

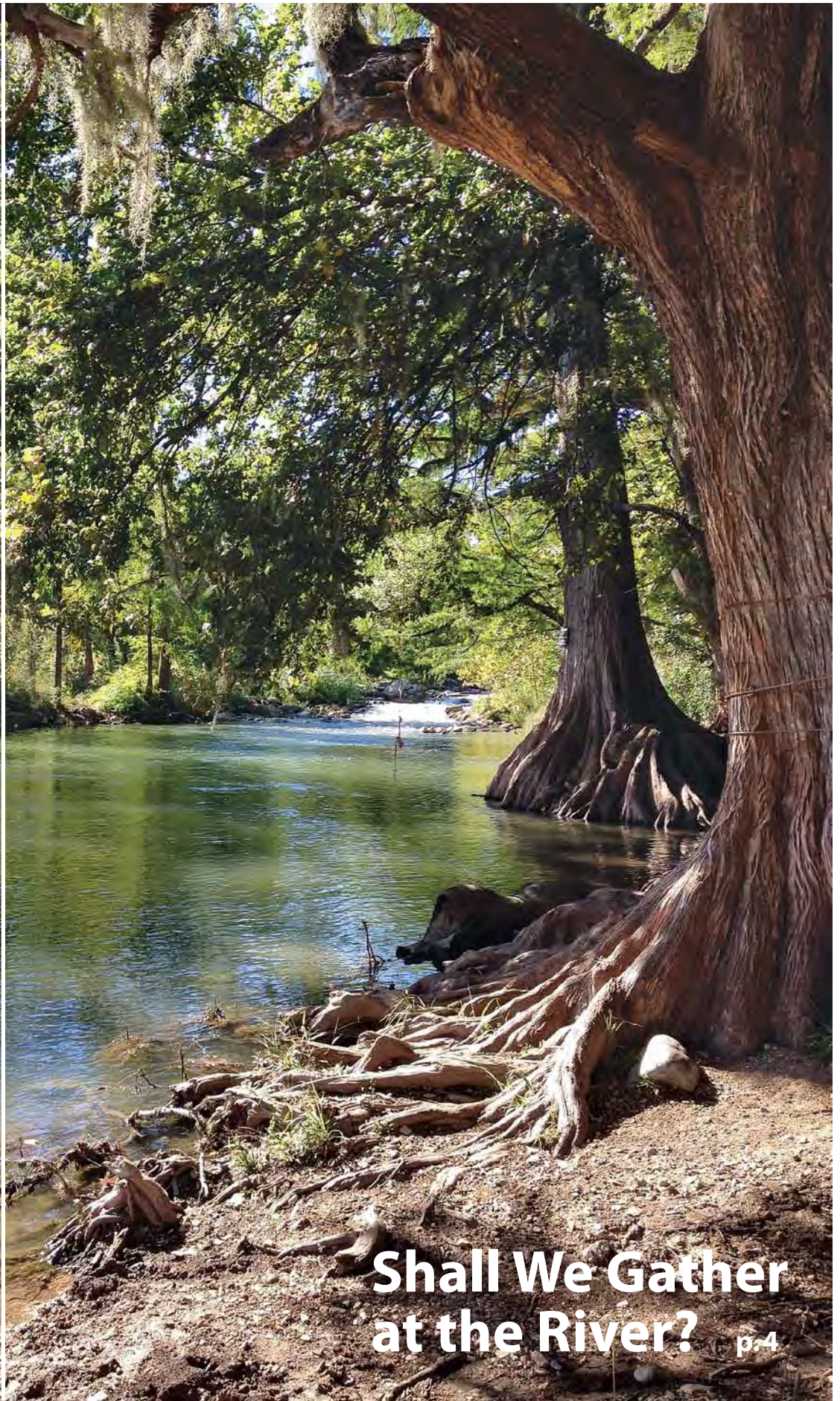
# In the shade!

NEWSLETTER OF THE ISA TEXAS CHAPTER

Vol. 37, No. 6  
March, 2014



Shall We Gather  
at the River? p.4





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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER by Michael Sultan



Pete Smith recently left Texas, after 25 years with the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS), to follow a new career path in Nebraska. For the few of you who may not know Pete, you should attend the Partners in Community Forestry Conference later this year for a chance to meet him and benefit from the work he will be doing as a part of his new role with the Arbor Day Foundation. For those who do know Pete, like me, I suspect it is hard to imagine TFS without him. I want to take this opportunity to share some insight that I gained from a recent conversation with Pete about his passion for urban and community forestry and the important role we all play towards ensuring that Texans continue to recognize the value of our urban and community trees.



Pete arrived in Texas in 1988, after a brief internship with the Society of American Foresters, to begin his career with TFS. Between 1988 and the early 1990s, he worked primarily with private forest landowners in East Texas, before accepting a new TFS position and moving to College Station to focus on silviculture research. Instead, Pete found himself working on a myriad of other projects, including administering grant money received as a part of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) national urban tree planting program. This program, aimed at creating more livable communities by planting trees in urban areas, was eliminated in the mid 1990s—however, not before Pete helped direct millions of dollars towards community tree plantings across Texas. This is the point at which Pete recognized the power and the leverage gained through the formation of strategic partnerships, and he began to understand how to advance and advocate for urban and community forestry in Texas, as well as successfully support TFS urban forestry field staff and their efforts.

Between 2000 and 2008, Pete was involved in a number of natural disaster relief and recovery efforts. He learned a lot about storms, disasters, and working with communities in a new way – one that focused first on the human element and the psychological impacts of severe natural events. It was during the aftermath of Hurricane Ike in Galveston that Pete invested heavily in assisting the community with risk assessment, navigating FEMA assistance, and creating plans for replanting trees. Pete spent a lot of time on the island, and he said, "There are moments when you just have to be there." He believed it was critical to establishing relationships and credibility in the community.

