

In the shade



NEWSLETTER OF THE ISA TEXAS CHAPTER

Vol. 40, No. 1

May, 2016



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In the Shade

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Nomations open for 2016 Texas Tree Awards

It's time to nominate your favorite arborist, volunteer, arboriculture project, landscape program, and arbor day celebration. We are asking for award nominations early this year so we can recognize the winners at the Texas Chapter reception at the ISA Conference in Ft Worth. Visit <http://isatexas.com/members/awards/> to read the category descriptions and access the pdf nomination forms. The deadline is June 2 so there is time for the committee to review, evaluate, and select the winners. Good luck. —Paul Johnson

ON THE COVER

The world's best climbers came to San Antonio in April for the International Tree Climbing Championship. See story on page 6. Photo by Mark Duff.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER by Vincent Debrock



Howdy fellow arborists, By now, 2016 is well under way. I hope many of you had the chance to visit the International Tree Climbing Championship in San Antonio. It was a world class event in more ways than one.

The staff of the City of San Antonio did an incredible job in making everyone welcome and catering to the multitude of needs that such a complex event has. I also have to thank the volunteers from our chapter that showed up to help out; you all contributed to make this one a memorable event for all involved. This includes board member April Rose teaching some Canadians and Belgians how to two-step!

The International team, as usual, did an outstanding job in making this event as high quality and safe as possible and really enjoyed the beautiful weather and setting San Antonio offered. It made us proud to be arborists from Texas. But we are not stopping here: Get ready for our Texas Tree Climbing Championship in New Braunfels May 20–21, and book your hotels for the International Tree Conference in Fort Worth August 13–17. The buzz is already out, after our San Antonio event, that Texas puts on great events!

Enjoy these busy times, stay safe, and see you in New Braunfels.



Pictured here are just a few of the ISA Texas chapter members who volunteered at ITCC (l to r): Emmett Muennick, Jim Breaux, Gene Gehring, Kirsten Schneider, Mark Kroeze, Paul Johnson, Markus Smith, Booker Arradondo, Oscar Mestas, Lara Schuman, Guy LeBlanc, Vincent Debrock, John Giedraitis, and Jim Carse.

Climbers will converge on the beauty spots of New Braunfels May 20–21



New Braunfels will be the site of the Texas Tree Climbing Championship (TTCC) May 20–21. The champion of this event will represent Texas at the 2017 ITCC to be held in Washington DC with the ISA conference. Top climbers will be eligible for the 2016 North American Tree Climbing Championship.

Preliminary events will be Friday, May 20, in Cypress Bend Park, 503 Peace Avenue. This is a popular spot for fishing, kayaking or tubing on the Guadalupe River. The Masters Challenge will be on Saturday, May 21, in Landa Park, 164 Landa Park Drive, near the playground.

Landa Park offers many family-friendly amenities like picnic tables under giant oak trees, and a miniature train that chugs around the 51-acre park. A paddle boat is one of the best ways to see the Comal Springs and Landa Lake. Or take in a round of miniature golf, relax at the playground, or enjoy the unique flora and fauna on the Panther Canyon Nature Trail.

Don't forget the William and Dolores Schumann Arboretum walking tour, with over 50 species of trees and one of the famous trees of Texas—the Founders' Oak! This event is held in conjunction with the educational Tree Fair, kids' recreational climb, tree vendors and food trucks on Saturday. All events are free and open to the public.

Interested competitors can register through May 16 at:

<http://bit.ly/TXclimber>.



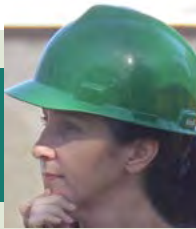
Keep McAllen Beautiful recently celebrated Arbor Day by hosting a tree adoption. Davey Tree Experts and AEP donated trees along with helping plan and facilitate the event.



Texas A&M Forest Service's Urban & Community Forestry Program made a big impression at this year's Texas Recreation & Parks Society (TRAPS) Institute and Expo annual convention in Galveston. Over 800 attendees from cities across Texas and the southwest participated this year. TFS's booth provided educational outreach materials, ISA tree care brochures, and information on careers in arboriculture. Materials were in both English and Spanish.

