

# How to sell cabling

## Cabling and bracing can support both trees and your bottom line—but know what you're doing.

by James E. Guyette

■ Tree care companies that provide cabling and bracing services can support at-risk trees, along with the company's bottom line.

"It can be a real profit-making operation," says Dr. Kenneth C. Miller, a tree pathologist with Miller and Associates, Ravenna, Ohio. "An \$80 to \$90 cabling job is not uncommon, and it will preserve the aesthetic value of the tree, too."

This type of service "moves" best in upscale neighborhoods but homeowners need to be informed of the increased value involved. "That's something the company owner has to train the sales person in," says Miller. "It's something you're not going to sell in a blue collar area, but it works in a yuppie area quite well."

**The benefit**—"Trees are usually a long-

term investment," points out Paul McFarland of McFarland Landscape Services, Philadelphia, Pa. "If clients want the beauty of the tree, they would invest in cabling to preserve the tree's structure."

In many communities, few tree care companies tackle cabling work. "Cabling and bracing is dragging its feet because people are afraid to get into it," says Dr. Alex Shigo, Shigo and Trees, Associates, Durham, N.H. "I think cabling and bracing is an extremely good practice, but many people run from it because they don't know how to do it."

Not only must the people attempting cabling and bracing be experts at tree biology, but mechanical engineering skills are also required.

**Be careful**—Even a seemingly easy cabling job can bring trouble, too.

"They have to match all the coordinates together to get a good hold, (or else) they could really create a lot of damage," observes McFarland. He knows of one cabling job that went awry when the cable broke and went through a greenhouse.

Miller is even more explicit. "Landscapers should stick with dogwoods" or other easy-to-



Shigo: cable with caution.

handle trees, he says. Using pole saws and ladders, a company can probably prune branches up to 20 feet high without harming the tree. However, cabling and bracing is a different story.

"I don't know if a landscaper wants to get involved with cabling," Miller notes. Even guy wire installation can be costly if attempted by someone without the proper training. "He or she is going to wind up girdling the tree."

"A mark of a professional is that he or she is able to make a decision," notes Shigo. "You have to be brave enough to talk to the client and say, 'I'm going to assign risks. Here is a tree I will cable and brace—and here is a tree I will not cable and brace.' If the client wants something else, get it in writing."

—The author is a freelance writer specializing in the green industry. He is based in South Euclid, Ohio.

## Accounting: an introduction

### It's a 'language of numbers,' not 'revenge of the math club,' says this accountant.

by Dan Sautner,  
Padgett Business Services

■ Financial statements are the products of accounting. They are primarily developed to help you run the business. Expressed in a common format—dollars—they show the results of every decision you've made. The purposes of financial statements are to:

- help you make better decisions for the future;
- allow you to file an accurate income tax return;
- help seek additional funding with your lender; and
- help attract buyers or investors.

Financial statements usually include three component statements: the profit-and-

loss, the balance sheet, and cash flow.

**P&L**—This ledger is a summary of the results of operation for a given time. It shows sales, costs of sales, and net income or loss (sales minus costs).

**Direct costs** include wages, equipment and advertising; **indirect costs** (those which will occur whether you have sales or not) include rent, interest expense and utilities.

**Net income** or loss will tell you how well you've used your resources. It also represents how likely it is that you will remain in business.

(Personally, I always look at the trend in net income. In business, it is not where you have *been*, but rather where you are *going*.)

**Balance sheet**—This ledger is a snapshot of the company's financial position at one point in time. It allows you to see what you have in the company, what you owe to outsiders, and what you own yourself. It will show you the original value of the assets on hand like office furniture and pick-up trucks.

These **assets** are offset ("balanced") by

**liabilities**—the company's obligations to outsiders—like bank debts, payroll and sales taxes.

The final section of the balance sheet is the **equity** section, which shows your original investment and the sum of undistributed income earned in previous periods. This is used to examine how well a company increases its assets, and what resources are available.

**Cash flow**—This ledger tells how the company took in cash and how it spent it.

**Adjusted net income**, for example, is your net cash position from the operation of your business. Paying debts or financial withdrawals by the owner would be shown as a use of funds. Reducing your inventory or financial contributions by the owner are shown as sources of funds.

The cash flow statement effectively ties together the income statement and balance sheet, and expresses it in terms of the change in your cash position.

—The author is chairman of Padgett Business Services, Inc., of Athens, Ga. This is the first in a series of basic accounting articles he is writing for *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*.