

OUTLOOK

By Bruce F. Shank, Editor

The time to evaluate employee development is here. We need to take a serious look at our investment in good people and to challenge old attitudes about loyalty, education, and advancement.

During a recent discussion with Green Industry managers I detected a serious unwillingness to pay for the education of anyone under the management level. Furthermore, this unwillingness represents a roadblock to advancement in technical areas, since managers are almost entirely concerned with business topics and not agronomic or horticultural matters. Sure, large companies provide technical training, but what about those small to medium size firms who can't afford a technical staff?

Until someone can prove the financial benefits of well-trained crew members, I suspect that this tightness will continue. Will a manager invest \$2,000 in an employee's technical advancement unless he can realize benefits which exceed that amount? Probably not.

The reasons stem from employee turnover, a lack of interest in education by many employees, and confusion over how to pay or utilize the better educated person.

The good employee is being penalized by this confusion and is likely leaving the industry for another field where employee investment is practiced.

Every company, no matter the size, should have one or two persons in a development track, both technologically and businesswise. These persons should either have been hired with an appropriate education or are in the process of being improved by company investment in education. There is no guarantee for keeping that person, but he should be brought along regardless. There are no sure things in this world.

If he leaves, you should quickly replace him and maintain your development program. Because, when the manager leaves, someone is there that knows the company from the inside, knows the customers, and can keep momentum up until he is either promoted to the management position or a new manager is hired.

There is another good reason to invest in education. There is pressure on many public universities to cut out unwanted programs. If you support these universities with your educational program, you not only



end up with a better employee, insurance against management turnover, and better morale, but you assure the industry of educational support in the future.

LETTERS

This letter is in response to Edward P. Milhous' comments related to Silver Maple. The article written in the January issue was designed to point out the desirable characteristics of trees and stimulate thinking. I was pleased to see it has done both. I suggest that one read the article carefully.

Silver Maple does not fit into every situation, but if one realizes it is a high maintenance tree and provides that needed level of maintenance, it has potential in the urban landscape. For example, pruning on a two- to three-year cycle reduces the incidence of heartwood decay (Silver Maple is a poor compartmentalizer), while correcting structural problems. If one can still con-

sider American Elm a desirable tree with its weak wood, insect problems, damage to the sidewalks, as well as heartwood decay (slime flux), while considering disease problems (UED), then one must rethink Silver Maple. Both trees thrive in the urban landscape.

Silver Maple, if one understands the plant's requirements, has a place in the urban environment. It is high maintenance but grows in flood plains and lake bottom soils which comprise many of our cities, e.g. Chicago, Cincinnati, Midland, MI, etc. Further, Silver Maple has shown tolerance to air pollutants (e.g. sodium dioxide and PAN) and sodium chloride. It was recently brought to my attention that one of

the conclusions of the 1979 Cleveland meeting of METRIA was that professionals in the field of urban forestry and horticulture again look at Silver Maple, its adaption in the urban landscape with an eye towards developing improved selections. No individual tree is perfect for every site.

A good dialogue between professionals actively involved with landscape maintenance who can assess plants' desirable and undesirable characteristics will advance the field of horticulture and lead to trees which will tolerate today's urban conditions.

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