

# Big, old trees can be of promotional value

## Using those trees you love and care for, to gain some public attention for your business.

■ Standout trees that are either big, old or odd can provide promotional value to local tree care operators. A company that encourages residents to track down these trees can harvest positive publicity.

"It's definitely something that appeals to the public," reports Lauren Lanphear, vice president of the Forest City Tree Protection Co. in South Euclid, Ohio.

As co-host of a gardening show aired over a local radio station, Lanphear invites listeners to write or call in with the location of a favorite old or big tree.

The tree promotion is not a contest in the true sense of the word, because prizes are not awarded, but it does serve as a clearinghouse for information on the area's unique specimens.

Each week during the 13-week summer radio season, Lanphear airs a brief piece on the location, size, approximate age and historic value of a selected tree. A 300-year-old white oak, for example, "was here when the U.S. Constitution was signed."

A handout is then prepared for distribution to tree-loving listeners who wish to visit these sights. "Each year I compile a list of the trees I have highlighted."

In addition to tips from listeners, Lanphear relies on information provided by Cleveland's Early Settlers' Association. He suggests that tree care operators in other communities can obtain similar help from historical societies, garden clubs and interested citizens.

"There can be some way of giving people encouragement," he advises, "like if you identify some kind of tree you get a booklet or service" related to tree care.

**Touch trees, touch history**—A successful promotion was launched by Larry Holkenborg Nursery, a tree care and landscaping firm in Sandusky, Ohio, to celebrate the nation's bicentennial. "We tried to find a 200-year-old tree in each township," he says.

Close to 20 plaques were affixed to these old-timers. "There were stories in the newspapers and all that," Holkenborg recalls. "I haven't had anyone say, 'I remember that

plaque; here's the job,' but it did bring positive publicity, and how do you measure that?"

Other tree care operators can benefit from similar promotions, Holkenborg says. "Anything to make people aware of trees" can bring positive results.

"I've seen this done in other communities and it's a good educational tool," reports Mark Ervin, special projects administrator for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Forestry.

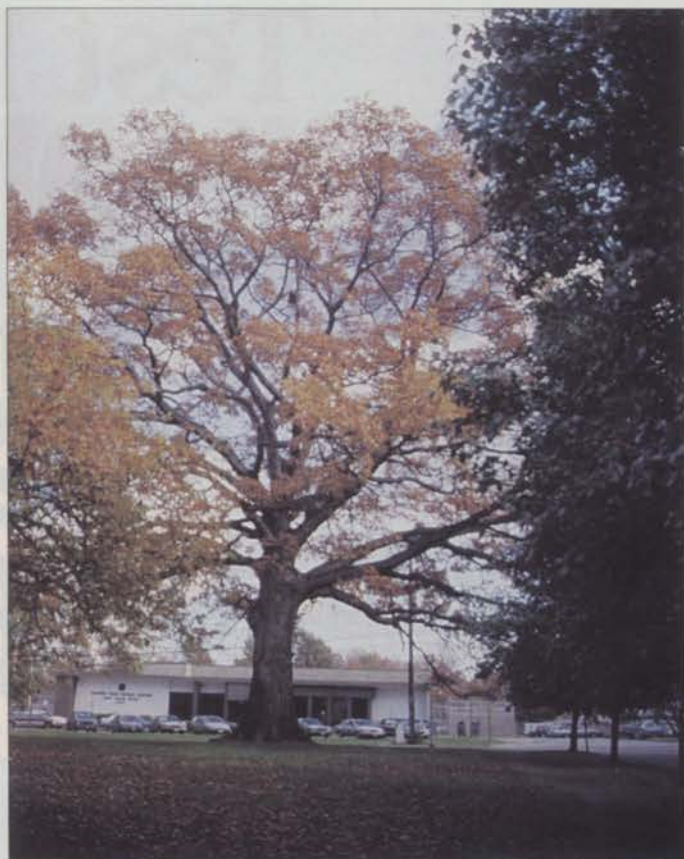
Promotions such as these "tend to increase the image and awareness of trees overall" among homeowners, says consultant Steve J. Day of Landscapes Plus in Littleton, Colo. Consumers then realize that trees "are just like people and cars—they need maintenance all their lives."

**What else to look for**—In Day's neck of the woods, near Denver, there are limited varieties of trees in the mountains, so he suggests promoting a search for "the most unusual specimen of a non-native tree."

And for those tree care operators reluctant to actually run a promotion, it can certainly do no harm to be on the lookout for a unique tree while out on the job.

"They can take a picture of it and include it in a newsletter as a special interest item," Day points out. "What arborists can do is tie in the history of the tree" with current buildings and events within the community.

"You can teach history through trees," explains Phillip Rodbell, urban forester at the American Forestry Association. The Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization actively seeks information on trees that are large, old, famous or historic. "We get a



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lot of participation from tree care companies at the local level," says Deborah Gangloff, vice president of program services. Help is needed to search out qualified trees, as is donated care for important trees in need of aid to survive.

**The big picture**—"Davey Tree is one of our biggest supporters in informing people about the value of big trees," Rodbell says. Davey sponsors the AFA's National Register of Big Trees, which names a "champion" biggest tree of each species. About 800 "living landmarks" have been selected, with Florida being No. 1 in big trees with 113. (Some 200 tree species lack a champion specimen.)

In addition to soliciting help from tree care operators in locating and caring for champions, the AFA also seeks out aid for other ongoing projects that can provide considerable visibility on a local level. "We are working with many tree care companies to encourage them to contribute time and equipment for tree planting," says Rodbell.

—James E. Guyette is a freelance writer based in South Euclid, Ohio.