



WT&T

OUTLOOK

By Bruce F. Shank, Executive Editor

Urban forestry may shift to arborist

Never has the tree care market been in such a volatile position. A potential cutback in urban forestry funding will place huge responsibility on the shoulders of commercial arborists in the 80's.

It is possible the full weight of regional tree emergencies, reforestation and maintenance of both public and private urban trees will fall on the commercial arborist within the next five years. The question is whether a market that has not experienced rapid growth in the past decade will be able to take on the load as quickly as it must.

Richard Pardo, director of programs for the American Forestry Association, warns the outlook for Forest Service state and private assistance programs is grim, with a budget cut of 25 percent proposed for 1983. In the March issue of *American Forests* Pardo writes, "Funding (in FY '83) for urban forestry and technology implementation will be eliminated, and planning assistance to states will be reduced by almost two-thirds."

Although the Forest Service is not the only source of government funding to tree programs, it has supplied much of the research we now use and was planning to push hard on urban forestry prior to the cuts.

All this comes at a time when research into low maintenance trees and tree health is starting to pay off. The solutions to urban stresses on trees are being found just at the time when the financial plug may be pulled. It therefore becomes the task of the commercial arborist to educate the public and implement this new technology.

The commercial arborist already has a portion of municipal tree work. Larger arborists have made this type of work top priority, along with right of way clearance. But the cities they work for are going by Forest Service recommendations to a great degree. The Agricultural Extension Service agent occasionally fills in where the Forest Service misses. But the Extension Service may also experience cutbacks equal to the Forest Service.

The landscape architect may find his advise needed more in the 80's by municipalities seeking to revitalize older neighborhoods where original plantings have faded by insect, disease, and construction related losses. But much of the advise required will be for jobs too small to warrant a landscape architect's fee.

Some large cities have the advantage of a city forester. Smaller cities in the suburbs will have the greatest need for the commercial arborist's help.

It would be wise for the arborist to get acquainted with landscape architects in their area who have done municipal plans before. LA's have regular contact with landscape contractors, but not arborists. The arborist must educate the architect to his superior capability regarding urban tree maintenance. Arborists who have shunned planting for the more attractive maintenance business, might consider limited planting to meet the needs of city tree programs.

Flexibility, service, and salesmanship will give the arborist markedly expanded potential in the 80's.

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