

# Tree Care Market To Double in 10 Years

## Can Industry Keep Up?

*A Forecast from Robert A. Bartlett*

**T**HE PICTURE of the tree maintenance industry over the next decade is seen as a mixed one by Robert A. Bartlett, president of The F. A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company.

On one hand, Bartlett sees the market for residential and industrial tree care as doubling from its present \$300,000,000 level over the next 10 years.

On the other hand, he feels that such a growth in market may outstrip industry's capacity for growth. He notes that the number of personnel entering the tree maintenance industry has been dropping at an alarming rate—falling from 15 to 30% per year over the past couple of years.

Thus, the biggest problem facing

the industry, as Bartlett sees it, is to educate young people to the opportunities available to them in the industry — opportunities not only for a satisfactory and remunerative lifetime career, but also to make a genuine contribution toward improving ecological conditions.

"After all," Bartlett says, "trees can live without man, but man can't live without trees."

Contributing to the expected market growth are several sociological factors, according to Bartlett.

At the beginning of the century when scientific tree care was in its infancy, most work was confined to large estates owned by the wealthy. His own firm, he notes, had as many as 150 men working on a single estate at a time.

As the trend toward subdivision has accelerated, the number of customers has increased vastly, while the expenditure per customer has naturally declined. However, the greater density of population with accompanying bulldozer blight and changing water tables has resulted in a tremendous overall growth of the need for tree care. It is estimated that 90% of the existing trees in areas which have been subdivided for residential construction require tree care if they are to survive.

Another factor contributing to growth has been the flight of business from the central city to the suburbs. A corporation need not be concerned with trees in a skyscraper location, but put it into a campus-like atmosphere and it immediately becomes a potential tree-care customer.

For the Bartlett Company, at least, this meant a continuing growth right through the 1970 business slump so that 1971 has been one of Bartlett's best years—this despite a decline in the investment of utilities in right-of-way maintenance.

Education is the key to the industry's being able to fully capitalize on its growth potential. Bartlett summarized in a recent interview. We must educate tree owners to the fact that trees, in addition to being an ecological and aesthetic asset, are worth real money and cannot be easily replaced. They must understand that trees, like human beings, are susceptible to a myriad of diseases and pestilences which can be diagnosed and cured by scientific means.

We must educate young people so that they will want to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to protect our trees and, incidentally, find a satisfying career for themselves.