I asked Pete to name a few of his most memorable projects or achievements with TFS. He mentioned Bastrop and the unique qualities of what he termed a *crossover project* for the agency – a holistic recovery approach and efforts aimed at homeowners and the community, the state park system, and reestablishing an entire ecosystem. Pete also believes that big trees are undervalued, and he is proud of the Champion Tree Program and the awareness it brings to the importance of respecting and preserving large trees. Pete ended our conversation in the same spirit in which he supported urban and community forestry in Texas, "Trees are in our cities to benefit people, and we can't ever forget that." Thank you, Pete.



# SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER?

by Kevin Bassett, TTCC chair

It is my pleasure to inform all of our Chapter members about the upcoming 2014 Texas Tree Climbing Championship (TTCC) May 15–17. Thanks to the great Parks Department team, we will be holding this year's event in New Braunfels.

The event will begin with an all-day seminar on Thursday, May 15, presented by Gary and Jared Aborjena at Cypress Bend Park. This father-son combination are two of the best arborists and tree climbers I have ever had the pleasure to know. For those of you who follow the ITCC you will recognize Jared as the 2009 ITCC champion and the 2011 North American champion. He has been a regular in the ITCC finals since 2001.

Gary and Jared will present a program in two parts: "Tree Climbing techniques – Past to Present" for the morning session followed by "SRT for Ascent and Work Positioning" in the afternoon.

Jared and Gary are very well schooled and experienced in all tree climbing techniques. Gary was a perennial Western

Chapter champion before Jared finally was able to beat his father and extend the family legacy at the ITCC. Gary is currently on the ITCC rules committee. He has been climbing trees since he was a boy in Hawaii, climbing for coconuts! I am sure that all who attend will learn something new regardless of experience.

Friday will be our preliminary events, beginning with contestant registration and gear check at 8 am *sharp* at Cypress Bend Park. The climbers will be challenged and tested through the five grueling preliminary events in a stand of some of the most remarkable bald cypress trees I have seen anywhere in Texas. The park is bordered by the Comal River, and if you get a little too warm, a cool dip will be available. We will complete all the preliminary events on Friday if at all possible.

Saturday's Final will be at New Braunfels flagship Landa Park. This may be the best city park I have ever had the chance to enjoy. It is home to the incredible "Founder's Oak," a great old live oak that is estimated to be at least 350 years

old. (She doesn't look a minute more than 300 to me!)

Along with our Master's Challenge final event we will have a recreational climb, the Stihl Stock Saw competition and the Texas Tree Fair. Registration for all events is available on line at [isatexas.com](http://isatexas.com)

If you are not a tree climbing competitor, I hope you will consider volunteering to help. Those who would like to be judges and technicians should contact Head Judge Guy LeBlanc ([arborguy5245@sbcglobal.net](mailto:arborguy5245@sbcglobal.net)). If you just want to help out I can sure put your talents to good use. (Contact me at [kbassett@arborillogical.com](mailto:kbassett@arborillogical.com).)

If you cannot volunteer, then just come and enjoy the unique fellowship which arborists and all tree lovers share. New Braunfels is one of Texas' finest cities. I hope you will come, bring the family and enjoy this year's Texas Tree Climbing Championship and all the great hospitality New Braunfels offers. I look forward to seeing you there as "YES, we'll gather at the river."

---

## New Braunfels and ISAT: a good partnership

On February 22 a group of ISAT arborists visited New Braunfels for the sole purpose of preparing several trees in Landa Park and Cypress Bend Park for the 2014 Texas Tree Climbing Championship, May 15–17.

The group selected trees for the event and removed any significantly large dead limbs in the canopy. They also provided a free day of service to the community by improving the long term safety and health of the park's trees.

Competitions like the TTCC can improve public awareness regarding our profession, trees and their benefits, and proper tree care techniques.

– Kelly Eby, *Urban Forester,*  
New Braunfels



Preliminary competition events for the TTCC will be held on Thursday & Friday, May 15 & 16, in Cypress Bend Park, 503 Peace Avenue, a popular spot for kayaking or floating the river.

The Masters Challenge will be on Saturday, May 17, in Landa Park, 164 Landa Park Drive. Landa Park offers many family-friendly amenities like shady picnic tables, a miniature train, and paddle boats.



# Save the Date

## **A300 Tree Care Standards Workshop March 11, Grand Prairie**

Review how A300 standards are used to make sure all parties understand proper tree care. \$25 fee includes free ANSI A300 Part 1 Pruning standard, 3 ISA CEUs, 0.5 CTSP CEUs, and morning refreshments. <http://tcia.org/training/a300>

## **Houston Area Urban Forestry Council meeting March 11, Missouri City**

Missouri City Tennis & Recreation Center, 10 am – noon

Memorial tree planting & tour at the Edible Arbor Trail directly after this meeting. [pwierzicki@missouricitytx.gov](mailto:pwierzicki@missouricitytx.gov)

## **TX Wildlife & Woodland Expo & Spring Fling March 22, Conroe/The Woodlands**

Lone Star College-Montgomery, 10 am – 4 pm

Volunteer opportunities for Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, badge opportunities for boy scouts and girl scouts, and more for the whole family. <http://expo.tamu.edu>

## **All You Need to Know About Bugs in the Landscape March 25 in Houston & March 27 in Austin**

Part of 2014 ISAT Masters Series in Arboriculture. One-day workshop conducted by entomologist and Certified Arborist Dr. A.D. Ali, PhD, BCMA. Learn about good and bad insects and apply your knowledge in a practical, outdoor sleuthing session. Brochure and links to registration at [isatexas.com](http://isatexas.com)



## **North American Tree Climbing Championship April 5-6, Pasadena, CA**

Hosted by Western Chapter, ISA [www.itcc-isa.com/](http://www.itcc-isa.com/)

