



# He Treats Trees Like People

Jimmy J. Harrod Sr., who owns and operates C & H Tree Experts in Fort Worth, Texas, is a warm-hearted, down-to-earth arboriculturalist who treats trees and plants like they were people.

One of the few people still around today who believe a handshake is as good as a contract, Harrod punctuates his almost constant dialogue with colloquialisms that will sometime hit you between the eyes like a migraine. He will tell you, for instance, that the best way to get rid of bag worms is "with a hammer and sidewalk," but he will further explain the proper sprays to use if you prefer.

Harrod has worked in a supermarket, operated a root beer stand, washed dishes, sold tobacco, and been a sky diver and a personnel consultant. He got his first taste of arboriculture while attending the University of Heidelberg as a foreign exchange student. He started out by taking general courses just to get an education. It was during his sophomore year that Harrod met the forest master of Germany's Black Forest.

"This old man knew those trees just like they were his kids," Harrod told WEEDS, TREES & TURF. "When they had a wind storm, they got someone out there raking leaves and cleaning it up. It is really a cared-for place." But it was not until some years later when he met who

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was to be his future partner in business that he realized there was money to be made treating trees.

"I got to talking to this guy one day and he started putting his terminology on me. I just talked back in the same language. He said, "Why aren't you in the tree business? You have the education for it, and you can sell a row boat to a desert rat." So a partnership was formed six years ago. Harrod since

has acquired all interest in the company.

"I sold nearly everything I owned to buy equipment, spending it for chains, saws, ropes, spurs, climbing gear and insurance," he said. "I even sold my wife's Volkswagen." Today, his equipment is worth around \$60,000, including trucks, chippers, a company car, two different spray rigs, a jeep, \$3,000 worth of chain saws, and \$1,000 in hand saws. At times he has had as many as 15 men working for him. "The personnel factor is one of the biggest problems there is. If I had the key people I could get more business than I could take care of. A lot of guys are going out of business because they can't get help.

"But they have to do it my way," he said. "There is a proper way to do the work. Some people leave brush in the yard or stuff in behind shrubs. We don't do that. If we take it off, we rake that yard when we are through. If the chipper makes a mess in the street, we sweep the street up."

Harrod attends professional conferences "just to pick the minds



of the older members who have been in trees so long they are bent over like gorillas." He said, "I like to find out what they did way back when there wasn't all the modern equipment and chemicals around to combat disease of trees. I like just listen-

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ing to them." And he makes good use of the information obtained from these conferences.

Harrod's concern today is for the consumer. "The consumer is getting ripped off by the so-called garden supply centers around the country," he said. He feels there are no competent employes in these centers to give proper advice to the consumer with a garden problem. "If you go into a discount center and

*Cement, divided with felt soaked in creosote, fills about five feet of the main trunk of this old oak tree. Harrod says the tree has been healing for about 25 years.*

look at the quality of plants and ask pertinent questions about certain diseases, see if you can get an answer. If you buy a spray, take it home and apply it and it doesn't work, the tendency is to go back and buy something else. No one can explain proper sprays or methods at these places," he said.

One problem encountered by Harrod is when he sprays a tree, the customer expects the trees or plants to be free of insects for the entire year.

"With the rains we had last year, for example, that is impossible" he said. "They want us to come out and spray one time, and they they want us to come back and spray 10 times more for free. We cannot do that. You need to spray from three to eight times a year, with normal weather."

Some clients expect Harrod to come out to their homes with a one-shot solution that is going to make a tree that has been dead three weeks come back to life. "And we cannot do that. On the other hand, some call me in time to save a tree, but they want to know if I can guarantee

that I can save the tree. That is just like asking a doctor if he can guarantee saving a life."

He does not claim to be a miracle-worker. "I know my limitations," he said. "All I want is

*Colloquialisms that hit you between the eyes like a migraine — the best way to get rid of bag worms is 'with a hammer and a sidewalk.'*

to have the best service available to people who really have a problem — to go out and do all I know — prune their trees properly, feed them properly and shape them." He says he may not have all the solutions to plant problems, but if he doesn't, you can bet he knows where to go to get the right answers. "I want to retire knowing that I have done the best I could have possibly done," he said. □