



EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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In the long run

In late spring I traveled to Naperville, Ill., to see how that city has put in place an aggressive program to save its 16,000 municipal ash trees from Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). (See page 25 for more details on that trip.)

In addition to hearing about (and seeing with my own two eyes) healthy, thriving treated ash trees literally across the street from trees that are dead and tagged for removal, I heard a story that stood out to me about how Green Industry professionals should be getting involved in the fight against EAB.

M.D. Skeet, a certified arborist and district manager for The Care of Trees, told the story of a few ash trees lining the property of his favorite sub shop. Being an unabashed tree lover who's also on the front lines of the effort to save trees from EAB, Skeet pointed out the failing ash trees to the facility manager, who explained her landscaper handles all of her exterior needs. Skeet kindly explained the trees were dying and may be able to be saved through insecticide treatments—or else they eventually will need to be removed due to safety reasons. Again, the manager said the landscaper's the expert and hadn't mentioned a thing.

Now, Skeet knows there is one of two things happening here: The contractor is either oblivious to the fact that he has an EAB problem on his hands or he knows about the ailing trees and doesn't want to alert his customer to the fact that the trees are dying on his watch.

It's a shame, Skeet explains, for a few reasons. These trees are likely going to be removed because they'll be too far gone by the time the landscaper recognizes or addresses the problem. These trees are some of the only greenery providing shade to the property. Also, it's a totally missed opportunity for the landscape company, not to mention a disservice to the customer.

Had the contractor recognized the EAB-infested ash trees, it could have recommended management options (removal or treatment). Depending on the company's capabilities, it may have made an additional sale. At the very least it could have referred the business to a tree care or tree removal firm. The bottom line is the landscaper isn't doing his client justice by either missing or ignoring the problem. The problem is, instead of doing what's ultimately right, too many contractors are short sighted and fear they'll lose an account.

Do you have a network of professionals in related fields you can rely on when you face a situation that's not in your wheelhouse? All three Green Industry executives interviewed for the cover story (page 14) talk about how their hyper-focused businesses thrive thanks to strategic partnerships with like-minded professionals.

Don't be ignorant or negligent like the landscape company in Skeet's story. Find others you can align with and agree to trade leads on a handshake or contractual basis. Whatever works for you, as long as it's best for the customer in the long run.

Landscape Management

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