## **Bilingual Tree Worker Workshop April 17, San Antonio**

St. Phillips College, 8 am – 4 pm

Come learn from industry leaders such as Eduardo Medina from Davey Tree, Jim Houser from Texas A&M Forest Service, Jacob West from Bartlett Tree Experts, and Mark Bird from City of San Antonio. Demonstrations on air spades, chainsaw safety, large tree pruning and removal, and young tree pruning. 5.25 CEUs. [isatexas.com](http://isatexas.com)



## **Tree Risk Assessment Qualification Course April 21-23 in San Antonio & April 24-26 in Houston**

Only 20 slots available for each event. Two-day TRAQ course followed by a half-day assessment that includes both a written and field component. Skip Kincaid will instruct. Registration available at [isatexas.com](http://isatexas.com)

## **Texas Tree Climbing Championship May 15-17, New Braunfels**

Articles on page 4 of this issue. More information at [isatexas.com](http://isatexas.com)

## **ISA International Conference and Trade Show August 2-6, Milwaukee**

All about the conference, including fun things to see and do in this lively city on the shores of Lake Michigan. Go to [isa-arbor.com/](http://isa-arbor.com/) and click on the conference logo.



## ON THE COVER

Cypress trees on the Guadalupe River near Gruene.

Photo by Kristie Flores, City of Leon Valley.

## In the Shade

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# Retrenching hollow trees for life

by Guy Meilleur, *Practicing Arborist, Aerial Consultant*

Thanks to Texans for their great hospitality, and putting on such a fine conference! I got to see some cool trees on the UT campus afterwards, and the excellent work done with the Charter Oak—it looks great! This article relates to the veteran tree pictured in the December 2013 *Arborist News*, pp. 30-32.

## What is retrenching, what's it got to do with tree care, and why should I care?

I'm glad you asked! Dictionary definitions of 'retrench' include: To live at less expense; To confine, limit or restrict; To cut off, pare away; To reinforce. The term has been used in literature and in relation to trees and their care in Great Britain since the 1700s.

## What does the British Standard say? They've been at this longer than we have.

"Retrenchment pruning is a phased form of crown reduction, which is intended to emulate the natural process whereby the crown of a declining tree retains its overall biomechanical integrity by becoming smaller through the progressive shedding of small branches and the development of the lower crown (retrenchment). This natural loss of branches of poor vitality improves the ratio between dynamic (biologically active) and static (inactive) mass, thus helping the tree as a whole to retain **good physiological function**... The pruning should be implemented by shortening heavy, long or weakened branches throughout the crown, while retaining as much leaf area as possible and encouraging the development of new secondary branches from epicormic shoots or from dormant or adventitious buds."

## What does the ISA BMP on Tree Risk Assessment say about retrenchment?

"Tree risk assessors should resist the ultimate security of risk elimination based on tree removal and consider possibilities for retaining trees when practicable... Over-mature trees in natural settings may reconfigure as they age and deteriorate, a process sometimes called '**natural retrenchment**'. They may continue to grow trunk diameter while branches die and fail—reducing overall height of the tree and **increasing stability**. Where tree risk is a concern, tree risk assessors can imitate this process by recommending crown reduction."

## If crown reduction or retrenchment requires heading cuts, doesn't that make it wrong?

For young trees to grow as large and fast as possible, 'heading' cuts to small laterals or buds are only made on temporary branches, while reduction of permanent branches leaves a lateral large enough (~1/3 diameter or greater) to assume apical dominance and spur outward growth. For mature trees, growing outward is not the objective. Maintaining health and value while lowering risk is what we are after. Other rules of thumb apply, such as: "Size can be maintained most effectively if the plant is pruned as it starts to reach the acceptable size" and "(If the lateral remaining is <1/3), the lateral should be fairly **upright** (>60% from the horizontal)." (Harris, *Arboriculture*)

## What if the tree is in a mortality spiral, on its last legs, ready to go, an imminent, severe risk?

Dieback in a once-beautiful tree can be ugly and depressing. It's seen as a spin in a mortality spiral, leading to removal and replacement. Inflicting 'death with dignity' is simpler than the uncertain task of revitalizing health, stability, and value, but "Old trees that are of low vigor and have failing branches can often be kept healthy and attractive by removing the weak-growing and dying limbs in their extremities, particularly their tops." (Harris) Old trees, unlike old people, can be **simultaneously senile and embryonic**. Mindful of the long-term processes involved, arborists think in 'tree time' and choose conservation over condemnation.

## Isn't retrenching the same as restoration?

Not exactly. "Restoration: selective pruning to redevelop structure, form and appearance of severely pruned, vandalized, or damaged trees." But old age isn't really damage, and restoration indicates that the tree will grow back toward its previous dimensions. Retrenchment is a natural process. Retrenchment pruning selectively develops a **new and smaller** structure, form and appearance. Both processes develop over time, but a retrenched tree is not expected to approach its mature dimensions. As Ted Green put it, the tree is **growing downward**.

## Does retrenching hollow trees fit in with Basic Tree Risk Assessment?

Yes and yes. The 2006 CEU article titled *Basic Tree Risk Assessment*: "As a professional arborist, you demonstrate competence and trustworthiness by looking at the trees' strengths ►

**Is retrenchment by crown reduction the same as 'topping'?** Let's compare these two practices:

### Retrenchment by crown reduction

Retains enough foliage to maintain tree health  
Releases gradual sprouting from interior nodes  
Endocormic growth from dormant (preexisting) buds is well attached, with buttressing at base of sprouts  
Smaller wounds where tree can compartmentalize



### Topping

Removes too much foliage, starving the tree  
Forces panic sprouting internodally or near wounds  
Epicormic growth from adventitious (newly formed) buds is weakly attached, with no buttressing  
Large wounds at poor locations, causing rapid decay

◀ as well as their weaknesses...Cavities greater than two-thirds of the diameter are sometimes considered “hazardous” and a reason for removal, but with close monitoring and care, trees with cavities greater than 80 percent of the diameter have been managed for many years...while decay is spreading on the inside of a tree, the development of **woundwood can compensate**, in part, for some of that loss of strength...decay can be compartmentalized by a tree with adequate resources, the risk from decay may be lowered over time by managing the soil to increase those resources.”

