In the Shade

Vol. 38, No. 5
January, 2015

Arbor Day at the Capitol 2014

NEWSLETTER OF THE ISA TEXAS CHAPTER

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ISAT Board of Directors Retreat

by Lee Evans, ISAT Treasurer

Since 2011 (at least that is what the archived articles of *In The Shade* on our website suggests) there has been an annual retreat for the ISAT Board of Directors. I believe Dr. Todd Watson started the retreat, and the naming of the event as a retreat seems misleading. My definition of a retreat is relaxing getaway!

As I was writing this article, I asked myself what is the literal definition of retreat? Merriam-Webster's defines it as a period of group withdrawal for prayer, meditation, study, or instruction under a director. I guess it is named correctly. I have had several people ask me what the retreat was about. The retreat is a lot of work, but overall it is a great event and fun. It was designed to accomplish several objectives.

One, to get the new board up to speed on what the past board had been working on. Two, the new board members get volun-told their roles and assigned to committees (yes we let them switch if they like something better or have a passion for another committee). Which reminds me, welcome to the board Jim Carse, Matt Grubisich, and Micah Pace! Three, it breaks the ice and helps the new board get to know each other a little better, which in turn will lead to a more productive board. Four, and most importantly, the retreat is the stepping stone for the upcoming year.

So what did we do? After two days of meetings, here are the business highlights:

- Approved investing monies into laddered CDs
- Increased ad rates for newsletter to help with rising costs
- Approved funds for joint statewide ad to promote ISA Certified Arborists
- Opened scholarships to professionals, not just students (policy forth coming)
- Increased rates for tradeshow at annual conference
- Added Volunteer of The Year for awards at annual conference
- Approved budget (Thank you, Greg David and Terry Kirkland, for serving on finance committee)
- Set guidelines for nominations committee
- Discussed and proposed contract for executive director
- Set Board of Director terms to 3 years versus 2 years
- **Planned visit to the Capitol** (look for email blast for date, and plan to join us)
- Addressed outstanding action items from past meetings
- Brainstormed 2015 Texas Tree Conference theme (contact Vincent DeBrock with talk ideas) Yes, planning has already begun for next year
- Planned and discussed upcoming educational events for 2015
- Discussed upcoming 2016 International Tree Conference in Ft. Worth ■

ON THE COVER

On Texas Arbor Day in November, Texans converged on the Capitol to celebrate trees. A tree was planted on the Capitol grounds, and over 300 bur oak seedlings were given away. ISAT and other organizations provided information.

Thanks to Texas A&M Forest Service for the photo. Photographer: Ron Billings.

In the Shade

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EVENTS

Arboriculture 101, January 15, 16, 23 & 24 in College Station
Get ready for the Certified Arborist exam or just brush up on your skills. This popular four-day short course, taught by Dr. Todd Watson, will be held from 8 to 5:30 January 15 and 16, and January 23 and 24 at the Utiliities Meeting and Training Facility in College Station. Contact Margaret Spencer, **mhspencer@ymail.com**

TNLA Winter Showcase, January 16
Location: Dallas Market Center. Go to **www.tnlaonline.org** and click on Winter Showcase icon.

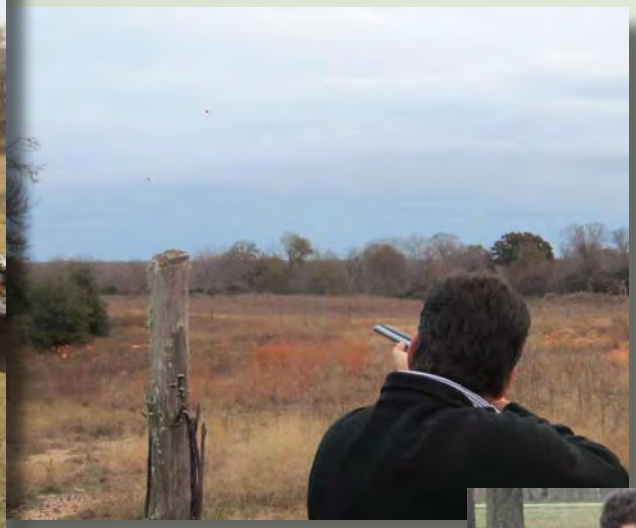
Greater Houston 8th Annual Tree Planting Competition February 7
Rain date: Feb. 14. Time: 10 am. Location: HCFCD Retention Basin, 7600 block of W. Little York. Teams must bring own shovels; 11 persons per team. Michael Merritt, 713-688-8931.

Tree Planting/Pruning Workshop February 13 in Jacksonville
This workshop will be February 13 at the Ruth Bowling Nichols Arboretum, Jacksonville. Contact Zaina Gates at **zgates@tfs.tamu.edu** or 903-657-2720.

