

An Arborist takes care of a tree for life.



OUT ON A LIMB

WINTER 2024, VOLUME 44, ISSUE 4



Were Your Trees Poached? More on page 9...

THE OMAHA TREE SHREDDER SNOWSTORM

By: Joseph Meyer, KMTV 3 News Now - Reprinted with permission

The snowstorm that literally changed the landscape of eastern Nebraska and western Iowa.

If you live in Omaha, think of the most impactful snowstorm you remember. This question depends on when you were born, but if you were born before 1990, there is a good chance the snowstorm of October 1997 came to mind (and not just because it's the subject of this article). One can argue the most impactful winter weather event in Omaha occurred on Oct. 25-26, 1997. It altered the landscape and left a lasting impression on the city. In this installment of This Week in Weather History, we look at the "Tree Shredder" snowstorm of October 1997.

THE WEATHER SET-UP

Snowstorms in October across the Midwest are rare, but they have occurred. Early records show that October snows happened in the late 19th century into the 20th century, but until the 1990s, there was no record of any significant blizzards. On Halloween in 1991, a blizzard dumped up to 2" of snow in Minnesota and canceled Halloween in Omaha. On Oct. 22, 1996, a snowstorm brought 9" of snow to parts of southeast Nebraska. In recent memory, in 2009, almost 6" of snow fell in the Omaha metro. In 2013, the same system that produced the Wayne Tornado 2013 also brought a major blizzard in the Nebraska panhandle and South Dakota.

But the October 1997 snowstorm is special.

The ingredients for the October 1997 snowstorm were two-fold, the first was an arctic cold front that was moving southward over the northern US. This front brought behind it very cold air for late October. This front stalled over Nebraska beginning on Oct. 24, and only slowly moved south over the next few days. The temperatures across eastern Nebraska during this event — thanks to that cold front — are crucial as to what unfolded.



KMTV: The weather map from October 24 at 12pm. The blue line to the west denotes the freezing line across Nebraska. By this point, Colorado was seeing a historic blizzard that shut down.

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A QUARTERLY UPDATE OF THE NEBRASKA ARBORISTS ASSOCIATION

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If you have anything you would like to submit for inclusion in the Quarterly Update, please contact staff@nearborists.org



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DnTree LLC

10825 108th Street, Weeping Water, NE
(402) 880-0280
dustytrecare@gmail.com

Samantha Rozic, President-Elect

Heroes Lawn Care

PO Box 390324, Omaha, NE
Work Phone: (402) 899-0225
Home Phone: (402) 890-2992
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Jorge Cardenas, Treasurer

Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC
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jcardenas6@asplundh.com

Tom Anderson, Secretary

Wright Tree Service, LLC
62171 US Hwy 275, Glenwood, IA
(402) 672-0163
tanderson@wrighttree.com

Tim Crowl, Director

Crowl Tree Service
3710 Highway 8, Superior, NE
(402) 469-3337
treemancrowl@yahoo.com

Michael Seuferer, Director

Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC
4330 W Huntington Ave., Lincoln, NE
(402) 432-1276
michael.seuferer@gmail.com

Ann Powers, Director

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
3310 Holdrege St., Lincoln, NE
(402) 890-3956
apowers4@unl.edu

Phil Pierce, NAA Board Advisor

Consultant Forester
18307 S 132nd St., Springfield, NE
(402) 253-2860
foresterphil@gmail.com

Stacy Hughes, NAA Board Advisor

Terry Hughes Tree Service
15802 Fairview Road, Gretna, NE
(402) 558-8198
stacy@hughestree.com

Alyssa Brodersen, NAA Executive Director

521 First Street
PO Box 10, Milford, NE
(402) 761-2219
alyssa@nearborists.org
www.NEarborists.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT: A FINAL FAREWELL

As this year draws to a close, so does my presidency with the NAA. As I reflect upon my time served on the Board of Directors and as the President of this great association, I am pleased to say that I will be leaving things in good hands. Of course, I won't really be going anywhere. I plan to stick around and do my part as I always have. I am more or less just planning on sinking back into the background and out of the spotlight, where I am honestly most comfortable. It has been a great pleasure to serve you all these past few years, and I am sincerely excited to begin this new chapter of the NAA. As always, I hope to see all of you at our upcoming events (the Great Plains Winter Conference will be the next one); only this time can you address me as "Past President."