The 2012 TRAQ form called *Basic Tree Risk Assessment* guides the user to consider the tree’s strength in its response

growth, and its adaptations such as corrected leans. (It’s the tree’s future at stake, so isn’t it only fair to listen to and translate its body language?) There are 4 lines where **Mitigation options, and the Residual risk** following each, can be listed. For instance, reducing the crown of a moderate-risk tree would leave a low residual risk. A 15% reduction can increase the stability of a branch or a tree by 50%. Improving soil structure, fertility and drainage would result in an even lower residual risk. Comprehensively consider all reasonable options. Lessen liability concerns. Sustain tree assets. **All we are saying: Give Trees a Chance!** ■

*(Part 2 appears next issue.)*



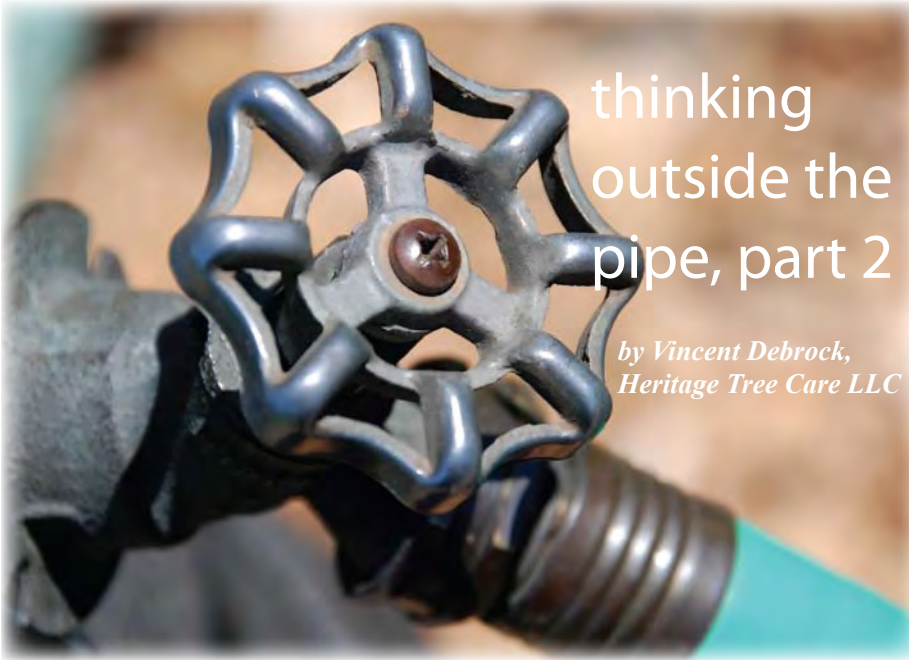
After the tip was reduced, two dormant buds released into upright reiterations. With their new growth to sustain the branch, the two downright laterals could be removed.



New growth to the right arose after a previous reduction cut. Now further reduction can be done, back to this concentration of vitality.



This red maple was pull-tested at Biomechanics Week. First, it failed above the open cavity. Second, a tension root with mower damage broke. It took over 4 tons of pull to separate the woundwood fibers. After the brush was cut off, the trunk was pushed back to vertical. Response growth will be assessed at the next Biomechanics Week.



# thinking outside the pipe, part 2

by Vincent Debrock,  
Heritage Tree Care LLC

and oak wilt, she wants to care for her remaining trees and wants to find out how to care for newly planted ones, considering the severe outdoor watering restrictions her area has experienced. She is rightfully concerned, as not only she is losing trees but she cannot establish new ones! That very fact should get us all in a frenzy: besides losing the tree benefits, it's our work load that is disappearing!

Current trends in weather forecasting tell us that the type of drought we experienced this last decade is becoming the norm. I will not argue against that: it is "above my pay grade." If this is the norm, our average rainfall will diminish, and with it, our canopy volumes, unless we find a way to compensate.

Besides piped water, the water we have available is our stormwater. The obvious thing to do is increase the stormwater retention if we decrease the piped water. The rain collection tank is a classic way to do so. Another reader reminded me that the condensate from an AC unit is also very usable. My house unit easily provides me with 7 gallons per day, or about 100 gallons every two weeks, which works perfectly with my rain barrels. ▶

Water is on the mind of all plant professionals. My first exploration on water issues in the January newsletter asked questions brought on by water restrictions during drought. I finished by asking about the role of arborists and noting that trees should be weaned from piped water as much as possible.

I received a few emails from arborists similarly concerned and offering their experience. For example, Texas A&M Regional Urban Forester Mark Kroeze put together a PDF presentation called "Will my tree survive stage 3 drought restrictions?" and went on showing how to efficiently water trees. Mark is willing to share that presentation, and we will try and post most of it on the consumer tree care section at [isatexas.com](http://isatexas.com). I particu-

larly liked to hear that he believes a twice-a-month watering schedule would work. I am currently experimenting with that schedule on an urban lot in Central Texas.

Another email came from a homeowner, not a professional arborist. She lives in the Edwards Aquifer conservation district and belongs to a sustainable living club. Having lost trees to drought



Raingarden catching roof runoff at HTC experimental garden



Mulch those trees!



◀ Raingardens are another way to intercept stormwater and give it a chance to saturate the soil before running off to the stormwater drains. Greywater, like water from your bath or dish washing, is also a good source, if you follow the local regulations.

As someone reminded me recently, the water is here, we just don't use it right.