EDITOR'S NOTE

by Rebecca Johnson



The Texas Chapter has been extremely busy this first half of the year, and we're not slowing down. This issue of *In the Shade* highlights the International Tree Climbing Championship (ITCC) which was hosted by our Chapter and held in gorgeous Brackenridge Park in San Antonio. Over and over, I heard the ISA staff comment on how helpful our Chapter members had been and how easy we'd made it for them. They also commented that our response to their call for volunteers had been overwhelming.

We're not stopping there, though. We'll be holding our annual Texas Tree Climbing Championship (TTCC) this month. We're going back to Landa Park in New Braunfels to "Gather at the River" again. And then in August we'll welcome the world back to Texas for the ISA Tree Conference in Ft. Worth. We won't be having a Texas Tree Conference this year, so this will be your chance to attend a conference this year. ISA Texas will be hosting a reception for attendees, so make your plans now. At the Texas Reception, we'll announce our Texas Tree Awards winners. Nominations are open now. Be sure to go nominate your favorite arborists.

We're looking for sponsors for the reception. If you know of any interested businesses send them the link to the signup page <http://bit.ly/TXreception>.

Thanks to all of our contributors this month. Without you, this newsletter wouldn't be possible. If you're interested in contributing an article, pictures, or ideas for the newsletter, email me at Rebecca@Arborholic.com.



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EVENTS

Aerial Rescue and Chain Saw Techniques Workshop
May 19, New Braunfels
Pre-competition workshop with Phillip Kelly.
<http://bit.ly/AerialRescue>

2016 Texas Tree Climbing Championship
May 20-21, New Braunfels
Competition both days. Texas Tree Fair (free and open to public) May 21.
<http://bit.ly/TXclimber>

Certified Arborist Prep Course
4 Mondays in June, starting June 6, Austin
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<http://isatexas.com/event/certified-arborist-prep-course-treefolks/>

Certification Exam
August 12, Ft. Worth
<http://isatexas.com/event/certification-exam-fort-worth/>

2016 International Tree Conference and Trade Show
Aug. 13-17, Fort Worth Convention Center
<http://www.isa-arbor.com/events/conference/index.aspx>

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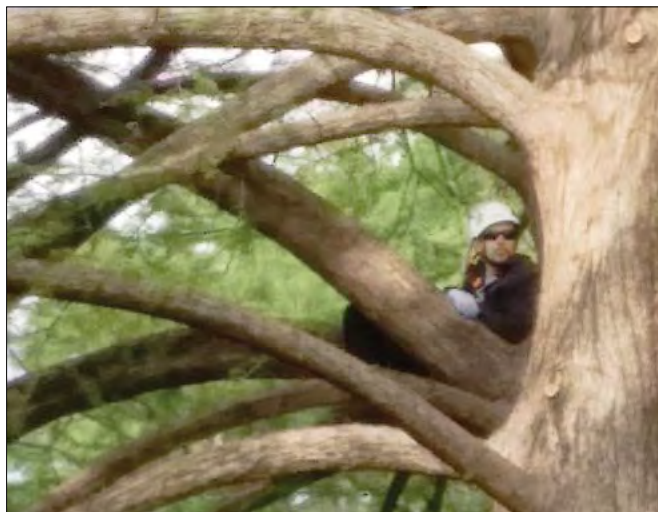
Intense competition, entertaining events, venue was a hit:

It was a great ITCC!

by Kevin Bassett, Chapter liaison to the ITCC / Chair TTCC

Wow! What a week! The Texas Chapter hosted the 40th ITCC at Brackenridge Park in San Antonio and it was great! The venue was beautifully prepared by Texas Chapter arborists and the San Antonio Parks & Recreation led by Ross Hosea. I can't even count how many of our guests remarked about the venue being the best ever! The venue was superb, educational opportunities were a big hit, and the competition among the world's best climbers was intense. Texas Chapter members participated on the judging teams and were involved with the Arbor Expo and the Arbor Fair. Thank you, Texas Chapter members who volunteer your time and expertise. Without your help and support this would not have occurred.

