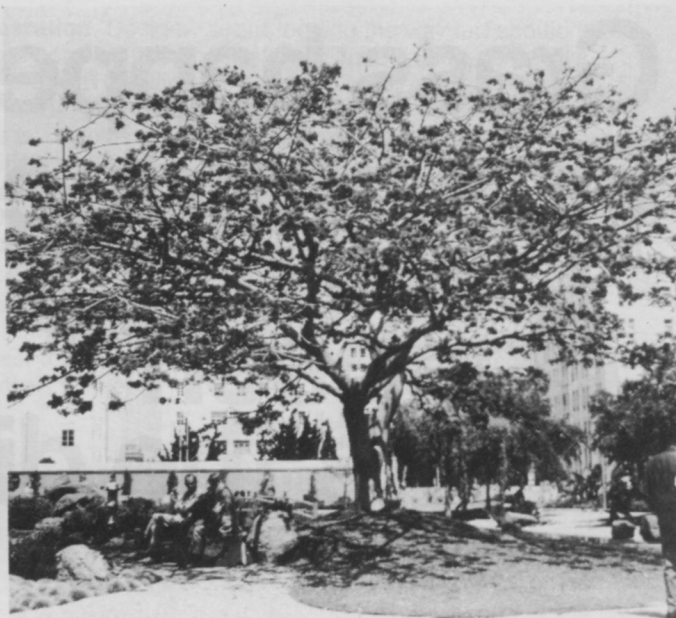




Equipment kept in good repair enhances employee relations. When on the job, proper identification to the passing motorist provides good public relations. People seeing the tree program in action are more likely to consider their tax dollars are wisely spent.



Place or plant trees in parks that citizens will enjoy. This flowering tree improves the park setting and provides a pleasant diversion to other trees that line city streets. Note that park benches are placed near these trees so that people may enjoy the shade and environs.

Selling A Tree Program To The City

By **WILLIAM T. BELL**
Superintendent of Street Trees
City of Long Beach, Calif.

THE statement that "nothing succeeds like success" is a truism which encompasses all aspirations. Just as a business corporation is an end point of successful business deliberations, so is a good street tree program the end point of the successful deliberations which formed its structure. In either case, positive results in the beginning help sell an expansion, whether to shareholders or to taxpayers.

In our case, the question which comes immediately to mind is—what deliberations formulate a good street tree program, and how should they be implemented?

With today's emphasis on ecology, the public's awareness of the important role trees play within our urban areas will bring enough pressure on any political entity to force them into a street tree program. But merely having a program is not enough. What are some of the things that should go into making a good street tree program?

In the first place, it is of the utmost importance to have a competent man in charge. In most cases, it should be a person with a college degree in forestry, horticulture or a closely related field.

This is not to say that the man who has come up through the ranks is not fitted for the position since in most instances he has supplemented his practical experience with schoolwork.

In any case, the man in charge should be hired for his technical capability and broad experience and not as the product of a political patronage system.

Along with technical knowledge of the field, the person in charge of a street tree program must be a sound administrator, a public relations man, and in some degree, a salesman.

While a good street tree program, when established, will sell itself to management, initially it may require salesmanship to get its concepts underway. However, a public awareness of the broad value of trees ecologically is not necessarily an informed public in the sense that adds support to a viable street tree program. And in this respect a public relations campaign spiced with subtle salesmanship should be a continuing feature of the program.

(continued on page 50)

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Tree maintenance trucks are kept clean both inside and out. Equipment is painted to keep it look in near new condition. Personnel wear protective gear and neat, clean uniforms. Author Bell believes that the small items go a long way in promoting a favorable public relations image.

SELLING A TREE PROGRAM (from page 23)

Promoting an interest in street trees can be accomplished in many ways. Certainly, the person in charge or some of his subordinates should be active in various service organizations, garden clubs, and plant societies and be available to give slide-illustrated talks outlining the aims and goals of the program. Another effective means of reaching the public is through the agency of the local newspaper with regular articles covering all the aspects of tree care. I have found that most people are truly interested in what we are doing, if those of us in the

field will take the time to tell them about it.

It goes without saying that well-trained personnel are essential, but it should be noted that top-rated tree men are scarce on today's market, with the commercial arborists having the edge in the hiring field because they are able to pay higher salaries than most government agencies can provide. This factor makes comprehensive in-service training courses a vital part of a street tree program. Within our city's operation we have found the well-trained employee not only does

When spraying of city trees is scheduled, property owners are notified and autos are removed from curbside. Trained personnel can sell a tree care program through their daily contact with the public. Each man working as a team with others can accomplish more work in less time.



a better job, but his interest in his work increases as his knowledge broadens.

Coupled with a professional image must be the appearance of the work crews. I know of no other municipal operation more in the public's view than ours, and for this reason I believe the appearance of our personnel is very important. Several years ago we were successful in selling management the idea of furnishing uniforms for our men. This has proven to be a good public relations factor and additionally has boosted employee morale.

While the appearance of the employee is important, so is the condition of the equipment they use on the streets. I have seen instances, as I'm sure most people have, of a banged-up, dirty truck and a battered chipper working on a street, and even if the men are doing a perfect job from an arboricultural point of view, onlookers cannot be



The right tree in the right place. This Orchid tree makes the total look of the street pleasing to nearby residents.

impressed with the operation. Clean, well-kept equipment is one of the best selling tools you can use.

Work procedures are important. For years our crews started work at 7:30 a.m. and quit at 4:00 p.m. This meant the tree trimmers and the brush men all got to the job at the same time with the latter standing around with nothing to do until the trimmers had finished the first tree. Then one day a tree trimmer approached me with the suggestion that the tree trimmers start work half-an-hour earlier than the brush men. I adopted his idea, and now when the brush men arrive on the job there is brush waiting for them to clear; and because the brush men are on the job half-an-hour after the trimmers quit this means the trimming occupies a full day and no longer has to be stopped in time

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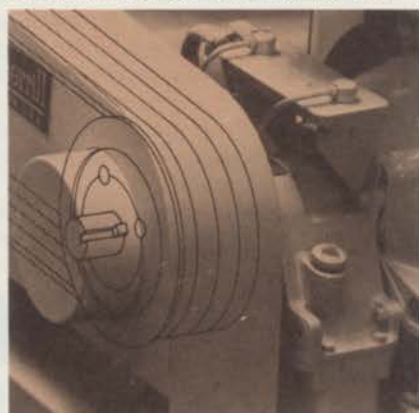


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to allow all the brush to be picked up.

Finally, I believe we should place additional emphasis on professionalism. We would all agree that competent, well-informed first line supervision is absolutely essential to a smooth-running organization, however, the caliber of the work force directed is just as important. The employees wielding the tools are themselves the "tools" by which administrators "finish" their jobs. The quality of a finished job reflect its

management.

"Selling the City on the need for trees" is primarily a matter of selling yourself, your staff, and your program. Once this is done and the people within your jurisdiction are aware of your program and its goals, they will be convinced that more and better trees planted along their streets is a must. Once these people are behind you it will be amazing how much easier and more satisfying your job will become.