

CITY BEAUTIFICATION projects have enjoyed considerable popularity the past dozen years. And with bicentennial spirits now at a peak, most communities have initiated beautification projects, however small, in hopes of putting some "civic pride" back into an apathetic public.

The projects vary with the individual community but one of the more popular ones has been the planting of street trees in otherwise bleak surroundings. But those bleak areas are tree-less for obvious reasons. They're wall-to-wall concrete. No one has yet devised a tree-spade capable of planting through concrete, nor do most communities have a large enough budget to warrant major reconstruction of sidewalks.

So, with some of the more obvious and also ridiculous solutions ruled out, city beautification committees are still faced with the problem of how to plant trees in this sea of asphalt. One popular method has been the construction of large concrete planter boxes. The two-ton planters are filled with soil and a tree is planted within.

"Trees soon become root-bound in concrete planters, plus the boxes take up a lot of space on these al-



This once-bleak street area will be green and alive in years to come as these young trees grow and leaf out.

ready narrow sidewalks," said Emerich Sabo, pointing down the street at a seemingly endless row of utility poles, parking meters, mailboxes, and trash cans. Sabo is city forester for Cleveland Heights, Ohio; and has been for 10 years.

"We had to come up with an economical and practical method for planting trees in the commercial areas right through the concrete," he told WEEDS TREES & TURF. His first approach was to borrow the street department's trailer-mounted air compressor and jackhammer. This made the job economical, but the large air compressor caused considerable traffic problems as they hauled it from planting site to planting site.

"We're planting these trees about 35 feet apart and the unit has to follow the man with the jackhammer," Sabo said. "You can imagine the confusion our crew caused trying to find a parking space every 35 feet."

"I got in touch with one of the local construction equipment distributors, Gibson Equipment Company, and purchased this portable hydraulic power supply unit and jackhammer," the forester said indicating to a rather small looking unit

(continued)

New look for a street



Two crew members prepare to chisel a hole through the sidewalk. The portable hydraulic unit is wheeled into position.



After the sidewalk has been scored and cut, the jackhammer is used to break-up the concrete.

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two of his crew members had just placed on the sidewalk. "With this outfit, after the first hole is cut, one man of our three man crew can roll the unit ahead and start on the next hole while the other two men put the finishing touches on the newly planted tree."

And all the industry murmurs about the handiness of hydraulics have been true for Sabo. After the hole is scored on the concrete surface, a gasoline-powered Stihl saw with a special bar and blade attachment is used to cut through the concrete. The hydraulic-powered pavement breaker breaks up the inside square section of cement and the pieces are shoveled out of the hole.

The power unit and pavement breaker are manufactured by

Worthington. Sabo says another advantage of the hydraulic system is its quietness.

In a normal working day, the three-man crew can plant eight trees, according to Sabo. The planting season for Sabo and his crew ranges from fall to spring. "We shovel the snow off the planting site and plant trees right through the winter," he added.

Working out the mechanical part of planting the trees proved to be a simple task compared to what happened when Sabo began planting the trees. The local merchants didn't see the same virtues in the planting project that Sabo did. He resorted to hard-sell tactics.

"When they heard we are going to plant trees in front of their stores, most merchants thought the trees

would cover-up their store fronts as they grew bigger and branched out," he said. His second job was to convince the merchants that the variety of trees he was planting would not conceal their stores from passing motorists.

Sabo selected two oval-shaped varieties for the project; the Little Leaf Linden and the Emerald Queen variety of Maple. Characteristically these varieties obtain a somewhat columnar shape enhancing the neighborhood and providing an unobstructed view of the store-front area.

The total tree planting project, when completed, will include some 300 trees. And at a cost of about \$75 per tree planted, that's a reasonable price to create a spirit of pride in the neighborhood and bring business back downtown. □



Sabo (right) and one of his crew members position the new tree. The trees seem to do very well when planted in this manner, according to Sabo.



The finishing touches are put on one of the newly planted trees. Before Sabo's crew leaves a planting site, they remove all debris.