A recap of the climbing boils down to this: Three women representing New Zealand, the United Kingdom/Ireland and the Western Chapter battled in the Masters' Challenge Final for the championship. Chrissy Spence of New Zealand had



In the men's division once again, all parts of the world were represented in the final. The finalists were led by Derrick Martin of the Penn Del Chapter. Jerome Pagy from France was 2nd; Lucus Drews, Michigan, 3rd; James Kilpatrick, New Zealand, 4th; and from Arb, Australia, Barton Allen Hall was 5th. On the outside looking in were Peter Vergote of Belgium and Miguel Pastenes, Texas Chapter and 2015 North American champion. Vicente Peña-Molina also represented the Texas Chapter and did very well in his first international competition.

In the Masters' Challenge final, James Kilpatrick of New Zealand conquered the giant pecan and his fellow competitors to become ITCC champion. Second place went to Barton Allen Hall from Australia, and Jerome Pagy of France was 3rd.

The big winner here was arboriculture and trees. The City of San Antonio was an incredible host city! I hope the Chapter will be able to bring the Texas Tree Climbing Championship (TTCC) to this site in the future as it is a nearly ideal venue for the event. ■



a treeeeemendous climb in the huge pecan which even had a station in an adjacent leaning pecan. After a four-year absence Chrissy came back to claim her fourth ITCC championship! Josephine Hedger of the United Kingdom placed second, and last year's champion Jamilee Kempton from Hawaii was third.

The men and women did the same climb. For years the women have wanted equality in the events. Whatever the men do, the women do, side by side. The gap between the top women and the top men continues to narrow. Jamilee scored 150 points in the preliminaries which placed her 10th among all competitors. I dare say that in the future we'll all just be climbers with very little separating the abilities and skills between the sexes.

GET ALL THE ITCC RESULTS!

ITCC event winners and final results are at this link:

www.itcc-isa.com/events/itcc/results.aspx

...and Arbor Fair 2016 was family-friendly and fun

by Lara Schuman, ISA Texas President Elect

If you weren't able to make it to San Antonio for the 2016 International Tree Climbing Championship (ITCC), Arbor Fair and Expo, I'm sorry to say that you missed out! I had the honor to be the local planning committee chair for the Arbor Fair. Last year I attended the 2015 ITCC in Tampa, Florida, in order to spy on the Florida Chapter of ISA and see what all was involved in the event. It was a fun and successful event, but I came away with the goal of making our Texas Arbor Fair better, because of course everything is better in Texas! Well I have to say, that not only was ours better, but thanks to everyone's hard work, the 2016 ITCC Arbor Fair and Expo turned out to be an even bigger success than I had hoped.

This year the event was really family friendly. We were set up right outside of the entrance to the San Antonio Zoo in Brackenridge Park, and right next to the main train depot. This turned out to be a prime spot for enticing local families to come check out the tree climbing events and participate the Arbor Fair fun. We had a Fun Climb, which was open to all ages, and a Limb Walk for the littler kids. The Limb Walk was incredibly popular, and kept the volunteers busy helping children into tiny climbing gear and getting their first experience of what it's like to balance on tree branches. We also had face painting, a scavenger hunt, lots of educational booths, music, and even a Tree Circus, which was great entertainment for all of us nearby. I spoke with several of the vendors who were there selling their tree-related arts and crafts, and it sounds like not only did they all have a great time, but they sold a lot too.

Of course we manned our local Texas Chapter booth, where we sold t-shirts and hats, spoke to people from all over the world about arboriculture here in Texas, and had a tree ID challenge. Members of the ISA Texas Board of Directors brought cuttings from trees in their areas, so that visitors could have a shot at winning a free t-shirt if they were able to identify half of the species. This turned out to be really fun for everyone, and sparked lots of great conversations. We were very lucky to be placed close to the Masters' Challenge tree, so we were able to watch the best of the best climb on Sunday, while we continued to work the booth.

I really appreciate the hard work of all of the volunteers who helped to make this event such a success and helped meet my goal of beating the Florida Chapter. We heard from ISA that they almost had more volunteers than they needed, which I think really speaks to how great our Texas Chapter members are. I want to especially thank Ross Hosea and Mark Bird, with the City of San Antonio. Both of them and their crews did so much to prepare the park, get local groups involved, and keep everything running smoothly during the event. It would not have been such a success without their participation.