HAUFC Emerald Ash Borer Workshop February 20, Houston
Get the latest updates on the EAB threat to Texas. Workshop covers identification, control strategies and treatment options. Location: Harris County Flood Control District, North Service Center, Houston. Sponsored by Houston Area Urban Forestry Council. Michael Merritt, 713-688-8931

ITCC 2015, March 21- 22 in Tampa
The 2015 International Tree Climbing Championship will be held in Tampa, Florida, March 21-22, rather than in conjunction with the August 2015 ISA Annual International Conference in Orlando. There will be something extra for everyone, whether you are climbing, volunteering, or attending as a spectator. For a sneak peek, go to **isa-arbor.com/events/treeclimbingchampionships/index.aspx**

Board Retreat



Above left: Jim Carse and Vincent Debrock waiting for the "All Clear" to begin knocking down some sport clays. This is a good way to release some energy after the day's discussion.

Above right: Micah Pace, eyeing those two little orange dots (centered above the pole) coming at him. Good training for focus and clarity for the Board meeting on Friday.

Left: All eyes and ears are looking in the direction of Michael Sultan. It must have been a major point of concern, as he has everyone's attention

Right: Matt Churches (CenterPoint Energy) defining boundaries with Bucky, the friendly ranch pet.

Scenes from the

Below: Bucky tries to pose with the new Board of Directors and Officers. Standing (l to r): Terry Kirkland, John Giedraitis, Misti (Bernie) Perez, Oscar Mestas, Margaret Hall Spencer, Lee Evans, Lara Schuman, Markus Smith, Jim Dossett, Matt Grubisich, Matt Churches. Kneeling: Vincent Debrock, Nevic Donnelley, Jim Carse, Micah Pace, Michael Sultan. Not pictured: Orlando De La Garza.

An Open Letter to Texas ISA from Arborist of the Year Don Gardner

lt has been 42 years since I became a tree worker. I attended Bill Anacker's tree school in Maryland in 1972. My arborist career really took off, however, when we moved our young family from East Texas to Austin in 1980. I started Austin Arborists Tree Service. We were among the first in Texas to call ourselves arborists.

After we moved to Austin I became a member of ISA and Texas ISA. I attended 28 of the first 30 Tree Conferences and I have learned so much at every one. However, due to a conflict with my only grandchild's birthday, I have missed two in a row. I am proud of what ISA has become, but I am far prouder of what Texas ISA has become.

The Texas Tree Conference is an educational opportunity beyond compare and the continued education programs are our connection to worldwide arboricultural information.

As a long-time tree climber myself, I am particularly proud of the Texas Tree Climbing Championship, where I volunteered for 10 years or so. The leadership of my friends Kevin Basset, Steve Houser, and Guy LeBlanc has built this complicated event into a well-oiled and thrilling showcase for those in our profession who do the really hard and dangerous work.

These remarkable achievements by Texas ISA have only been possible because of dedicated individuals who, despite busy family and professional lives, found a way to give back to the ongoing gift that is Texas ISA.

I want to ask each of you to please take a deep breath and rededicate yourselves to being safe on the job. Safety is not a cliché. I have been very fortunate. I made it through a 25-year professional climbing career without a major accident. I very much wish the same for you.

And here is a piece of free advice: you can't climb commercially forever. So, as you get older (I'll be 70 next year), and as you get more knowledgeable about trees, start charging for tree consultations with your clients. Your knowledge is valuable. Charge for it.

In the future we will need many more consulting arborists than we have now. Keep up with your continuing education. Establish yourself in your community as an expert in arboriculture. For those of you who are really knowledgeable, consider becoming a full-time consulting arborist.

Thank you, Texas ISA, for everything you do. And from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for this wonderful honor. Just remember: Trees are the answer.

Don Gardner
Registered Consulting Arborist #438
Certified Arborist TX0228A

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CLIMBING LINES by Guy LeBlanc, Certified Arborist

Bingham Does It Again

Kevin Bingham, the ingenious inventor of the Rope Wrench, has come out with the Rope Runner (RR). Unlike the Rope Wrench, a non-life-support hitch-assist tool for SRT, the RR is a mechanical hitch, much in the style of Morgan Thompson's Unicender (now made by Rock Exotica) or Petzl's new Zigzag. The first generation of RRs was released to a few dozen crowdsourcers and top-level climbers earlier this year, and I was lucky enough to be able to borrow one for couple weeks, courtesy of **TreeWeaver's Jackson McIntosh**.