Dustin Nelson

Dustin Nelson, NAA President

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference

January 21-22, 2025
Embassy Suites - Lincoln, NE

NAA Certification Exam

Tuesday, January 21, 2025
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Embassy Suites - Lincoln, NE

ATTENDEE REGISTRATION



EXHIBITOR REGISTRATION



OFFICE HOLIDAY HOURS

The NAA office will close for Christmas on Tuesday, December 24, Wednesday December 25, and for New Year's on Wednesday, January 1.

We wish you all a safe and happy holiday season!

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Out west, a large storm system took shape over Colorado on Oct. 24. This storm system was slow-moving, making its way to Oklahoma by Oct. 25, and into Missouri on Oct. 26. This placed Nebraska and Iowa in the prime location for the snowfall band to set up.

RECIPE FOR A DISASTER

What made the snowstorm of October 1997 so disastrous? The factors involved include snow amount, the nature of the snow, and the trees themselves.

Amount of Snow: Forecasts leading up to the 1997 snowstorm called for 2-4" of snow for both Omaha and Lincoln. However, both cities ended up with over four times that amount! How did that happen? 1.) The amount of moisture in the storm system was impressive by late October standards, with lots of water content in the atmosphere. Once it froze, it came down as snow. 2.) The location of the front forced the air upward into the region favorable for snow development, which just happened to be I-80. These smaller-scale features shown below are why the snow band was so narrow. Fremont picked up 3" of snow while Waterloo saw a foot!

Type of Snow: The amount of snow was huge, but so was the heavy nature of the snow. This was because temperatures at the surface during the heaviest snow were near or just above freezing. As the snow fell, right before it reached the ground, it melted just enough that it became wet and heavy. The weight of the snow would be unbearable on even the strongest of trees, but a third factor turned this into a true disaster.

The Trees: Because this snowstorm occurred in late October, many of the trees still had the majority of their leaves. Since the leaves act as nets to grab snow, they put more weight on the trees than many could not handle. Many limbs would give way onto homes, cars, and power lines.

These three factors combined for one of the worst snowstorms in Nebraska or Iowa history.



KMTV: The weather map from October 25 at 6 p.m. The freezing line was as far east as Norfolk, but would only slowly move eastward through the evening. The position of the low-pressure system over southern Kansas placed eastern NE and western IA squarely in the heaviest snow band.

THE SNOWSTORM AND ITS AFTERMATH



KMTV: Snowfall totals across the 3 News Now Viewing Area.



KMTV: Snowfall totals across the Omaha metro from October 1997.

The rain began in the late morning of Oct. 24 and continued off/on through Oct. 24 into Oct. 25. During the day on Oct. 25, the temperature across eastern Nebraska slowly turned colder. By noon it was 38 in Omaha and snowing in Norfolk. That 38-degree temp held into the evening when Columbus changed over to snow. Finally, at 9 p.m., the temperature fell to 34, and snow began. The heaviest snow fell on the morning of Oct. 26. Once eastern Nebraska and western Iowa woke up, over a foot of snow fell in some locations.

The band of heaviest snow fell in a narrow stripe from south of Kearney to Omaha to far western Iowa. The gradient was so tight that Fremont and Blair picked up only 3" of snow, while Sarpy County saw over 14" in some spots. Totals varied across the Omaha metro, with 9-12" being commonplace across much of the city.

In Lincoln, 13-14" of snow was the norm, with spots in southern Lancaster County topping out at 15". By far the greater totals occurred across Saline County back towards Hastings, where 16-20" of snow fell in many spots! The highest snowfall totals in Nebraska were Clay Center, east of Hastings, at 23", and Guide Rock, near the Kansas border, at 24".

Suffice it to say that the October 1997 snowstorm shattered records for snowfall across the board. Officially, the NWS in Valley saw 9.2" of snow, breaking the old October record of 4.6" that fell in 1898. Lincoln's 13.2" smashed the old record of 6.6" in 1970. Both cities also broke monthly snowfall records for October in just 12 hours!