It's a busy year for our Chapter, and we are looking ahead to our Texas Tree Climbing Championship coming up in May in New Braunfels. We are also hosting the International Tree Conference in Fort Worth in August. We are incredibly lucky to have these international events coming right to our front door, so don't miss out on the opportunity to meet other professionals working in our field who will be coming from all over the world to talk trees. We hope to see you there! ■



Scenes from the 2016 ITCC



More pictures from the ITCC at <http://isatexas.com/gallery/2016-international-tree-climbing-championship/>

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Photo: Brian Bixler. Arborist: J. David Driver (the X man).



URBAN FOREST INVENTORY & ANALYSIS IN AUSTIN

by Gretchen Riley,
Texas A&M Forest Service

On the edge of the wild, wild west, home to a vibrant music scene and the state's capital, one doesn't always associate trees with Austin, Texas. Yet, driving through the city, the extent of leafy green canopy is remarkable. Boldly straddling two major ecoregions – the Edwards Plateau on the west and the Blackland Prairie on the east – Austin's urban forest is as unique as the city itself. Vegetation of the Edwards Plateau is a mosaic of live oak-mesquite savannahs and dense juniper-oak woodlands on often steep and rugged hills underlain by honeycombed limestone. The Blackland Prairie is characterized by former tallgrass prairie now producing food and forage crops, thanks to the fertile black soils. Trees associated with this ecoregion are found along riparian areas and include elm, sugarberry, cottonwood and pecan.

Austin isn't shy about loving its urban forest – all the trees and associated vegetation where we live, work, and play. Citizen

advocacy groups have long played a part in protecting and enhancing trees in the city. Numerous arborists are on staff across several city departments to help sustain the functions and associated benefits of the urban forest.

Which is one of the reasons the city was selected by Texas A&M Forest Service as the inaugural city for implementation of the USFS Urban Forest Inventory & Analysis (Urban FIA) program. Mandated by Congress since 1928, FIA is the nation's forest census. It collects traditional forestland data on everything from species composition to growth rates and land ownership. The program helps evaluate whether current management practices are sustainable in the long run. Recognizing that urban trees are critical to human health and well-being and that knowledge of the urban forest can help sustain and enhance it, FIA expanded in 2014 to establish an Urban FIA program. ►

Q: How many trees are there in Austin? by Emily King

A: Thanks to the Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis program (Urban FIA), I can easily answer this question. There are an estimated 33.8 million trees in Austin!

You may be wondering why a body would care how many trees are in Austin. Well, with the type of information we now have in our hot little hands, we can do all sorts of things. For example, I can make impressive statements about Austin's trees, such as:

Our trees have a value of \$16 billion, which is equivalent to:

- 9 Space Shuttle Challengers (plus change)
- Almost 23 Pluto missions • 1,061,200,000 Indian rupees
- Only \$5 billion less than Starbucks' revenue last year

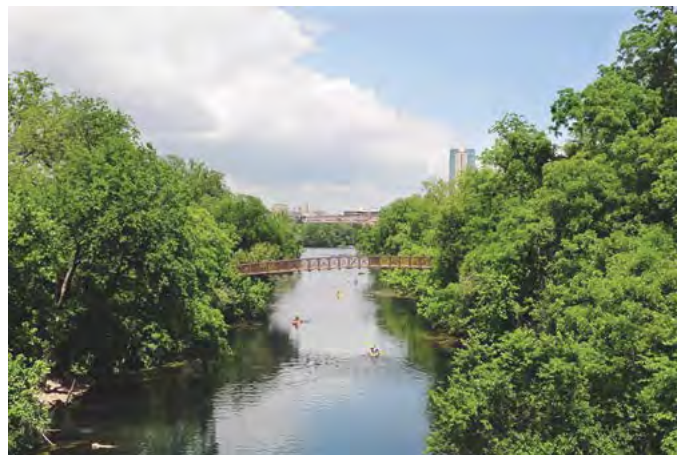
I also found out that the two trees whose pollens are my annual nemesis, Ashe juniper and live oak, are two of the top three most commonly occurring trees in town. It turns out that both Ashe juniper and live oak rank highest for positive contributions they make in several areas that might not be immediately obvious: reduction of surface water runoff and carbon storage and sequestration. Of course, the fact that there are SO many Ashe junipers and live oaks makes it stand to reason that they'd provide more benefits than other species around town. I doubt I'd find such reasons to keep the ragweed around...