Made in Detroit under Bingham's **Singing Tree** label, the Rope Runner is most similar to the Unicender, and, like it, can be used in SRT or DdRT configurations. Unlike the Unicender, in which the climber's line is woven back and forth between C-shaped binding links, the RR is dismantled by removing two pins and a carabiner, and the rope is then fully captured once the device is reassembled (*see photo*). This does make the RR more difficult to install than the Unicender, but is a huge advantage over the Zigzag, which cannot be installed midline and furthermore, cannot even be installed over a spliced end.

So what makes the Rope Runner special, if it is so similar to the Unicender yet is more difficult to install? I'd have to say the ease of ascent. There is absolutely no friction on the device when advancing one's line. It is beautiful, and is what sold me on this device. And yet, despite such smooth rope advancement, there is absolutely no loss ("set back") when your weight is put back into the system. One of the biggest frustrations I have faced lately is how poorly hitch cord interfaces with the slicker, smaller diameter lines that are so popular now. While I was never one for mechanical hitches, always preferring the reliability of hitches, now that I have switched over to skinny 24-strand lines like Tachyon and Poison Ivy, I find I must constantly fuss with my hitch cord, changing my hitch as both the cord and my climbing line wear. This was never an issue for me with ½-inch lines. The Rope Runner completely resolves this issue. I find the Rope Runner also makes a fairly compact SRT system allowing for instant transition from ascent to work positioning or descent. Descent is intuitively smooth, with none of the jerkiness of the Unicender.

There is the ability to adjust the RR for different ropes and/ or climber preferences, but the one I used was set perfectly for me in this regard. I have been climbing with it using Poison Ivy (11.7 mm) in both SRT and DdRT. Jackson uses it with Cougar. I have also attached it to Arbor Master (12.7 mm) and found that it runs almost as smoothly.

Of course, as Jackson says, none of these devices are perfect. And there are some things that could be improved upon. As noted above, connectivity is definitely one. The two pins used to hold the different sections together each have two spring loaded safety cams in them. They are very tiny and hard to suppress and keep suppressed while removing the pins. As with everything Singing Tree makes, the RR is a sturdy beast, but this makes it rather bulky, and like the Unicender and even the Rope Wrench, I have never really liked the idea of a big chunk of metal swinging around near my face. Perhaps, as with the Rope Wrench, the next generation of the RR will be trimmer and rounder. A third problem in my opinion is that even though the RR has a built-in line tender, for some reason it does not provide an adequate fair lead, and if the falling end of the rope is at a sharp angle, I find I need to pull more slack than I would with a traditional hitch cord and line tender setup.

Overall, I think this is a great tool and plan to buy one as soon as they are available, assuming the next generation is a bit more streamlined and is made easier to attach. Even as is, though, I consider it superior to the Unicender, which I always found too finicky on descents, and the Zigzag, which was initially recalled just as it hit the market, and has since had several reports of cracks in the metal in the second generation. There's been no recall on that generation, but it doesn't inspire a whole lot of confidence. As one reviewer said of another Petzl product after they shrunk it, "Petzl needs to stop designing their products for the crazies who weigh their shoelaces!" ■

The author has owned and operated Arbor Vitae Tree Care in Austin for over 30 years. He also provides tree care and tree work safety instruction to professionals. He may be reached at 512-301-8700.

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Diversity Recommendations for the Urban Forest

by Micah Pace

For decades, researchers, educators, urban foresters, arborists, and tree managers have agreed on the importance of species diversity within the urban forest. The catalyst for promoting this accepted management philosophy for our urban forests is primarily the result of historical and devastating population losses attributed to an exotic pest/disease.

Such was the case of the loss of one of the greatest forest types in North America, the American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*). According to the American Chestnut Foundation, during the first half of the 20th century, approximately 4 billion trees or nearly ¼ of the population of the eastern hardwood forests of the U.S. were killed by the deadly fungal disease later called chestnut blight.

Similarly, since 1930 when Dutch elm disease (DED) was first discovered in Ohio, DED spread up and down the US East Coast and then west across the continent, reaching the West Coast in 1973, ultimately killing some 40 million elm trees. Currently tree professionals have been struggling with the advancement of the emerald ash borer (EAB) since 2003 when it was first found in Michigan and has killed tens of millions of ash trees alone. EAB has killed tens of millions of more trees from the east coast to as far west as Colorado and south to Arkansas, where it was found in 2013 and 2014, respectively.

