



Going Computer

Computerized records help park superintendent with planning, budgets and reports.

by Ed Porter, parks superintendent, La Verne, CA

Having kept tree records for administrative purposes for several years, the parks department staff felt it was about time we improved our tree management operation and utilized a computer.

The potential was intriguing. While sitting in the office, we could check tree species, insect and disease problems, tree quantities, and have that information visually in front of us by pressing a button.

The concept is not new, but for us it has become a reality. Most tree managers do have some technical system for identifying species, disease and other information. In this age the computer offers tree managers an opportunity to store all of the technical data needed to implement tree programs.

A management concept developed by Herman Weskamp, Professor of Urban Forestry, at Mount San Antonio College, Walnut, CA, gave us the motivation to initiate a computer tree program for the City of La Verne.

In order to even consider having a tree program, a need must exist. If that need is present, then that is your starting point. The expense of a computer can be very

costly but, in our case, we were fortunate enough to have an IBM System 34 Computer. One of the biggest hurdles facing us was convincing Administration of the justification. Much to our surprise, Administration was very enthusiastic and receptive of the idea.

It is important to get input from field personnel, especially when making changes to the existing program.

The Data Processing Department was very cooperative and open to suggestions in programming our tree information. Jay Trunnel, computer programmer, discussed with us at great lengths the type of information needed in setting up a program. It is as important for the programmer to understand your goals, objectives, and purpose as it is for you, as a novice, to understand what he can do for you. Cooperation of both departments is a must.

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Tree inventory cards and work forms are needed in establishing technical information for the computer master file. This data will vary according to environment, type of organization, and individual needs.

Things to consider when setting up the technical forms are:

- 1** any type of hazard
- 2** insect problems
- 3** disease problems
- 4** root problems
- 5** tree species
- 6** diameter
- 7** height
- 8** spread
- 9** type of pruning (thin out, lift skirts, line clearance)
- 10** stake young trees
- 11** tree planting
- 12** grind stumps

When you get the first computer readout, you might be surprised to find you are spending far too much time on one certain type of tree. If this were the case, you could plan to remove unwanted, high-maintenance trees, or make sure that species is not planted in the future.

It is not practical in a small city to remove all unwanted species just because the computer printout identifies a problem.

Just recently, the tree statistic printout gave us the numerical amount and tree varieties pruned in a one-month period. The information was very helpful and informative in making out my monthly reports.

In the beginning we had a few problems filling out the new work order forms, but with some training this was corrected. It is important to get input from the field personnel, especially when making any modifications to the existing program.

The most important factor is just how functional is your program and is it an improvement over your previous record system? We have found the printout information has been very helpful in preparing monthly reports, annual budgets, and special reports to the Parks and Human Services Commission and City Council.

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