Emily King is Environmental Program Coordinator, Community Forestry Planning Program, Forestry Division, City of Austin. (www.austintexas.gov/departments/urban-forest-planning)

- ◀ Over 200 permanent plots were established throughout Austin. Data were collected on all plots in 2014; approximately ten percent of them will be collected again annually, resulting in the latest available data each year and a complete updated set of data every ten years. Changes in the urban forest over time – such as plantings and removals, associated ecosystem services, public/private ownership, and even stewardship practices – will now be easily measureable. The results of the initial data collection and analysis are summarized in the report titled *Austin's Urban Forest* at www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/50393.

Considering its place in the Edwards Plateau, it's no surprise that of the sixty-two tree species found in Austin, Ashe juniper is the most common. But before you knock it, consider that juniper alone reduces stormwater runoff by over 25 million ft³/year, helping to keep flooding in check, reduce erosion and maintain water quality.

My City's Trees (www.mycitystrees.com), a soon-to-be-launched interactive web tool developed by Texas A&M Forest Service with assistance from the USFS, will display much of the data analysis relative to other important geographical considerations. Watch for the launch announcement later this month. Users will be able to quickly compare composition and associated benefits of the forest across ecoregions, land cover types, watersheds, and historical city limits. Say you'd like to know what percent of Austin's estimated 33.8 million



trees fall in high-density developed areas? Just click a few buttons and the map and charts will display your interest. Or perhaps you want to know how much of the estimated \$38.2 million in annual ecosystem benefits comes from trees in older neighborhoods compared to new neighborhoods; My City's Trees will tell you.

Texas A&M Forest Service hasn't limited the program and web application to Austin, however. My City's Trees will eventually display Urban FIA data from other participating cities; check for Houston sometime in 2017 and San Diego, California in 2018. ■



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What you should know about The new Oak Wilt Qualification

by Gene Gehring

Over the last several years, ISA Texas has received requests from members who would like to see the Oak Wilt Certification program improved. When the program was first developed, it was designed to convey to the public that the person holding the designation met some minimum level of knowledge. The primary problem with the Oak Wilt Certification is that there is no assessment of knowledge. The holder merely had to sit through the workshop.

Improving the oak wilt workshop has been on the board's agenda for the past couple of years. Shortly after being voted back on the board, I was asked to chair the committee responsible for developing and implementing improvements to the workshop. One of the recommendations was to change the designation from a "Certification" to a "Qualification." The primary difference between Oak Wilt Certification and Oak Wilt Qualification is that an Oak Wilt Qualified individual will have passed a written exam indicating a basic understanding of oak wilt biology, diagnosis and currently accepted management practices.

The workshop will be open to anyone wishing to attend, but there are prerequisites before you can be considered Oak Wilt Qualified. In addition to passing the test, you must be an ISA Texas member in good standing, and you must be an ISA Certified Arborist or ISA Board Certified Master Arborist. To be listed on the ISA Texas website as an oak wilt vendor, you must have a TDA pesticide applicators license (required to sell any chemical application). The qualification will be good for five years. There will be a three-year transitional period for previously Oak Wilt Certified arborists; after that, "Oak Wilt Certified" will no longer be used.

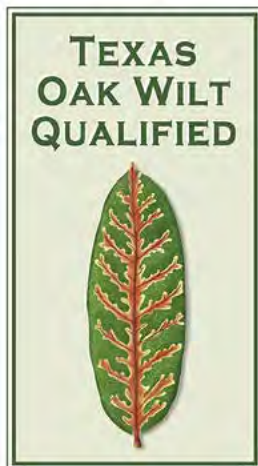
The first Oak Wilt Qualification workshop will be held June 9-10 in Granbury. Class size will be limited to 25. It will be on a first-come, first-served basis, but priority will be given to ISA Certified Arborists or ISA Board Certified Master Arborists who are TDA licensed applicators. Based on the results of the first workshop and its evaluations, changes will be made, and two to three Oak Wilt Qualification workshops will be offered in 2017.

The first day Dr. David Appel, Texas A&M University, will cover tree biology and CODIT. He will then discuss the epidemiology of *Ceratocystis fagacearum* (oak wilt) and how that relates to recommended management strategies in

Texas, followed by a discussion of how oak wilt relates to other tree diseases and problems, such as drought. Robert Edmonson, Texas A&M Forest Service, will discuss the TFS Oak Wilt Suppression Project. He will explain the state's role, the practices and protocols of the project, and how commercial arborists can participate.