While the loss of the American chestnut was not an urban forestry loss, per se, the loss of tens of millions of elms and ash trees along our city and suburban streets was a result of overplanting a single genus and in some instances even single species. Thus, the best management practice (recommendation) of using a more diverse palette of species and genera developed in the hopes to avoid future catastrophic losses of trees. However, while the concept of increasing genus/species diversity is widely accepted, there have been various recommendations of how to implement such diversity. A 2013 ISA conference proceeding paper by Dr. Wade summarized recommendations for urban tree species diversity: **http://www.isa-arbor.com/events/conference/proceedings/2013/WADE_ISA_Conference_Proceedings.pdf**

In general, there is a range of percentages from more conservative to less conservative diversity recommendations. The most common BMP typically quoted/used is from Santamour's 1990 work, which states that an urban forest population should consist of no more than 10% and 20% of the same species or genera, respectively. So for example, a population of 10,000 trees should have no more than 1,000 Shumard oaks (less in my opinion) or no more than 2,000 oaks of any species.

However, a more recent perspective being promoted by researchers claims this approach to be outdated and suggests that a new and more conservative strategy which focuses on non-species-specific threats such as EAB, verticillium wilt, and gypsy moth should be used. Dr. Ball, of South Dakota State University, discussed this management approach with attendees at the 2014 Texas Tree Conference. Dr. Ball (and others) now recommend that communities should limit a single genus to only 10% of full stocking (rather than as a percentage of the total tree population). This approach, while perhaps more comprehensive, would also require a full inventory to calculate, including plantable space, something most communities here in Texas do not currently have. Here's a link to Dr. Ball's paper from 2007: **http://joa.isa-arbor.com/request.asp?JournalID=1&ArticleID=3012&Type=2**

Finally, a 2013 paper from McPherson and Kotow that "grades" California's municipal urban forests and discusses this important topic is also available at: **http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/mcpherson/psw_2013_mcpherson002.pdf**

Of the 29 California municipal forest inventories (836,943 trees) evaluated or "graded," reducing pest threats was the top priority recommendation in 18 inventories. The study emphasizes the importance of managing for multi-host pests and planting of vacant spots with species not vulnerable to the most abundant and severe pests within the given community/region.

Ultimately, all the BMPs presented here are helpful ways to improve the long-term health and success of our urban forests, but the choice of what and how many to plant should be decided at the local level with regional concerns in mind. Every community has limitations but education and knowledge should not be one of them. There is a wealth of information that we as tree professionals have to offer. Make sure to speak with your clients and community leaders about proper planning and management and how species selection, in terms of present and future risk from pest and disease, is an important part. I think each community should assess their susceptibility to some of these more problematic pest/diseases and decide how aggressive their urban forestry diversity strategy needs be. ■

The University of Texas at Austin held their seventh annual Arbor Day planting at the McCombs Softball Field on Nov. 7. Athletics, landscape services, and facilities staff helped plant a mix of 16 evergreen and deciduous trees in various locations. UT-Austin has been a Tree Campus USA since 2008. Their arborists manage over 5,000 trees on multiple UT properties.

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Great CTW Exams in a Great Location *by Misti Perez*

The Certified Tree Worker Climber Specialist and Aerial Lift exams were held in Austin October 30 and 31 at Disch-Falk Field, the University of Texas baseball stadium. ISA flew in two trainers from the Rocky Mountain Chapter, Dave Sexton and Brian Sereduke, to lead the exams and train new evaluators, while simultaneously testing new candidates.

Thirteen candidates took the hour-and-a-half written exam and then, one by one, performed the Climber Specialist skills portion. The live oaks in the parking area of the baseball field were the perfect trees for the test. Congratulations to the four new Climber Specialists who passed the exam! Thanks to the volunteer evaluators: Nevic Donnelly, Brennon McGee, Armando Cortez, Jim Carse, Paul Schuman, and Nate Sponseller.

The following day, several of the same candidates returned to test their skills for the Certified Tree Worker Aerial Lift designation. This was the first time this exam has been held in the state of Texas! Again, led by Dave Sexton and Brian Sereduke, a group of evaluators were trained while simultaneously testing new candidates for the exam.

A new group of seven candidates performed their skills exam on various lifts. Some used a bucket truck, and one candidate used his own spider lift. Wind gusts picked up just as the event was coming to a close – perfect timing! Congratulations to the six new Aerial Lift Specialists who passed the exam. This is an impressive number. Thanks to the volunteer evaluators: Nevic Donnelly, Brennon McGee, Jim Carse, Paul Schuman, Jackson McIntosh, and Markus Smith.

Again, thanks to everyone who volunteered their time, hard work, skills and efforts to make this event a success. The ISA Texas Chapter is hoping to hold two CTW exams per year as long as there is demand for it. The next one will be held in Dallas in January. Check ISAT's calendar regularly for details at **isatexas.com.** For an application and/or manual for the Certified Tree Worker Exams, please visit **www.isa-arbor.com**. ■

Brennon McGee demonstrates his skills in the spider lift for the Aerial Lift exam.

