or aeration holes may have to be drilled from the trunk out past the dripline. These procedures are not always successful and the soil may need to be excavated and replaced around the affected tree. Wood chips or shredded bark may then also be applied to keep off excessive traffic and to conserve soil moisture. Some species, such as sweetgum, white oak, and flowering dogwood, are especially sensitive to soil compaction. In heavily traveled areas, planting of these trees may be avoided altogether, or they should be planted in raised planters. Alternatively, extended pits (planting
holes which are interconnected by trenches and are partially covered with bricks or paving blocks) can considerably reduce compaction related root problems.

Inadequate growing space
Fast growing trees or those that eventually reach large sizes are often encountered in areas where they are going to be confined by limited growing space. This not only poses a problem for the tree, but often results in property damage as well. Roots may grow into sewer pipes or septic system drainage lines, can cause buckling of steps and sidewalks and may damage building foundations. The root system confined by man-made barriers may begin to coil around the trunk, effectively girdling the tree. If this problem is noticed early enough, you may be able to save the tree by cutting the girdling roots at or below the soil line. You may also need to educate homeowners on planting locations of trees that will likely outgrow the chosen site. Inform your client that the root system often grows far beyond the spread of the crown.

Mechanical damage
One of the most frequently encountered—and one of the most easily avoidable—stress situations affecting trees is mechanical damage. Injuries may range from lawnmower and weed trimmer damage to poor pruning practices, vandalism and construction damage. Mechanical “weed whackers” are especially notorious because their fast moving nylon or metal cutting lines can rapidly strip the bark off the tree. Young trees, with their thin bark, can be killed quickly by these machines.

Improper pruning practices can lead to big problems down the road. Protruding branch stubs are often starting points of decay because the tree cannot heal the injury properly. Branches also should not be cut flush with the trunk because this creates a large bark wound which takes a long time to close. Research by tree pathologists at U.S. Forest Service laboratories and at several leading universities has shown that branches should be cut at a slight angle, using the branch bark ridge as a guide. “Topping” of trees, where the top of the tree was simply cut off, used to be a fairly common procedure that is still occasionally encountered. Once primarily practiced by utility maintenance companies to keep trees from growing into power lines, this very damaging procedure is now done mostly by uninformed homeowners. Topping causes excessive crown loss that results in loss of vigor. It also exposes large branches or the main trunk to potentially fatal decay problems. The practice also often
backfires, since the tree may begin to sprout new branches just below the cut tops, leading to a more severe problem of utility line obstruction.

Mechanical damage to trees frequently occurs during home construction. Injury can range from “bulldozer blight” to soil compaction by heavy machinery. Partial exposure of the root system during foundation work may kill the trees. Alternatively, partial burial of the trunk by deposition of excavated soil may “suffocate” the tree. Disturbance of the soil profile during construction can lead to serious nutritional problems for trees that are planted in excavated and back-filled sites.

Salt damage
De-icing salt applied to streets, highways, and sidewalks often injure susceptible tree species. While some trees tolerate road salts fairly well, white pine, Norway spruce, blackgum and sugar maples are very sensitive to these salts. Salt can accumulate on foliage or in tissues, interfering with the normal functioning of plant cells and causing water deprivation of root tissues. Symptoms of salt damage vary from species to species but generally the tips of conifer needles turn brown and injured needles fall off. In broad-leaved hardwoods, the edges of leaves often turn brown, and small twigs and branches are sometimes killed. A good indicator of salt damage is that the symptoms are severe on the street-facing side of the tree, while the other side is usually less affected.

Managing urban trees
Management of urban trees includes both preventive practices and treatment of existing problems. Many of the stresses created by human activity are avoidable or correctable. Always ask questions before attempting to work on trees. Find out as much as you can about the source of the tree, its growth history, and about its growth conditions. Consider the site factors in the overall treatment or procedures performed. In cooperation with the homeowner or property manager, you can greatly increase the odds in favor of the beauty, productivity and longevity of urban landscape trees.
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Ladders and Love Knots

By John Haller Jr.

We expected no special difficulty when we were sent out to remove a dead tree in a back patio. A removal is a removal, but we should have known that nothing is routine in the tree business. Every job is different and challenging; no two problems are ever alike.

The building was formerly a two-story residence converted to a real estate office in the downtown area of a Texas city. As the city grew, once-spacious gardens were sacrificed to make way for the high-rises that surrounded the patio, cutting off all access except through the original building. The patio looked more like an abandoned well.

As soon as we saw the tree our hearts sank. It was dead - dry as a bone and loose in the ground. A large alder, it had been killed by lack of water, huge growths of mistletoe and general neglect. It towered 50 feet above us, its bleached limbs outspread. I pushed against the barkless trunk and felt it tremble. This was no tree for climbing, nor would it support the weight of a man at the top of a ladder.

"Any ideas?" I asked the men on my crew.

Their answers included a crane, a sky hook, a helicopter, a balloon and a scaffold. One of the men suggested just pushing it over, but the windows on the surrounding buildings canceled that idea.

Then I thought of “Bertha,” a 40-foot aluminum extension ladder my father had bought from a national retail chain in the 1960s. Almost every one of its rungs showed damage from the impact of falling wood, but the welds were firm and the side rails were as strong and solid as ever.

Now we had to figure out how to get Bertha to the patio. Going through the building’s maze of hallways, stairways and offset doorways was out of the question; over the roof was the only solution.

Although the roof sloped at a steep angle, we made it by lashing single-section ladders together, letting one hang down each slope, roofer style, then pulling Bertha up and lowering her into the patio.

"Now what?" asked one of the men. "As soon as Bertha leans on the alder, it’ll fall over."

"Then we won’t let her touch it," I replied.

What I had in mind I had never tried before, but I thought it might work. We tied three ropes to the top of Bertha’s lower section and three more to the top of her upper, movable section. Now we needed something to tie the other ends to.

"Get the earth anchors," I directed.

One of the men went back to the truck and returned with three 36-inch screw-type earth anchors, the kind with a split disk at the lower end and a large eye at the upper. Screwing them into the ground at the appropriate spots - one in a center location and each of the others a little to the side of center to form a V-shape - we were ready to position the ladder. Setting its base near the tree’s base, we ran up the movable section so that it would be as close as possible to the upper part of the trunk without actually touching it. We then secured all six ropes, the lower ones through the eyes of the anchors and the upper ones knotted around these. To prevent backward toppling, we wedged a long pole with a fork at its end against the lower section about half way along its length.

I climbed up this improvised boom, tied myself to it with the safety strap, started my saw and began the dismemberment. The ground men adjusted the old ladder’s lean from time to time by alternately loosening and tightening the ropes as I worked away at full speed. In short order, the top and major branches were on the ground. When I had worked things down to about the 18-foot level, I descended. We took the ladder down and pushed the rotting trunk over.

The only remaining problem was removing the wood. Cutting the branches into 8-to-10-foot lengths, we took them out over the roof, forming a human chain and passing the long pieces from hand to hand. We then cut the trunk into manageable rounds and carried them through the building.

The job done, we took Bertha back over the roof and loaded her on the truck. On the way home, we bought a pink ribbon, fashioned it into a large love knot and perched it on Bertha’s top rung.

John Haller Jr. is employed by the John M. Haller Tree Service Co. in Modesto, California.

Do you have a story for From the Field? TCI will pay $50 for published articles. Submissions become the property of TCI and are subject to editing for grammar, style and length. Entries must be submitted by field workers and must bear the name of the worker and his employer or they will not be considered for publication. Articles and photos must be received by the first day of the month for the following month’s publication.

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