Day two will be in the field looking at an oak wilt center. Mr. Edmonson will cover the five steps to diagnosing oak wilt and the steps involved to developing a management plan. Dr. Appel will demonstrate the proper way to perform a fungicide macro-injection. The qualification exam will be conducted in the field utilizing the disease center.

This workshop is not designed to be a comprehensive training on the skills and understanding needed to become an expert in tree injection. ISA Texas is working on devising a training course that discusses the science of tree injection and approaches in successfully injecting trees for a variety of purposes. This new workshop will include hands-on experience in the field to gain practical experience in the art of injecting trees. The registration link will be emailed to the ISA Texas list in the near future. ■



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Three municipal arborists tell how...

MFI supercharges skills and enthusiasm

LEARN TO SET AUDACIOUS GOALS TO DEVELOP GREAT COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

by G. Tyler Wright, Urban and Community Forester, Texas Trees Foundation, Dallas

The Municipal Forestry Institute, or MFI, is a collaborative effort amongst the Society of Municipal Arborists and other leading professionals in municipal and community forestry. The Cadre of the MFI is led by the Cadre Madre, Jerri LaHaie, SMA Executive Director, and the Cadre Padre, Dr. Paul Ries of Oregon State University. The other Cadre participants represent various private and public institutions from North America that share with a group of nearly 40 professionals from different states and Canadian provinces.

Texas was well represented this year with five individuals from public and non-profit organizations. Texas has been sending many participants to this lead-

ership training each year and this year marks the 500th participant to graduate from this program.

MFI is an immersive training based on leadership and professional development for participants actively engaged in urban and community forestry programs across North America. This six-day course runs from Sunday evening to Friday morning, giving students only a few breaks during the day to answer emails and other items at home. This program completely immerses the student in items that the Cadre feel are not being met with great performance reviews in our industry. This course teaches you how to interact with the public, set goals, establish relationships with other entities and non-profits, and how to successfully run your program to see it become an integral part of the community you live in.

Each day has its own theme, and from the beginning of the day, students are asked thought-provoking questions. They are also asked to work independently and

in Peer Learning Groups, and to speak in front of their peers to help resolve mock and real scenarios. Here are some of the points which were drilled into us:

BHAGS: Big. Hairy. Audacious. Goals. BHAGs are those far, out-stretching ideas that will propel your program to another level. The example which was used for MFI was Starbucks. The original goal of Starbucks, about 10 years ago, was to open 2,000 stores by the end of the year. This was an attainable goal, as it was projected Starbucks would have this many open. So, Starbucks decided a bigger goal for them was to be the most recognizable brand in the world. That is Big, Hairy and Audacious! And, as many people see everyday, Starbucks are on many streets and even competing with each other on the same street.

A BHAG should be something that will be difficult to attain, unless you have:

The Right People on the Bus in the Right Seat. Another element to any great program will be the employees. However, you need to have the right employees in the right seat doing the right job. Seek professionals who will fit into the program, not only in professional background but also in their attitudes and work ethic. If you bring the wrong employee into a position, it can set back your program many months or even years. Casey Trees, a national non-profit in Washington, D.C., actually administers a personality test to the final three candidates to a new position to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate so they can get the right person in the right seat on their bus.

Who Moved My Cheese? Now, to move your program from good to great, you also need to make sure that you are constantly looking for new opportunities to partner with groups, organizations, neighborhoods, and private companies. Urban and community forestry programs cannot live in a vacuum; you need to find partnerships with like-minded, and sometimes opposing-minded, entities

MFI Class 2016 with cadre leaders in front. Photo by Paul Reis.



◀ that can help your program. This help can be monetary, volunteerism, branding opportunities, or just introducing you to people who have resources you need. Always be ready with your 30-second 'elevator speech' to let individuals know about your program. Be ready to re-brand and re-market your program, as we urban foresters/arborists/plant geeks have a difficult time with marketing.