Nate Sponseller performs a gear inspection for the Certified Tree Worker exam.

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Case Review

Trust everyone, but always cut the cards!

by Greg David, RCA/BCMA

I'm not sayin' that I've been led astray by attorneys, but sometimes it turns out that what I've been told just doesn't always "dance with the facts." It's happened more than once, and every time it does, I always promise myself that I'll keep the salt shaker handy, so that I digest what I'm told with a grain of salt next time.

As expert arborists, our role is to provide the court with objective, unbiased, and impartial opinions that are based upon an examination of the facts of the case under the light of scientifically credible arboricultural principles, state-of-the-art industry standards, and peer-reviewed processes.

Of course, while we arborists are required to stay unbiased and impartial, the attorney that retains us is not. In fact, their job is to be an advocate for their client, so they are inherently biased.

Not long ago, I had an opportunity to work on a case that involved a fatal injury to a child when a pine tree broke and fell at a youth camp. I was contacted by the camp's attorney immediately following the incident, and my initial site inspection occurred shortly thereafter. The scene had been cordoned off and preserved by camp staff, so I was able to closely examine the subject tree and obtain a clear picture of how the incident had unfolded.

The trunk on the tree had snapped about twenty feet above grade, and the falling top had landed in a wilderness teaching area in a heavily-wooded section of the camp. Although camp staff initially believed that the subject tree had been alive when it fell, and showed me green pine limbs strewn about on the ground, I observed that the subject tree had, in fact, been dead prior to the failure, and I pointed out fresh stubs in nearby pine trees that were the source of the green limbs lying on the ground.

An examination of the subject tree revealed that the topmost eight feet of central leader was dead, free of bark, and weathered – presumably as a result of an old lightning strike. The remaining sections of trunk were dead and decaying, but the bark on the lower portions of the trunk had not begun to discolor or fall away prior to the incident. Close examination revealed exit holes from borers and an accumulation of frass at the base of the tree.

The forest in the area was a mix of conifer and hardwood, and, since the incident occurred during winter, the deciduous trees were dormant and bare of leaves. The tree canopies were closely intertwined, so a casual observer probably would not have noticed that the subject tree was dead, unless they could identify pine bark, and they had scrutinized the tree with more than just a casual glance.

Well, needless to say, the camp's attorney was not particularly thrilled to learn that the pine tree had been dead prior to the incident, but he *was* glad to receive a frank and straightforward assessment of the tree, so that he knew where he stood. Since my findings were not going to be particularly beneficial to the camp's case, I was not surprised when the attorney informed me that I would probably not be utilized as a testifying expert in the case, but that he would like to keep me retained as a consulting expert in anticipation of a lawsuit.

After tagging, examining, and photographing the scene and the subject tree, I interviewed camp staff regarding both the incident and the camp's tree risk management protocol. Although the camp had an ongoing tree risk reduction program in place, camp staff requested that I inspect other highly used outdoor sites on the property, and, over a period of a few weeks, a fair bit of pruning and tree removal work was accomplished by staff and outside contractors in an effort to further reduce risk prior to the busy spring and summer camping seasons.

In due course, a lawsuit involving the incident was filed against the camp, and, over the following eighteen months I received a number of reports and depositions to review in my role as consulting expert. Attorneys for the plaintiff originally retained a wood scientist as their primary tree expert. He visited the site, took samples of the subject tree's trunk, and produced a rather scathing report on the tree, the camp, and the incident.

Although this expert was well qualified to offer an opinion regarding the physical strength of wood, he did not seem to have a handle on how ▶

and why trees actually fail, and how decay and wood-destroying organisms work in a forest setting. The wood scientist also appeared to jump to a number of unsupportable assumptions, and the highly biased, inflammatory, unscientific, and legalistic language of his report struck me as quite unusual.

After the wood scientist was deposed by the camp's attorney, plaintiff's attorneys realized that they needed a different tree expert, so they retained an out-of-state consulting arborist to provide a report. This consultant reviewed reports, depositions, and other information provided by plaintiff's attorneys, and wrote a report based upon that information.

Although this out-of-state expert did not personally inspect the site or the tree, and he did not interview camp staff, his report offered a scathing and unequivocal opinion that camp staff knew that the subject tree was dead and hazardous prior to the incident, that staff had "intentionally put children and others in a location that they knew to be extremely unsafe," and that staff "continues to operate the camp in an unsafe condition."

Well, as a behind-the-scenes expert, I had read the reports and depositions upon which this consultant had based his report, and I could not understand how he could justify his conclusions with such certainty. In addition, since I had personally examined the tree immediately after the incident, had interviewed camp staff in a frank and candid manner, and had supervised the subsequent tree risk mitigation effort, I was certain that these allegations were simply untrue.