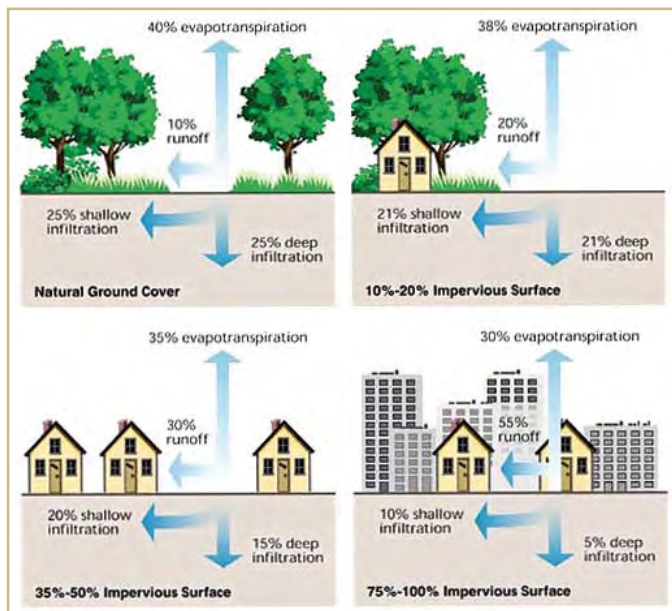
Feel free to chime in on this topic. Email me at [vincent@txheritagetreecare.com](mailto:vincent@txheritagetreecare.com) with subject line "thinking outside the pipe." ■

*Next episode: Passive watering for trees*

Curb island: forgetting the micro-drainage patterns. A simple change in design with curb cuts would allow additional water to drain to the root zone instead of keeping water out.



Where does your water go?



## Successful workshops for Hispanic tree workers

Two workshops in Houston and Conroe drew nearly a hundred Hispanic tree care workers from the landscape, nursery, arboriculture and horticulture arena.

The workshops were sponsored by Texas A&M Forest Service, Houston Area Urban Forestry Council, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Texas Nursery & Landscape Association, International Society of Arboriculture Texas, and Davey.

According to Conroe workshop facilitator and TFS Urban District Forester John Warner, "The workshops held in Houston and Conroe were presented in Spanish and designed specifically to meet the needs of Hispanic workers who on a daily basis provide tree care and maintenance services for clients in the greater Houston region."

Warner added, "Tree care and landscape businesses employ and are owned by an increasing number of Hispanics. Our goal was to provide those attending the workshops with the knowledge and skill sets needed to provide the best customer service possible in a safe manner."

Upon completion of the seven-hour course, attendees received a certificate of completion. Possible future short courses will focus on building business relationships, marketing, and advanced arboriculture.

For information on this workshop or future courses, please contact John Warner at [jwarner@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:jwarner@tfs.tamu.edu) or Mickey Merritt at [mmerritt@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:mmerritt@tfs.tamu.edu).



## Right Tree Right Place:

# Utilities should reach out to communities

It is well known that the responsible planting of trees is an important way to care for our environment and beautify our communities, but it is also vital to the safe and reliable delivery of electricity.

To promote a balance between environmental responsibility and reliable electric delivery, it is important to have a developed Right Tree Right Place program. The goal of the program is to educate consumers about power line-friendly tree planting practices and ultimately help minimize the number of outages caused by tree interference with power lines.

The Right Tree Right Place program can bring utility personnel together with community leaders and city officials to locate potential problem areas in the service territory. CenterPoint Energy has been working to significantly decrease potentially harmful vegetation and power line interaction along public rights-of-way, in neighborhood parks and at schools.

The company has worked successfully with several Houston-area communities, including Missouri City, Bellaire, Pearland, Pecan Grove and the City of Houston, to host Right Tree Right Place planting events. These public events bring together residents, key community leaders and CenterPoint Energy representatives to remove potentially harmful trees near power

lines and replace them with power line-friendly vegetation. These preferred low-growing trees will not come in contact with overhead power lines even when they reach mature height, not only eliminating a potential hazard from a public place, but also bringing awareness to an important issue.

One of our programs is partnering with Trees For Houston in the Trees for Schools program in which 7,500 students across 42 schools will receive education about the benefits of trees as well as responsible planting locations.

It benefits utilities to launch aggressive marketing campaigns to help with public education efforts. Throughout 2013 CenterPoint Energy, using multi-media outlets, placed a number of advertisements relating to our Right Tree Right Place initiative. The Right Tree Right Place presentation was added to our Speakers Bureau, and volunteer employees are now presenting on the program to local groups upon request.

One of our more successful Right Tree Right Place outreach programs was the specialty booth developed to display at events and conferences. In 2013, the booth was set up at over 12 different events including City of Houston Farmers Market, the annual Houston/Galveston Hurricane Workshop, races, local concert venues, Bike Around the Bay and public city events. The booth is staffed by CenterPoint Energy arborists and volunteers, is educational, and is accompanied by informational handouts. CenterPoint Energy has partnered with about 25 groups and organizations both public and private.

Cultivating these relationships has provided CenterPoint Energy with a wide variety of opportunities to educate more people about the importance of tree placement in our communities. It has also presented the company in a way that shows that we are not only interested in our investments but in the communities' investments as well. Our employees are in the public eye, making improvements and helping to beautify the community. ■

—submitted by Matt Churches, CenterPoint Energy



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Arbor Day volunteers.

# BIO Landscape champs win again at 7th annual Houston tree planting competition

by Michael Merritt, Bayou Region Urban Forestry Coordinator, Texas A&M Forest Service

On February 1, more than 130 volunteers planted 1,100 trees in less than 2 ½ hours as part of the 7th annual tree planting competition sponsored by the Texas A&M Forest Service, Houston Area Urban Forestry Council, Harris County Flood Control District, and CenterPoint Energy. Eleven 11-member teams competed for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in Professional, Amateur and Youth divisions.