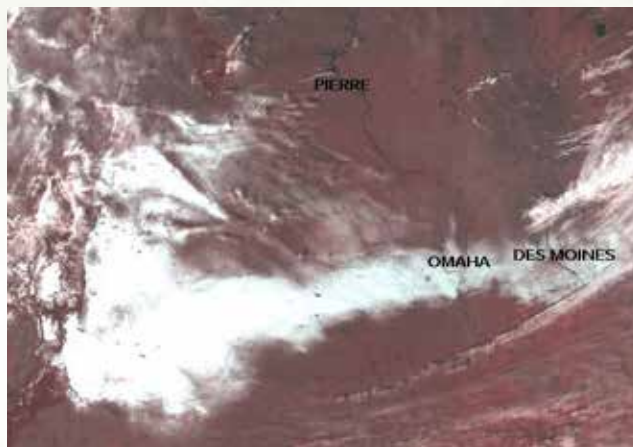
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As the snow fell, the stress on the trees became unbearable, and many snapped. One eyewitness described the sound of tree limbs breaking as “rifle shots” that continued throughout the entire night. Even days after the storm, tree limbs that could not take the strain snapped. Power lines were sagging and snapping, either by tree limbs or from their weight. Cars were damaged, some homes had roof damage, and roadway damage was also in spots.

When residents of Omaha and Lincoln awoke on Oct. 26, the scene looked downright freaky. It was as if a massive tornado tore through the city due to tree damage. By some estimates, 85% of the trees in Omaha were either damaged or destroyed, a total not even reached by the worst thunderstorm to impact the city. The July 31 windstorm this year does not hold a candle to the amount of tree damage done in 1997. Although many trees were spared as the damage was only to limbs, around 25% of the trees across the city had to be removed.

With the tree damage came the power outages. At the peak on Oct. 26, 150k customers in the Omaha metro were without power at one point or another. As “customer” means metered household, it is estimated that over 200,000 people in Omaha were without power at some point. It is the third worst power outage in Omaha history, surpassed by the July 2021 windstorm and now the July 2024 windstorm. Those without power had to wait it out in their cold homes or head to shelters for hot food and drink, which thousands did.

It took OPPD several days to fully restore power, by Halloween around 50,000 Omaha residents still had no power. Things were complicated by a series of high wind events that knocked down further power lines on Oct. 30 and Nov. 3. It took until Nov. 6 to have power restored to nearly everybody, 11 days after the snowstorm swept through. In Lincoln, the snowfall was more significant, but the impacts were less widespread. Around 25,000 customers were knocked out of power in Lincoln, which likely meant at least 50,000 residents were without power for a time. This was the 2nd largest power outage in LPS history. Power was restored to those Lincoln residents by Nov. 3. On Nov. 12, 39 counties across Nebraska were declared Federal Disaster Areas, including Douglas and Lancaster Counties. Eleven Iowa Counties were also declared disaster areas. According to FEMA: “The recovery efforts cost \$50 million to restore power, repair cars and homes, and replant trees.”



NOAA Satellite Imagery: Satellite image over the Midwest showing the snow band from eastern Colorado into Nebraska and Iowa. Omaha is noted in the right side of the image.



KMTV Archives: One of the many scenes commonplace across Omaha and Lincoln in the wake of the October 1997 snowstorm.



OPPD: The top 5 power outages in Omaha history according to data from OPPD. A “customer” means a meter, not one without power. Therefore, the amount of people without power are often higher than those numbers above. For example, the 1997 snowstorm likely knocked out power to over 200,000 Omaha residents at some point.

Now, 26 years later, the region has fully recovered. Many of the trees damaged in the storm recovered and have grown new branches, and those trees that were lost have been re-planted. Services like OPPD learned from the lessons of 1997 to create a better system of reporting power outages and strengthening the infrastructure. This helped greatly in July 2021 when a major windstorm brought power outages into the hundreds of thousands once more, and again in 2024 when the July 31 windstorm knocked over 200k customers out of power.