When the out-of-state expert was deposed by the camp's attorney, he remained adamant about his conclusions, but stated late in the deposition that all of his opinions were "preliminary" until he was given a chance to visit the site. The camp's attorney reminded the expert that the trial date was less than six weeks away, that the deadline for discovery had passed, and that there would not be time for him to amend his report prior to trial.

The inflammatory tone, innuendo, and legalistic jargon used in the original wood scientist's report led me to believe that much of the wording in his report may not have been his own. Although the out-of-state expert's report did include the word "preliminary" in the title, and he did a good job of listing the documents upon which his opinions were based, it was clear to me that his report was based upon incomplete information that had been selected for him by the plaintiff's attorney. Unfortunately, the report that he produced was, in my opinion, inflammatory, highly biased, and ultimately filled with erroneous assumption.

This case settled prior to trial, when it became clear that the plaintiff would not be able to show that camp staff knew that the tree was dead and that the camp intentionally endangered children.

So, what can we, as arborists, learn from this case?

1. For me, it is a reminder that we should always maintain a healthy dose of skepticism when we are given information. The information that we are given may not be correct, or we may only be given selected information. Keep that grain of salt handy!
2. Also, a modicum of restraint in word choice in our reports is often wise. Phrases like "it appears that" or "I could find no evidence of" often lend credibility and an unbiased tone to a report.
3. Inflammatory wording and innuendo have no place in an independent, objective, and unbiased professional report.
4. And, finally, remember that just because the opposing side in a litigation matter has not named an opposing expert, that does not necessarily mean that we are the only arborists retained in the case. It is common for attorneys to rely on undisclosed consulting experts to provide advice and insight regarding reports and testimony. ■

Greg David is a Registered Consulting Arborist and a Board-Certified Master Arborist with TreeConsult, in Muenster.

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Moving day for BIG live oak

by Guy LeBlanc

On July 12th, a large live oak in Austin was given a new home thanks to the efforts of a dedicated group of volunteers and a supplemental grant from the city of Austin. The move to keep the tree from being cut down to make way for a TXDOT highway intersection improvement was led by the Austin Heritage Tree Foundation and its executive director Michael Fossum. AHTF is a non-profit group working under the umbrella of the Austin Parks Foundation.

The 30-inch diameter tree was located at a major intersection in southwest Austin scheduled for significant expansion. Although some design proposals included working around the tree, the design ultimately chosen by TXDOT called for its removal. TXDOT would not fund transplanting of the tree, but when approached by AHTF, they readily agreed to postpone removal of the tree and allow AHTF to raise the money to move the tree.

The foundation was successful in petitioning the city's Urban Forestry Board for a grant to fund the transplant, but it wasn't enough. They were then able to convince city council to provide additional funds above the maximum allowed by the grant process, which would cover about 75% of the total cost, leaving the foundation to raise about $20,000 from individual donors. However, the city funding was contingent upon a "feasibility study" which included a long term survival prognosis, and no part of the funding could be used for such a study.

The feasibility of transplanting was assessed by the contractor chosen for the project, Environmental Design Inc., a company with a long history of successful transplants all over the U.S. There were many elements that made this tree much more difficult to move than most that EDI moves. First was its close proximity to a very busy intersection, and the fact that no lanes could be closed to facilitate the root ball excavation. The trunk of the tree was about eight feet from the street. An adjacent sidewalk and retaining wall at the edge of the walk reduced this distance to about three feet. It was unknown how deep the retaining wall was, but at least 18 inches of it showed above existing grade. Also, the tree was obviously buried under an unknown amount of fill.

ISA Texas board member Vincent DeBrock of Heritage Tree donated air spade work, and Davey Tree Company did the majority of the air spading at significant discount to find the root flares. It turns out there was about two feet of light, sandy fill mixed with a lot of rocks, probably put over the original grade about 30 years previously, when other road construction had occurred. Air spading also revealed that an extensive secondary root system had developed in the fill. ISAT past President Keith Brown of Austin Tree Experts donated some pruning to remove some small low limbs that would be necessary to allow the move.

At this point I was asked to donate time to assess the trunk and root flares of the tree, in hope of determining some sort of prognosis for long term viability. This was difficult to assess since the excavation barely exposed the tops of root flares, due to their depth and the presence of so many large secondary roots above them.