Each 11-member team – 10 planters and one captain – were assigned 100 5-gallon containerized trees, a mound of mulch, and a designated planting area. Teams worked against the clock to plant the trees, according to established guidelines for correct hole size (depth and width), proper mulching, and spacing. HAUFC and the Flood Control District provided judges and timekeepers.

First place in the Professional Division went to returning champs BIO Landscape and Maintenance, which turned in an impressive time of 21 minutes and 21 seconds. (BIO was the only contestant in that division this year.)

Top three teams in the Amateur Division were:

- First place, Houston Community College – 51 minutes and 47 seconds
- Second place, CenterPoint Energy – 59 minutes and 58 seconds
- Third place, Sam Houston State Alumni – 83 minutes and 34 seconds

Top three teams in the Student Division were all from Memorial High School:

- First place, Memorial Mustang Outreach Bunch Team 2 – 103 minutes and 56 seconds
- Second place, Memorial Mustang Outreach Bunch Team 1 – 107 minutes and 51 seconds
- Third place, Memorial Mustang Outreach Bunch Team 3 – 130 minutes and 14 seconds. ■



# Volunteers establish 140 trees on busy North Austin streets

Over the last four years, a community organization called Sustainable Neighborhoods (SN) has established 140 trees on North Central Austin's major arterials, in particular Burnet Rd. The trees are part of the organization's vision for a walkable, child-friendly community.

The City of Austin urban forestry grant program funds about half of the SN initiative.

Steven Zettner, SN's president, said the group has shifted its strategy over time. "We started out in 2010 planting big trees – 15 and 30-gallon containers," he said. "But then we killed ourselves trying to keep those trees hand-watered during the drought." So the group shifted tactics, planting more, smaller trees. "This way, we have to wait a little longer for the trees to mature, but when they do, we have a more complete network of shaded sidewalks," Zettner said.

During the 2012 and 2013 planting seasons, SN began using a device called the Groasis™ waterboxx. The waterboxx is a donut-shaped tank about 1 foot tall and 3 feet across, that is placed around a seedling. The 5-gallon tank has a wick that slowly emits water, preserving minimum moisture in the top soil. The waterboxx also buffers the tree from weeds and dry wind, and protects against other dangers, like weed-whackers.

In the first season, SN deployed 20 waterboxx trees, with two 4" liner trees per boxx. "Our success rate was 100%," Zettner said. "At least one liner tree survived in each boxx." The group said that relatively cooler temperatures in the summer of 2012, and twice-a-month watering, contributed to the outcome.

In the second season, SN deployed another 60 waterboxx trees, but this time with one 1-gallon tree per boxx. "We lost 17 trees early in the season from various causes," Zettner said. "We replaced most of them before sum-

mer, so our overall success rate was 90 percent."

Meanwhile, the trees from the first season also did well. "We lost two trees from the first season due to stress. Ironically, these were two trees that grew magnificently in the first season, and then died early in the second year. We think they were getting some spray from the adjacent commercial irrigation, but when that got turned off during the dry winter, the trees weakened." He said the other trees survived the winter fine, and the group watered them twice a week during the summer months.

Going forward, Sustainable Neighborhoods is employing some additional tricks to keep its trees alive in the harsh environment of the Burnet right-of-way. "When we replace the waterboxxes after the first year, we are putting a 4x4 layer of landscape fabric around the base, and covering with plenty of mulch," Zettner said. "That suppresses weeds and helps retain moisture. If we had done that consistently for all our second-year trees this last year, we probably wouldn't have lost any."

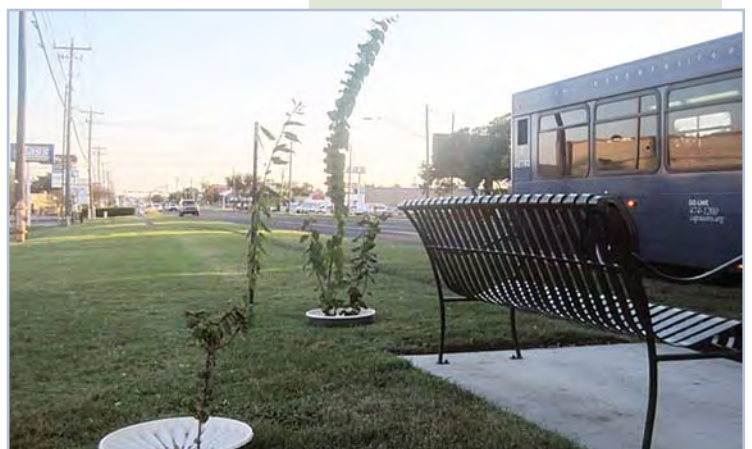
For SN's October 2013 planting, Treefolks donated about half the trees. "We're really excited to be partnering with them," Zettner said. "They are such a great organization, and they can get us

liner trees that work really well with our waterboxxes."

SN's website includes a blog with detailed notes on the waterboxx trial: [www.snaustin.org/projects/waterboxx](http://www.snaustin.org/projects/waterboxx)

For more information contact Steven Zettner at [zettner@snaustin.org](mailto:zettner@snaustin.org) ■

Typical size of 4" liner Mexican plum seedling planted in waterboxx on Burnet Rd. on March 11, 2012.



Trees at 8801 Burnet Rd benefitted from irrigation spray and had astounding growth rates over the first six months.