Since the latest 40 individuals have left the wild and wonderful hills of West Virginia, we have continued to stay in contact; we are sharing resources, making connections, and creating an urban forestry super choir to help each other. It is truly amazing to see many people working together for a common goal: helping trees serve our communities. MFI was a wonderful experience and gave each individual more tools in the arborist toolbox to make our urban and community forestry programs great! To all my fellow graduates of MFI, Semper Gumby! ■

YOU CAN BECOME PART OF A VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE-SHARING COMMUNITY

by Rose Belzung Holmes, Forester, Harris County, Pct. 4

This class was an invaluable opportunity to meet other folks in different and similar aspects of urban forestry – from all over North America. The educational aspects and the speakers who presented were top notch in their field, but even more valuable to me was all of the shared input from the other attendees. Being able to hear about other's challenges and obstacles, which may be similar to my own, gave great ideas for overcoming them. The instructors did a fantastic job fostering a culture of openness and sharing, making everyone's input and experiences valuable contributions.

Another great surprise was all the other women I was able to meet. I am a woman in my early thirties, and I still feel like I am new to the scene of urban forestry and learning all the time. I know I will never stop learning the technical aspects of the job, but being a young(ish) female in this field can sometimes be somewhat

challenging to accomplishing your job to the best of your abilities. I found it encouraging seeing so many other urban forestry professionals attending were also women, and being able to share the challenges specific to women in the field gave me even more tools to conquer these challenges.

I would recommend this workshop to EVERYONE. You will gain knowledge on how to better work your urban forestry program, but just as importantly, you will become a member of a community of encouragement, sharing, troubleshooting, problem solving, and celebration in successes! ■

I CHECKED MY PRECONCEPTIONS AT THE DOOR AND GAINED FRIENDS AND RESOURCES

by Brent Pearson, Municipal Arborist, City of El Paso

Wow, what an experience! I went to the 2016 Municipal Forestry Institute not really knowing what to expect. I was totally open for the experience, checking all preconceptions at the door when I left my house. I had never been east of the Mississippi or been away for so long.

After initial introductions, what transpired over the next six days and five nights was amazing. Forty strangers from all across the country had come together and realized we all knew each other. We all had a bond of being advocates for trees and our stories were all similar. MFI taught us how to avoid or minimize our failures and to build on our successes. MFI taught us how to lead, how to think and plan and how to work effectively from our position. I gained valuable friends and resources that will be with me the rest of my life. I think each one of us can only aspire to be as good as the other thirty-nine because all of us seemed to be heroes to each other.

I would like to thank Paul Johnson and the Texas Forest Service for having enough confidence to invest in me, I am truly honored. You and your agency have been a big part of my career and I can only hope to make you proud. ■

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Clarifying the drop-start

An article by Peter Gerstenberger in the latest issue of *TCI Magazine* discusses a recent revision to OSHA rules for working around electricity. He points out that in those rules, drop-starting is also addressed. The very confusing language in the OSHA ruling, and Gerstenberger's explanation of the industry response to it got me thinking that a review of just what this term means is in order. The answer is as clear as a federal government ruling.

I'll start by talking about the ANSI Z133, the "guidelines" that our industry uses as its safety bible. Even though the "Z" is called a "voluntary standard," it is often cited by OSHA when issuing violation notices against companies, as Gerstenberger also points out, so it can have the weight of law.

The term drop-starting appears in the "Z" at least as far back at the 1988 edition, and the definition has remained virtually the same since then. In the latest edition (2012) it read: "The act of starting a chain saw by pushing the saw away from the body with one hand while simultaneously pulling on the starter cord handle with the other." Sounds clear enough, but there are significant problems with this brevity related to what is therefore not drop-starting.

In 1988 the "Z" allowed for saws less than 15 pounds to be drop-started. By 2000 drop-starting was only allowed when using (any) saw from a bucket and the only other language applicable to starting said "chain saws shall be held firmly in place on the ground or otherwise held in a manner that does not allow movement of the saw when pulling the starter handle..." I don't think there's a tree man out there that can hold a saw with one hand and pull the starter cord without the saw moving at all, and ANSI must have agreed because in 2006, the starting procedures were again tweaked. Although drop-starting was prohibited altogether for the first time, that edition states that a saw must be held "in a manner that minimizes movement of the saw when pulling the starter handle." This description is retained in 2012.