It was also difficult to estimate the age of the tree. Some associated with the project thought it was a *Quercus fusiformis* of more than 100 years. However its leaves and growth form were entirely different from all the other oaks in the area, and much more in keeping with *Q. virginiana* (or a hybrid). Since *Q.v.* is a faster-growing species, I thought this probably made it a much younger tree, and probably a more viable transplant candidate. My opinion of the original root system was that the part of it I could assess was sound, but I could not determine how critical the secondary root system was to the tree. It was the opinion of John ▶

Hillis, supervisor of the move for EDI, that the massive amount of overfill (most of it still in place even after all the air spading) would add about 60% to the cost of moving the tree, and possibly even make it impossible due to weight, but he was confident he could successfully move the tree. This "feasibility study," such as it was, was enough to obtain the city funding, including the extra cost of dealing with the overfill.

We were up against the clock with deadlines from TXDOT which AHTF managed to get repeatedly moved, but road construction delays from continuous winter rains and utilities relocations bought us more time.

Hillis guessed that much of the secondary root system was connected to the original system in just a couple locations, and that the tree would survive without it. He removed the secondary system (which did indeed appear to all emanate from just one original root) and the overfill, and then excavated a root ball that was about three feet thick. TXDOT allowed the sidewalk to be removed, which allowed Hillis to maximize the width of the root ball on the side closest to the street to about eight feet. I was surprised to see that very few lateral roots of any size existed on this edge of the root ball, even though they were under about three feet of heavily compacted road base. The edge of the root ball was packaged in plastic for moisture and soil retention pending the actual move, which was still weeks away, and a series of pipes were driven under it to sever it. During those weeks I noticed no change in the leaves. The canopy remained full with good leaf turgor.

Moving day really went without a hitch, and it all happened in just a few hours. Certified Tree Climber Ramiro Durantes (an employee of Austin Tree Experts and Yoyo's Tree Care) donated his time to install the haul straps, and the crane lifted the ball via the platform of pipes. The tree was placed on a trailer and moved to about a block away, across the highway, to a right-of-way dedicated by TXDOT. The tree's new location is far from ideal as the tree's west side is heavily shaded by an even larger pecan tree. However the cost that would have been associated with moving it further away was prohibitive and this was the only space that was available. I had recommended removing the pecan, as it is in very poor condition due to severe drought dieback suffered in 2009 and 2011, but preserving every living tree near this new highway intersection was a priority for AHTF. Durantes and Brown donated pruning of the pecan which had massive dead leaders in it. John Dromgoole's Natural Gardener donated mulch for atop the new root ball, and a five year post-transplant care plan is in place.

Beside the technical difficulty of this particular transplant, what really makes it special is how many different people and government agencies came together. From the city of Austin's Urban Forestry Board members, city arborist Michael Embesi, city legal departments and council members and aides, all of whom fast-tracked the project, to TXDOT, volunteer arborists, and community fundraisers and business donators, it was a real testimony to what folks will do to save a tree. We'll see how it turns out. ■

Riparian Enhancement Project:

Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan

by Melani Howard, Habitat Conservation Plan Manager, City of San Marcos & Texas State University

The City of San Marcos and Texas State University have hired a local company, Heritage Tree Care, to accomplish riparian work from Spring Lake Dam to IH-35 along the San Marcos River. HTC is removing all non-native (concentrating on the invasive) trees, shrubs and vines. They use the cut trunks as part of the erosion control plan and mulch the remaining brush to cover open soil for the protection of new plantings. A combination of compost socks and terraces are used to control soil erosion along the steeper banks.

Ligustrum has been the dominant non-native with paper mulberry dominating the south end of the river (above IH-35). The remainder of the non-native invasive trees were chinaberry and Chinese tallow. A diversity of plant types *(see plant list at end of this article)* were installed, providing a natural buffer along the river. Gravity-fed drip irrigation with timers will remain in place for the first two years. All plantings were completed by the end of April, and maintenance includes pulling competing non-native species and replanting plants that didn't survive the transplanting process.

The City and University also hold volunteer planting days in the spring and autumn to fill in areas that were not budgeted. The public enjoys the opportunity to be involved and we are able to spread the message of why we are making the effort to increase the density and width of the riparian corridor with natives. HTC assists with all of the volunteer planting workdays along with the San Marcos River Foundation and the San Marcos Nature Center. The plants are provided by the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees gather seeds from natives along the river and grow them in their greenhouse at SMARC. HTC had a 90% transplant survival rate for woody species and 50% for small herbs and grasses.

The establishment of a native vegetation buffer along the river is funded by the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan for the protection of riverine integrity and listed species. A dense wide buffer along the edge of a waterway enhances water quality and prevents bank erosion through infiltration of storm water runoff. This infiltration slows down the runoff and cleans ▶

Existing seed stock and plants subdued by the invasive species are able to grow again after removal of the problematic ligustrums.

Signage is essential to keep the public on board with this very visible project.

