



# Save that mature tree

**Former landscaper perfects methods to move large valuable trees**

BY RON HALL/ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**M**oving mature trees or even semi-mature trees is a job few landscape companies want to try. That may change. Bryan

Williams, 49, says that he perfected techniques and developed inexpensive equipment that Green Industry companies can use to lower the cost of such an operation. He says that his methods will allow the landscape companies to rescue and relocate large trees when executing projects.

Williams, owner/operator of Worldwide Tree Moving, Oxford, MI, calls his system "the modular sled system."

He says that he's been developing the system since he traveled to England in 1996 to study techniques used there to move semi-mature trees. One of these techniques, the Newman Tree Frame System, is regularly used to move trees with up to a 12-ft. diameter root ball weighing 60,000 lbs. or more. In fact, Williams says he's used the same system to move trees with 20-ft. rootballs weighing 120,000-lbs.

## Beautiful giant gets moved

Even so, Williams needed a different way to move a copper beech in downtown Plymouth, MI. The 90-ft.-tall, 120-year-old beech has a trunk diameter of 56 in. and weighs 400,000 lbs.

Residents of Plymouth prize this stately tree, which needed to be moved to make room for a new condo complex. The tree came to the United States on a sailing ship from Holland over 100 years ago. Its first home was a tree nursery in Chicago.

## Movers take their time

Williams moved the tree in stages, starting by pruning its roots in late spring 2001 and monitoring it for two months for stress.

Then he used a horizontal boring unit to drill six holes five feet underneath the tree's root ball. He passed steel cable through the channel to the other side of the root ball and attached it to a 5-ft.-wide, 30-ft.-long rectangular piece of steel, 5/16-in. thick.

Upper left, the copper beech has a 56-in. diameter trunk. Right, Williams and his crew spent weeks getting the tree ready for its move.

Using two D-8 Caterpillar bulldozers (one acting as an anchor and connected to the second Cat by a cable and pulleys), an operator pulled the steel sled under the root ball. "It's pure brute force, but it's really just simple physics," Williams explains.

Williams repeated the process six times until there were six panels of steel, making a 30-ft. by 30-ft. sled beneath the root ball. The bulldozers pulled the tree on the sled to the planting site 150 feet away where the steel sleds were removed one at a time.

Williams says there's a great need for companies that can move large trees. "I want to teach others how to move trees that are larger than tree-spade size. There is no place to go to learn this," he says.

To learn more about large tree moving call Williams at 248/568-4492 or visit the Web site [www.treemoving.com](http://www.treemoving.com). LM