View the full article at: <https://www.3newsnow.com/weather/weather-history/october-25-26-1997-the-omaha-tree-shredder-snowstorm>

ARBORIST SPOTLIGHT: JARON DOCK

By Ann Powers, NAA Board Member

Meet Jaron Dock, Landscape Manager for Douglas County, whose responsibilities include managing plantings, removals, and maintenance across various county properties. With an experienced crew of four, Jaron oversees landscapes for essential facilities, including the Douglas County Extension Office, Health Center, and Law Enforcement Center. Each day, he ensures Douglas County's landscapes are healthy, sustainable, and ready to serve the community.

A Career Rooted in Trees

Jaron's journey into arboriculture began as a student worker at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where he spent six years honing his plant identification skills and developing a passion for trees. After joining Douglas County, Jaron expanded his expertise, achieving Certified Arborist status and continuing his education through classes and conferences encouraged by the county. "The county has been really supportive of continuing education," Jaron says. "They understand the importance of building knowledge in the industry." Jaron credits consulting arborist Jack Phillips, a mentor, with inspiring his focus on tree health and management strategies that prioritize longevity and sustainability. Now, Jaron finds himself not only managing landscapes but also mentoring his own crew, a role he takes very seriously as he seeks to balance people management with plant care.

A Day in the Life of a County Landscape Manager

Jaron's day begins early, arriving about 30 minutes before his crew to prepare for the day's tasks. "Each day starts with a briefing and a plan," he shares. After sending his team out, Jaron inspects the grounds, handles emails, and strategizes upcoming projects. His work can range from sitting on the mower or pulling weeds to selecting or planting trees. He currently has plans to plant 29 trees this fall for an ongoing project that features over 200 native trees as well as native shrubs and herbaceous plants.

One of Jaron's key goals is to establish sustainable landscapes that require minimal intervention. This means focusing on native or near-native species, which are better adapted to the local climate and soil conditions. "Trees are smart," Jaron says. "They know what they're doing. We only prune what needs to be pruned and avoid staking; the trees tell us what they want if we know how to read them." Jaron sources his trees from local nurseries like Iowa Native Trees and Great Plains Nursery to ensure genetic suitability and resilience. He also works with grant programs to support tree planting on public lands, reducing costs while enhancing the county's green spaces.

Among Jaron's most ambitious projects is developing an arboretum on one of the county's campuses, complete with accessible walking paths, bioretention planting, and native species, this project will serve as an urban oasis where community members can access essential services—like the DMV and Sheriff's Office—and enjoy nature along the way.

Leading by Example

Jaron's focus on building sustainable landscapes is paralleled by his commitment to building a strong team. Recently, he completed leadership courses through the National Association of Counties (NACO) and other programs, which he describes as invaluable to his management style. "It's not just about managing people but leading them with purpose," he explains. "These programs teach you to see your crew as people with strengths and ambitions of their own."

His leadership philosophy is rooted in clear communication and problem-solving. In a county environment where collaboration across departments is essential, Jaron emphasizes the need for proactive solutions and clear communication. "The biggest challenge is ensuring everyone is on the same page, but with a great crew and a supportive boss, we're able to get things done," he says.

Future Goals and a Lasting Vision

Looking forward, Jaron is focused on establishing more trees and sustainable landscapes throughout Douglas County properties, creating an urban environment where greenery and community coexist. He aims to leave a legacy of durable, healthy landscapes that enhance the lives of residents and support local ecosystems. Jaron is also a passionate advocate for the arboriculture industry. "The more we educate people about trees, the more they take interest," he shares. He hopes to see more consistent arborist training opportunities and believes that raising awareness about trees' resilience and ecological importance can make a lasting impact.

Jaron's work benefits not only Douglas County but also serves as a model of sustainable landscape management that community members can look to for inspiration. His dedication to his craft and his team reflects his belief that trees and the landscapes they inhabit are not just part of our environment but part of our shared heritage.



CEDAR TREES

By Mark Peyton, *The Village Naturalist*

When I was first married, I spent many a day in Custer County on my father-in-law's ranch cutting cedar trees. Dean, like most cattlemen, hated cedar trees, so he sent me up to the ranch with an ax, and I spent the day checking windmills, putting out minerals, and cutting the trees. It was a great job!

Cedars, eastern red cedars to be precise, are one of two juniper trees native to Nebraska. The other is the Rocky Mountain juniper tree, which is found out west in the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills.

