

Keeping profits in the plant

The large investment today in landscape plant materials makes even minor losses intolerable. This is true for both buyers and sellers. Landscapers and owners therefore seek the same goals—quality and livability.

Brickman Industries, Inc., operates one of the largest design and build landscape firms in the nation. Quality is a standard. Brickman deals with developers and owners on zoning, access and site layout in addition to full service landscaping and landscape maintenance. Horticultural materials that represent sizable investments are handled carefully.

"We protect materials being transplanted with an anti-transpirant," says Daniel C. Skinner, support services manager at Brickman's Langhorne, Pa., office. "We follow up with the same kind of treatment during the period when transplanted materials are being established.

"The anti-transpirant is actually a waxlike coating which protects leaves against excessive loss of moisture during periods of stress," Skinner explains. "Plug up the stomata with the anti-transpirant and there is less water loss."

According to the makers of Wilt-Pruf anti-transpirant, their product dries to form a clear, colorless, flexible, glossy film on leaves and does not interfere with plant growth. Respiration, osmosis or photosynthesis is reduced only slightly. The product is a water-based pine oil emulsion which is not damaged by freezing and is an



Daniel C. Skinner, support services manager at Brickman's Langhorne, Pa., regional office, stresses the importance of protecting new plantings with an anti-transpirant.

organic, biodegradable material.

Tree moving is but one of the specialties developed by Brickman crews at its regional offices: Northeast, Central and Mid-Atlantic. Skinner says handling big trees—six to 15 inches in diameter—is a standard operation. All trees are dug by hand; the root balls are then shaped and wrapped with burlap.

"We have a 99 percent success ratio in moving big trees," Skinner says, pointing out that the biggest tree moved to date weighed 80,000 pounds. Applying an anti-transpirant greatly reduces the shock when trees are dug.

"We spray the tree with the anti-transpirant the day before digging," Skinner says. "We have been using Wilt-Pruf at a one-to-five ratio which is very cost efficient—so much so that we use the same one-to-five strength mix on materials being held and on newly-established landscape materials.

"We buy heavily from nurseries, and we often specify that trees or other materials be sprayed with an anti-transpirant the day prior to digging for delivery, just as we do in our own nursery. Our own crews also prune out one-third of the foliage on big trees in addition to spraying with the anti-transpirant ahead of digging.

"On new contracts, our people

often come on site ahead of the bulldozers and move trees out to be held for later planting as part of the new landscape design. In these instances, trees being held for replanting are sprayed every 30 days with a one-to-five strength anti-transpirant mix. We do the same for trees and other materials held over the winter."

At the Langhorne headquarters, the nursery is filled to capacity each fall since Brickman crews plant year round in the territories of both eastern regional offices. Planting throughout the winter is common in the East. Any materials coming from Midwest nurseries must be brought in before freezing weather eliminates digging.

"We spray these trees every month," Skinner says. "We do the same during the winter for the majority of the plantings we have made the prior season."

Brickman, long known as a major landscape and architectural contracting firm in the northern Illinois area, opened the Langhorne office eight years ago. Because of the demand for services, this unit has greatly expanded. Business has grown tremendously in each of the past three years. Sixty-five full-time and 200 hourly employees are needed to serve customers. **LM**



Brickman Industries' spray operation includes spraying anti-transpirant on new landscape plantings to prevent dessication.