# NEW MEMBERS

J K Anderson	Frisco	Donaldo Ortega	Fort Worth	Peter Stoltman	Dallas
Craig Brian Anderson	Houston	Ann Payne	Austin	Brian Swiney	Conroe
Jonathan D Brokaw	Abilene	Juan Carlos Ponce	Houston	Andy Teeter	Skiatook, OK
Gary E. Brownlee	Oklahoma City, OK	Elayna Prado	Keller	Ben M. Thoennes	Amarillo
Nicholas Butler	Houston	Amanda Reese	New Caney	Colin Trotter	Austin
Stephen Joseph Butler	Tyler	Cindy Marilyn Romero	Houston	Brittany Vaughn	Fort Worth
Steve Cabrera	Cedar Hill	Tommy David Schooler	Midland	Sean Watson	Austin
Pablo Camarillo	Abilene	Justin Scott	Bryan	Justin Wells	Austin
Ben Rease Carruthers	Dallas	Kenneth Shook	Keller	John M. White	Las Cruces, NM
Robert Earl Copley	Azle	Jayson L. Skidmore	Cedar Creek	Evan Williams	Pflugerville
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# The Tastiest Trail in Texas

*by Paul Wierzbicki, City Forester,  
Missouri City Parks & Recreation*

The concept of an edible tree garden is nothing new, but this might be the first project of its kind for a municipal parks department in Texas. What started as a “wouldn’t that be cool” thought I had several years back, has developed into one of those projects that has brought many facets of our community together.

The project started in 2010 with the planting of 50 trees that produce edible fruits and nuts. Today, 160 trees have been planted, including the following species: Mexican plum, persimmon, jujube, mulberry, pomegranate, fig, pear, kumquat, chestnut, walnut, pecan, norange lemon, pineapple guava, and olive. All the trees are situated in groves along one of the city’s popular hike and bike trails, which spans about three miles through the center of Missouri City. Each grove has an interpretive sign that gives basic information about the tree and fruiting time.

This project has been privately funded by individual businesses, organizations, and families. Sponsorship includes a grove of 10 trees and a permanent trail sign that displays tree information and the sponsor’s logo. Sponsors include: Houston Galveston Area Council, TXU Energy, Kroger, Apache, Quail Valley Church, Houston Area Urban Forestry Council, TreeSearch Farms, Quail Valley Garden Club, Missouri City Green, Quail Valley Golf Course, and Riverstone Shopping Center.



TXU Energy volunteers planting plums.

Individuals and families who want to contribute towards the project but do not have the funds for an entire grove can share sponsorship with others; this has resulted in a large grove of mixed pecan trees. One family was so excited by the project, they contributed towards the completion of three groves of trees.

Throughout the journey of developing this project, I have been given the opportunity to connect with the residents I serve in ways I did not anticipate. Sponsors and volunteers have worked side by side planting these trees. Families and school children routinely come to learn about the trees and taste for themselves. City council members have shown off the project as part of their city highlights. The project has received awards from the Houston-Galveston Area Council and the Texas Recreation and Park Society, as well as local media coverage. The best part: We are only halfway through the project.

For more information about this project, visit [missouricitytx.gov](http://missouricitytx.gov) and search “Edible Arbor Trail.” ■



Tree planting tips at the Pear Grove.



## EDITOR'S NOTE by Oscar Mestas

Spring always reminds me of an interesting story. One time, in my former life as the Forester for Harris County Pct. 4 Parks Department, I received a work order to remove a tree by the storage shed at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens. I loaded up my truck with gear, hooked up the chipper and away I went to cut down a dead tree. When I arrived on site, I looked up the person who submitted the work order and was shown to the dead tree. I was asked the usual question, "How long will it take?" and since they had just finished planting a color bed of flowers, I was directed to please be careful not to smash the flowers. I quickly said, "I'm done, do you have any other concerns while I'm here?" The Arboretum employee said "You haven't done anything." I stated that the tree was not dead, just dormant; give it a couple of weeks and it will be fully leafed out.

If you haven't guessed by now, it was a hickory. As many of you know, hickories are usually one of the last trees to leaf out in spring. Even though the employee was a trained horticulturist, he did not know that little tidbit. What's the moral of this story? No matter what we think we know, there is always more to learn. This is why I'm glad to be part of this great organization. The officers, board and volunteers work hard for you, the members, to bring you up-to-date and current information, as well as training opportunities to expand your knowledge. In turn you can pass on that information when working with your clients.

As always, we need you to share your stories, lessons learned, new tools, new books, tricks of the trade, etc. Please send your articles to me at [omestas@tf.tamu.edu](mailto:omestas@tf.tamu.edu). Thanks for everything you do. Hope to see you at the Tree Climbing Championships in New Braunfels this year.

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# What's the Big IDEa?

Can you identify this native Texas tree?



If you know this tree, look for the photo on our facebook page and correctly identify it in the comment section under the photo. If you don't know it, check the page for the answer in a few days

*Hint:* This petite beauty is all by itself.

## January winner

Dave Richardson, who lives and works in the Dallas area, correctly identified the January Big IDEa tree as a Shumard red oak, *Quercus shumardii*. Dave is a Certified Arborist and member of the International Oak Society.



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# A Scary Lesson Learned

by James Tuttle, Certified Arborist

We generally learn the most from our parents, the good and the bad. Just because your daddy did something and got away with it, didn't mean it was good.

Recently, one of our crew foreman developed an infection in his left hand and finally went to the doctor about two weeks later when his hand became so swollen he couldn't bend his finger. After three to four days of strong antibiotics and waiting for a hand specialist, the diagnosis was cellulitis, an infection that a person can get by not wearing gloves and handling a variety of things, including soil. When he went into surgery, he didn't know if he would wake up missing a finger or even the hand. The doctor said that they had to get the infection out and if it had spread to the bone, it would have to be removed.

They did manage to excise the infection with a quarter size wound almost a quarter inch deep and only took meat. After

three weeks of miraculous healing – no more surgeries as first thought – he was released to go back to work. He will need months of physical therapy to manage scar tissue build-up and loss of function in two fingers.