When Gothenburg was founded, there weren't many trees in the area except in the north canyons and south hills where the cedars grew. They became the wood for most construction until E.G. West arrived with his trainload of lumber from the back east. The Pony Express Station has its original 170-year-old walls made from cedar and "new" 92-year-old cedar rafters.

The eastern red cedar is one of 12 juniper species in North America and a member of the cypress family. Its formal scientific name is *Juniperus virginiana*. It was common from the Atlantic coast to around Gothenburg. It was used a lot for fence posts and furniture. The aroma of the cedar repelled insects, so "Cedar Chests" were in high demand. So were cedar pencils. Eastern red cedar was in such demand it soon became somewhat scarce. A lot of ranchers wish it still was.

Cedars are a "pioneer" species as they can quickly populate a disturbed area. They are drought-resistant, and they can withstand growing close together. Because of this, in the 1930s, farmers were encouraged to plant cedar tree rows to act as windbreaks. The Central Platte NRD still offers eastern red cedars to farmers.

Eastern red cedar can grow quite tall and live up to 1,000 years! So why don't we have red cedars everywhere? Throughout history, fire controlled the growth of cedars on the Nebraska prairies. Now, with fire suppression, the young cedars do show up just about everywhere. Why? Because of birds like the cedar waxwing. The birds eat the blue "berries" of the cedar. The berries only stay in the gut of the bird for about ten minutes before being pooped out. However, that's long enough to dissolve the tough outer coat of the "berry," allowing the seed to germinate. Where the "berries" land, they grow into new trees!

Cedars are dioecious, which means there are male and female trees. Go to Ehmen Park, and to the north of the Pony Express Station, you can see two tall cedar trees. To the south is a male red cedar with its rust-red pollen cones, and just north of it is the female tree with the little blue berries. Is there any value to being able to tell a male from a female cedar tree? Yes. If you go to the river or pasture and cut a cedar tree to use as your Christmas Tree, make sure you cut a female. If you cut a male tree, the pollen cones will thaw once you bring it inside, and your house will soon be covered in eastern red cedar pollen. Believe me, I speak from experience!

NAA MEMBERS ONLY PORTAL

As a reminder, the Nebraska Arborists Association has created a new Members Only portal on the NAA website. This portal contains meeting minutes from 2020 up to the most recently approved minutes. Members can access the minutes for review by visiting <https://www.nearborists.org/members-only-portal> and entering the password NAA2024

The portal can also be accessed by visiting [nearborists.org](https://www.nearborists.org), clicking the Membership tab, and selecting the members-only portal from the dropdown. The password is **NAA2024**

Once a member has accessed the portal, they can click the year of the board meeting minutes they would like to review, and they will be directed to links to each of the board meeting minutes from that year.

As a reminder, board meeting minutes must not be shared outside the organization or with non-members.



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WERE YOUR TREES POACHED?

By Jeremiah Sandler, BCMA | April 2, 2024

The trees that stand in my neighborhood once saw forest. They then saw farmland, and then the land eventually became suburban/urban. Now they see houses, but they wonder where their neighbors went. The sound of leaves in the wind is becoming harder and harder to hear.

The neighborhood is dotted with gigantic veteran and mature oaks, mature maples, and a handful of very old hophornbeams who have seen some shit. Those trees germinated before the place was leveled and were surprisingly spared from massacre.

I'm sure the trees that were giants back then were not spared. Many of the neighborhood's current biggest trees survived the onslaught only to face a new (but similar) menace: Poachers.

Last fall while walking my dog, Winry, in my neighborhood after work, our route was determined by the sounds of chainsaws. Not away from them, towards them. The sounds led us to a helmetless crew removing a very large eastern white pine that I admired each time I walked Hazelhurst Street.

A groundsman was at one of the work trucks replacing a chain on a saw. "What was wrong with that tree?" I asked him as we walked by.

"I don't know; that's all this guy knows how to do" he said while gesturing towards the climber, who I assume is also the owner of the company.

This company portrays itself as a legitimate company with all of the buzzwords on its large chip truck "tree care," "voted best blah blah blah." The disinterested groundsman didn't hide the truth very well when he said basically "all we do is kill trees."