So there you have the key phrase that, as Gerstenberger states in his article, allowed our industry to argue (regarding vague standards the industry itself created) that if saw movement is "minimized," holding the saw with one hand and pulling the cord with the other is not drop-starting. Gerstenberger states that this must be done with the arm holding the saw to be

"locked or pretty stiff," which I have read elsewhere, but that is found nowhere in the "Z."

So that means in an acceptable start-up procedure for a top-handle saw, the top handle (not the front one) could be held in the right hand, right arm remaining stiff and extended, while the left hand pulls the cord. Could a top-handle saw be "legally" started with the left hand on the front handle and the right hand pulling the starter cord? Conceivably, yes, but in my opinion, the control is just not adequate. This is another question not addressed at all by the "Z," nor is it definitively answered in online forums such as TreeBuzz and others, or in training manuals or saw manufacturer videos.



In my opinion, the correct start-up procedure for this saw would be holding the top handle with the right hand, arm fully extended, and pulling the start cord with the left. I have seen it recommended to use this same procedure to hold the saw against the tree, but I find this results in more movement, not less, and do not recommend it. You could also theoretically use this same procedure to pin the saw to the ground, but top-handled saws are not recommended for ground use (for ergonomic and saw control reasons).



causes the saw to be pulled from the leg-lock, causing it to spin around into the back of the leg just as it starts? Crazy things have happened. Even with chaps (ALSO required for all starts), this could really cut into your dinner plans, amongst other things. I recommend a ground-start procedure for beginners using rear-handle saws.

So that's what I know. It seems that our own industry committees are not immune to the same kind of obfuscation that we often blame the government for. However, the goal of these start-up standards is to minimize injury by making clear (or not) the importance of stabilizing your saw by using a "non-drop-start." Maybe we can call it "the stiff-start." ■

The author is the owner and operator of Arbor Vitae Tree Care in Austin. He has over 30 years experience and is available for worker safety and tree care workshops. He may be reached at 512-301-8700.

◀ Will the next "Z" address specific hand placement? That would be nice. I had heard a few years ago from "Z" committee member Tom Dunlap that clarifications about drop-starting will probably be made, but a March 2016 TCIA article by Gerstenberger about proposed changes to the next edition of the "Z" (expected in 2017) makes no reference to any changes regarding drop-starting.

Regarding rear-handle saws, I think it's obvious that using the right hand to hold a rear handle while pulling the starter cord with the left is just not a good game plan. The ergonomics are terrible (for your right wrist in particular), and the angle of the starter cord is so extreme you will wear it or its housing very quickly. (Ever seen a groove worn through the starter cord housing? That is how it happens.) But most importantly, you are extremely unlikely to "minimize movement" of the saw, so you don't have much control, which is mainly why this is against the "Z" standard. And starting a rear-handled saw with the left hand on the front handle and the right hand pulling the starter cord by itself won't adequately stabilize a big saw.

That is why the correct off-the-ground start-up of a rear-handled saw the "leg-lock" technique, in which a rear-handle saw is held by the left hand on the front handle, arm stiff, while the rear handle is "locked" between the lower thighs (yeah, right, "locked"), and the right hand pulls the starter cord. I have to say I do NOT recommend this technique for beginners. What if the user forgets to engage the chain brake (as required for ALL starts) or it fails, and compression

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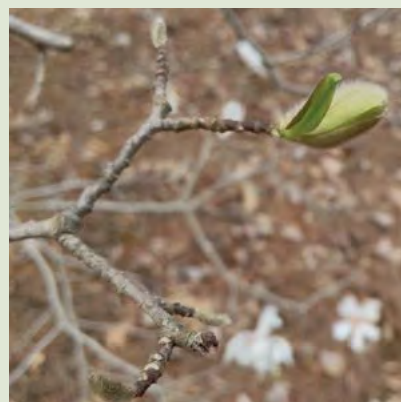
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If you know this tree, look for the photo on our Facebook page and correctly identify it in the comment section under the photo, using the full scientific name and one or more common names. If you don't know it, check the page for an answer in a few days. The winner gets bragging rights and the chance to submit a tree to stump fellow arborists in the July issue. *Hint: Fall color makes this a lovely understory tree for landscapes.*

March Winner



March's tree– star magnolia, *Magnolia stellata*–was correctly identified by Dan Howse, landscape architect at The Davey Tree Expert Company.