



HEARMEOUT

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Well equipped

Rob Foster of Strata-G Communications sent me the Husqvarna photos today. There were so many, it took more than an hour to download them.

When I came to the shots of myself, it felt surreal. I scrolled through them slowly, savoring each one as one might savor a rich dessert.

Why? Because the photos, taken in July at a Husqvarna demo, were taken from a photographer's perspective. And the photographer's perspective of me proved to be vastly different from my own.

That the contrast should be so stark amuses me. Throughout the two-day demo, I felt insecure about putting my limited landscape experience on display for all to see.

The photos, however, portrayed an adept, confident newcomer who rose undaunted to each challenge presented.

The demo was held concurrently with the unveiling of Husqvarna's new state-of-the-art research and development center in Charlotte, NC. I went to Charlotte oblivious to what level of participation was expected of me. And that was the key to everything that followed.

It was daunting enough being the newcomer in my group, and even more so being the only female. I would have been quite content to sit idly by and watch as the guys in my group worked the tractors



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and the chainsaws and the pole saws without me.

So when Husqvarna chainsaw safety pro Cary Shepherd pointed to a tree and told me I was going to chop it down with an axe, I was surprised.

But Shepherd presented it so matter-of-factly, I didn't know saying "no" was an option. It didn't even occur to me.

So off I went to chop down a tree. As the guys looked on in silence, and the clanking of the axe against the tree rang out, it felt like an eternity. But when the tree careened to the ground, I felt triumphant. That was my reward.

And so it went throughout the day. Through the chainsaw demo. And the edgers. And the zero turns. I felt pained and elated all at once.

The Husqvarna safety crew stood closely by through it all. They provided us with full safety gear and were quick to intervene when necessary. Thanks to their care and expertise, I always felt safe and protected. Through their example, I not only learned how to better operate landscape equipment, I also learned the importance of working responsibly and safely.

I am grateful to them for that. And I am just as grateful to them for throwing me into the fire—for giving me the tools to not only cut down a tree, but to grow.

For more on safety in the industry, see our cover story (beginning on page 26).