The two days in the hospital gave him an opportunity to ask the doctor where the infection came from and ponder a possible source. The doctor told him the infection came from his own mouth. Who knows what the initial opening was: a splinter, nick or scrape most likely. In tree work, we all get them all the time. But how did the bacteria get from his mouth to his hand? His conjecture was that every time before climbing, he would spit in each palm and rub them together before grabbing the climbing line.

He learned the habit from his dad. I remember telling his dad 35 years ago when I noticed him doing it that the mouth is a nasty place. I hope that I can break the habit of licking my finger before counting the money. ■



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# BAJO LA SOMBRA

## Técnicas Apropriadas para Aplicar el Mulch, Parte 1

*Traducción del original en inglés "Proper Mulching Techniques", International Society of Arboriculture, Champaign, Illinois, por Sally González, Especialista en Forestación Urbana y Paisajismo del Servicio Cooperativo de Extensión, Universidad de Puerto Rico.*

El mulch está formado por diversos materiales que se colocan sobre el suelo para mantener la humedad y mejorar las condiciones del mismo. El uso de mulch es una de las mejores prácticas que el dueño de una residencia puede hacer para mantener la salud de sus árboles. El mulch puede reducir la pérdida de agua del suelo, mejorar su estructura y minimizar el crecimiento de hierbas. Un paisaje puede volverse muy atractivo si el mulch se aplica de manera adecuada; de no ser así, los árboles y demás plantas del jardín pueden sufrir daños significativos si la capa es muy profunda o si se utilizan materiales inapropiados.

### Beneficios de aplicar el mulch apropiado

- Ayuda a mantener el suelo húmedo. La evaporación se reduce y la necesidad de regar puede minimizarse.
- Ayuda a controlar las hierbas. Una capa de 2 a 4 pulgadas (5-10 cm) de grosor de mulch puede reducir la germinación y el crecimiento de las malas hierbas.
- Actúa como modulador natural de temperatura. El mulch mantiene el suelo más tibio en invierno y más fresco en verano.
- Diversos tipos de mulch sirven para mejorar la aeración, la estructura del suelo (el agregado de las partículas del suelo) y con el tiempo, el drenaje.
- Algunos tipos de mulch pueden mejorar la fertilidad del suelo.
- Una capa de mulch puede inhibir algunas enfermedades en las plantas.
- Cuando se coloca alrededor de los árboles, facilita su cuidado y puede reducir las posibilidades de daño por los cortadores de hierbas o las "quemaduras" causadas por las podadoras de césped.
- Puede darle a las áreas con plantas un acabado uniforme y una apariencia de buen mantenimiento.

Los árboles que crecen en su ambiente natural tienen las raíces de anclaje en un suelo bien aireado y rico en nutrientes esenciales. El suelo está cubierto por hojas y materia orgánica que reabastecen los nutrientes y proveen un ambiente óptimo para el crecimiento de las raíces y la absorción de nutrientes. El paisaje urbano, sin embargo, es generalmente un ambiente más hostil, con suelos malos, poca materia orgánica y grandes fluctuaciones en temperatura y humedad. Añadir entre 2 y 4 pulgadas (5-10 cm) de mulch orgánico puede ayudar a simular un ambiente más natural y mejorar la salud de las plantas.

El sistema radical de un árbol no es una imagen exactamente

igual a su copa. Las raíces de un árbol pueden extenderse una gran distancia alrededor y más allá del tronco. Aunque muchas prácticas de mantenimiento inician a partir de la línea de goteo— la parte más externa de la copa— las raíces pueden crecer mucho más allá. Además, muchas raíces finas de absorción, están localizadas a sólo unas cuantas pulgadas de la superficie del suelo. Estas raíces necesitan oxígeno para sobrevivir y son esenciales para la toma de agua y minerales. Una capa fina de mulch puede mejorar la estructura del suelo, los niveles de oxígeno, la temperatura y la humedad disponible en el área en donde crecen estas raíces.

### Tipos de mulch

Existen muchas formas comerciales de mulch. Los dos grupos principales son los orgánicos y los inorgánicos. Los inorgánicos incluyen varios tipos de piedras, piedra volcánica, goma pulverizada, y materiales geotextiles, entre otros. El mulch inorgánico no se descompone rápidamente, por lo que no necesitan ser reabastecidos con frecuencia. Por otro lado, no mejoran la estructura del suelo, no añaden materia orgánica ni proveen nutrientes. Por estas razones muchos horticultores y arbolistas prefieren el mulch orgánico.

El mulch orgánico incluye astillas o virutas de madera, hojas de pino, corteza de árboles, cáscaras de cacao, hojas, mulch mixto y una gran variedad de otros productos generalmente derivados de plantas. El mulch orgánicos se descompone a diferentes ritmos dependiendo del material. Los que se descomponen más rápido se tienen que reabastecer con más frecuencia. Debido a que el proceso de descomposición mejora la calidad del suelo y su fertilidad, muchos arbolistas y otros profesionales de la arboricultura consideran benéfica esta característica, a pesar de que aumenta la necesidad de mantenimiento.

### ¡No use demasiado mulch!

El mulch es benéfico, pero en exceso puede ser dañino. La recomendación general de profundidad de mulch es entre 2 y 4 pulgadas (5-10 cm) de grosor. Desafortunadamente, el paisajismo en Norte América está siendo víctima de un exceso de mulch. El término "volcanes de mulch" ha surgido recientemente para describir el apilamiento de mulch alrededor de los troncos de los árboles. Muchos tipos de mulch orgánico tienen que ser reabastecidos, pero el ritmo de su descomposición varía. Algunos, como el de ciprés, permanecen intactos por años. Añadir una capa anual (generalmente para que su color sea visualmente agradable) crea una cubierta demasiado profunda que podría ser poco saludable. Las capas de mulch muy profundas pueden ser efectivas para controlar hierbas y reducir el mantenimiento, pero generalmente causan otros problemas. ■

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