This Kapok tree, thought to be the largest in the U.S., was recognized by the National Arborist Association at its recent meeting in Tampa, Fla. But Richard Baumgardner recognized it as an outstanding specimen long before. He built a befitting eating place at its base. The Kapok Tree Inn has fed as many as 7,500 people in one evening. Three plaques, instead of one, have been ordered to appropriately recognize this specimen, whose trunk is an estimated 10 feet in diameter. Below, John Duling, right, who handled arrangements for the NAA presentation, talks with Mr. and Mrs. Baumgardner.

NAA Offering Non-Members

HOME STUDY COURSE ON ARBORICULTURE

A MAN WHO BUILT a fortune around a single tree and a multi-million-dollar garden, both of which attract tens of thousands of visitors every year, provided further dramatic evidence to members of the National Arborist Association that theirs is a profession held in high esteem and one that attracts a great deal of money.

As though in response to these expressions of high regard for trees and tree care, NAA members, meeting in February in Tampa, took actions indicating they're interested in taking the lead to improve the professionalism of arborists.

NAA, at its business meeting, de-
cided to offer its home study pro-
gram to non-members and to con-
tinue development of a tree ferti-
lizer especially for members.

An extensive home study course
in general arboriculture is avail-
able, and advanced courses are still
being written. Details may be ob-
tained by writing NAA headquar-
ters, 2011 Eye St., N.W., Washing-
ton, D.C. 20006.

Subjects for a typical year's
course include: customer relations,
professionalism, the importance of
quality work, tree moving, tree
feeding, objectives of pruning, prun-
ing standards, tree anatomy, spray-
ing trees, dusting, and safety for
tree workers.

Some 150 persons heard reports
on business management, research,
and brainstorming of practical prob-
lems. Entertainment highlights in-
cluded visits to Busch Gardens and
the Kapok Tree Inn.

Al Meserve, a Connecticut arbor-
ist, provided an interesting back-
ground note for this year's NAA
tree plaque presentation. It is the
practice of NAA to recognize, by
means of a plaque, trees that are
considered outstanding specimens
and to encourage preservation of
these trees.

On a trip to Florida more than
a decade ago, Meserve recalled see-
ing a man driving a stake into the
ground at the base of a big tree
near Clearwater. His name was
Richard Baumgardner. When told
the man was staking out a restaur-

ant, Meserve questioned the wis-
dom of locating "way out here in
the country." Meserve declined to
buy stock, though Baumgardner as-
sured him his restaurant would be
one of those "better mousetraps"
to which people would flock to buy.

Today the Kapok Tree Inn is na-
tionally famous and is practically
indescribable in words. Though the
Inn can seat 1,700 diners at a time,
guests stand in line for hours. On a
recent evening, the Inn fed 7,500
persons.

A special tour of NAA members
visited the Inn to present a plaque
to Mr. and Mrs. Baumgardner. The
tree, estimated to have been planted
in 1888, is thought to be the largest
Kapok tree in the U. S.

Dr. Charles Lincoln of USDA's
Delaware, Ohio, tree research lab-

oratory, talked about the better
mousetrap search for ways to con-
trol Dutch Elm Disease.

Work emphasis at present is on
ways to attract the elm bark beetle
away from elm trees and to seek
parasites that would reduce beetle
numbers.

Dutch Elm Disease already has
killed 40% of the nation's elms, Dr.
Lincoln said, and it continues to
threaten an additional 400,000 trees
each year.

Federal entomologists have found
two chemical compounds uniquely
present in the elm tree bark that
serve as attractants. Additional re-
search must explore several direc-
tions—developing the strains with-
out the "scent"; masking the scent
chemically; or developing an arti-
ficial scent to lure the beetles else-
where.

Dr. Spencer H. Davis, Jr., of Rut-
gers University expressed high
praise and offered graphic illustra-
tion for the effectiveness of the new
fungicide, Benlate. He reported the
results of usage on gray mold fun-
gus, laurel leaf spot, hawthorne leaf-
spot, and botrytis leaf spot. Tersan
1991, he said, had shown excellent
control of dollarspot.

NAA members split into groups to

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sion could be observed.

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Members themselves provided the subject matter for one morning’s program. The audience divided into discussion groups. Leaders then reported the results of brainstorming four topics.


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brainstorm four subjects; customer contract provisions, recruiting and holding good employees, conglomerate affiliation, and specifications for an all-purpose commercial arborist truck body.

Here is a summary of comments.

Customer contracts—"Get it in writing." Clearly describe your charges. Include provision for extra work. Have a policy on travel time, weather days, late payment, late work completion. "A well-written contract is a protection for both company and customer." Hold a field conference with customer. Make notes. Draw up a formal contract before work begins. Keep a day-to-day diary, sending a duplicate with billing. Be sure "guaranteed clauses" are understood. Charge for diagnostic work and drawings. Get full insurance coverage. Be sure client understands what you are talking about. Take before, during and after photographs. Make on-the-job inspections with the customer. Make specifications clear cut.

Recruiting and hold good employees—Talk with high school counselors to orient them on the opportunities in tree care work and seek their assistance in recruiting 18-year-olds. Offer retirement programs, hospitalization programs, guaranteed 40-hour week. Use bad weather days for training. Encourage use of the NAA home study program.

Conglomerate affiliation—An advantage is that the parent company is usually well-financed and can secure good equipment. A disadvantage is that your business could be sold out from under you. The group felt that while some companies might be looking for a tax loss, most would buy a tree company with good potential for long-term profit. The consensus was that there was no immediate danger of conglomerates taking over.

Specifications for an all-purpose arborist truck—This project appears to be a hopeless case at present. Laws are said to vary too much from state to state. Most companies design a truck to their particular specialty. For example, some do only spraying, some only trimming, some trimming and disposal, and so on. The group proposed that another equipment survey be taken. One arborist reported purchasing an equipment van. The vehicle afforded better storage and accessibility for tools, and in cold weather it was an ideal warm place for workers to eat when they're working in the field.

Safety awards were presented to three companies: Karl Kuenmerling Associates, Inc., Canton, Ohio, more than 100 employees; Chas. F. Irish Co., Inc., Warren, Mich., 25-100 employees; and Landscape Foresters, Ltd., Bronxville, N.Y., 25 employees or less.

Two kinds of tree food here. Dan Brogan, manager of professional sales for Agrico Chemical Co., holds up the bag for NAA professional tree food. While the program is going to be continued and expanded, economics limits the availability of the product to the eastern half of the U.S. But Mrs. H. C. Wilson's "tree food" is always available with just a little effort. Look closely for the tree design in this pound cake. Mix up two-thirds of the batter and pour it on top. Then pass a knife through the batter to form the trunk. It's very simple, said Mrs. Wilson, but she wouldn't guarantee what variety of tree you will get. That's the surprising part, she added.