Plant material from invasive removals is re-used as erosion control: logs are placed on contour, mulch is covering newly exposed soil.

out the pollutants carried by urban runoff. Associated with the riparian enhancement are six access point/bank stabilization sites placed at heavily used sites along the river, thus giving the public well-designed and safe access with the hope that these sites will be used instead of the natural river bank.

For more information on the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan, contact Melani Howard at: **MHoward@sanmarcostx.gov**

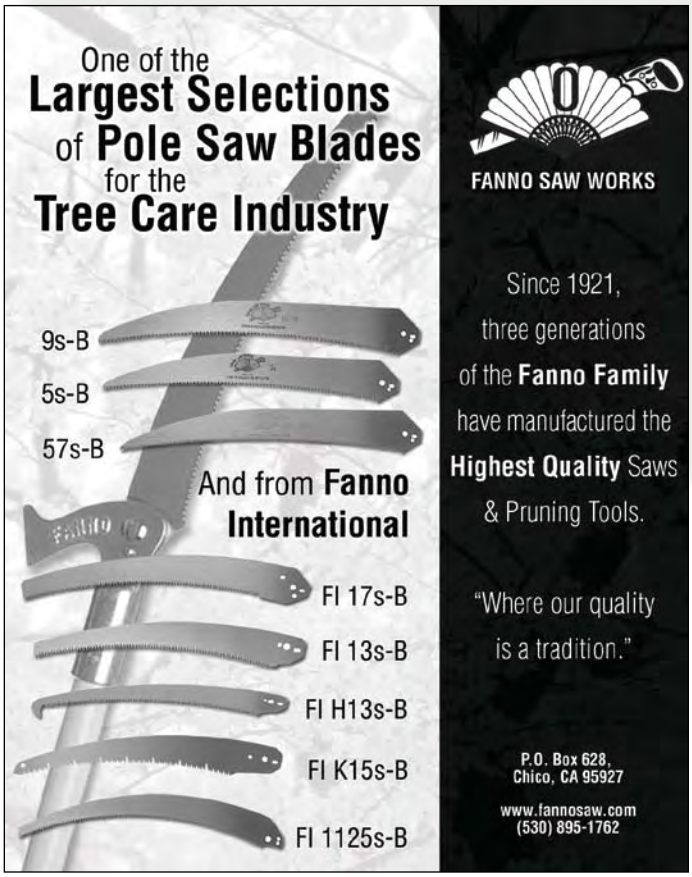
Plant List (Common Name)

Bald Cypress	Palmetto "Brazoria"	Bald Cypress
Sycamore	Coral Bean	Shumard Red Oak
Eastern Persimmon	Mexican Olive	Chinquapin Oak
Texas Ash	Chinquapin	American Plum
Arizona Walnut	Nimblewill	Honey Locust
Mexican Plum	Buttonbush	Fragrant Mimosa
Fragrant Sumac	Red Buckeye	False Indigo
Cedar Elm	Bur Oak	Swith Grass
Red Mulberry		Inland Sea Oats

Right: Plantings to restrict access by using a combination of vines, shade trees, and woody, thorny or thicket-forming shrubs. The fence protects plantings during the establishment phase.

Far right: Five-gallon shade trees installed to supplement existing vegetation when needed. Establishment uses a combination of gravity-fed drip line, hand watering, and when allowed by drought-related watering restriction, spray irrigation that helps existing seed bank to germinate.

Photos by Vincent Debrock



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Parkland Pre-K Nurtures Native Trees in El Paso

by Kathleen Whelen, Librarian, Parkland Pre-K, El Paso

Five inches of rain in just three days in September of 2013 left Parkland Pre-K playground (and building) in El Paso flooded and feeling a little damp. Due to the drainage problems, the campus was temporarily closed for one day. Behind every rain cloud is a silver lining, and much to the surprise and delight of the children, the rains brought native desert willow seeds.

Conditions were perfect and the seeds quickly germinated and established next to the play area. Mulch was added and the area was "fenced" off to protect the seedlings from foot traffic and string trimmers. Everyone was invited to adopt a tree and help take care of them. One student brought his water bottle regularly all summer long to sustain his favorite tree.

Students watched these tiny seedlings become small trees at a rate of several inches a month. Again, in September, 2014, a flood brought forth a new crop of desert willows, and closed the school for three days. These plants came up inside the actual playground so were removed for relocation. The school received a grant from Texas Parks & Wildlife to continue and expand their efforts to protect native trees.

Far left: Oscar Mestas of TFS IDd the desert willow seedlings.

Left: The desert willows quickly grew taller than this student.

Below: Tree protectors (l to r) Sheila, Briell, Aniya, Maria, and Kaelyn care for the next crop of desert willows.

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