The classic sign of poaching on my street. A huge stump in the front, with a harder-to-poach tree in the backyard. Many of the front yard giants in my neighborhood have been poached, but the backyard giants remain. This is because of the challenge they pose to the poachers who prefer easier prey. The common struggles of tree cutting companies incentivizes them to find reasons to remove any tree. After all, that's the most profitable thing to do. And when you don't know much about trees, you either leave 'em or you kill 'em. Nothing in between.

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Poachers justify removing trees by either convincing the owner to agree to it or by accepting that request.

Their skillset is not in service of trees; no “tree service” is being done for trees. It’s done for their paychecks, without knowing how their pillaging affects entire neighborhoods. Without knowing even why poaching trees is problematic. Without any regard for the rights of nature.

And they don’t know, and they don’t care. That’s what tree work is to a majority of arborists and trimmers.

I feel no sense of camaraderie with most tree companies. It’s kind of a bummer. I feel no shame writing this article, as I don’t expect many of them to read it. Neighborhoods like mine, the people and trees and wildlife in it, the ecology, are all worse off because of the prevalence of tree poachers.

As someone who cares deeply for nature and especially trees, I’d be damned if I didn’t express my indignation that tree care in the US has mutated into an industry that is so anti-nature. Ethical consideration is replaced by productivity and exploiting nature. That is the norm in this industry.

What is tree poaching?

Tree poaching is similar to people poaching elephants. Killing something for the deliberate sake of it. This can apply to forests where trees are poached for a commodity like timber, but in this article, poaching refers to the deliberate destruction of a low-risk urban or suburban tree for profit. Here in the US, risk from trees is highly overstated by the tree industry and is tactically used by poachers to frighten folks towards tree removal.

Tree companies are taught a small handful of patterns to look for, inclusions, any amount of decay, etc.. and use those to justify killing trees.

An unknowing client is allowed to have an uninformed opinion on tree risk. That is OK. By reaching out to arborists, homeowners think they’re doing the right thing. That’s sort of the obvious path to go down. Who else do you call?

But they don’t know that arboriculture as an industry accepts a terribly low standard of care. And good arborists with good perspective are very rare. And as a result, well, plenty of trees are maimed and killed despite homeowners thinking they’re doing the right things.

While writing for industry publications, for example, during the editing process, I’ve been asked to rephrase certain statements because they may turn some readers off. Dislike of my use of phrases like “tree-killing” and “people who kill trees.” This indicates to me that the omnipresence of low-quality tree care is something we’re not ready to acknowledge.

I reckon acknowledging the commonplace of bad practice might suggest our industry’s efforts are in vain. They are not in vain; they just aren’t totally sufficient to eliminate bad practices. I don’t think bad practice will ever be eliminated.

I think identifying its presence is critical. And so, too, are the words we use to describe it. And so I call it poaching. If you think you’re encountering poachers, ask them many “why” questions to their recommendations, and quickly they will expose themselves. When it serious doubt, hire a consulting arborist. Seriously.

Here’s a scenario that has probably happened to you or someone you know, or someone they know: A tree service recommended a large tree be cut down for some reason or another. The owners think this is a bummer but believe the tree service is acting in good faith and looking out for their best interest. The tree is removed, but the tree’s stump looks totally solid after they were told it was hollow. I know I am simplifying here, as a tree can be justifiably condemned while still having a solid trunk. But trees being vaguely diagnosed as “diseased” or “hollow” are common tropes I hear a lot, and the owner doesn’t have much recourse once the evidence is chipped up or hauled away.

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Poached tree in front; more challenging bounty in the back. At least they left a snag, I give them credit for that. Three streets away from my home.

It is also common for homeowners who aren't informed of the importance of trees (and nature) to request their removal for some anthropocentric reason like they don't like the way it looks or they don't like picking up leaves.

This is like filling in a creek with soil because you don't like it. Absurd, right? Because messing with a creek has obvious consequences downstream. The same can be said for needless, profit-driven tree removal. These are vital elements of nature that have purpose and function at micro and macro levels. This is unchallengeable.

What's the problem with people removing their own trees at will? An ecocentric worldview doesn't see nature as something to recklessly exploit or exercise tyrannical dominion over. It is easy to think of killing a 200+-year-old organism because you don't like it as a totally childish notion with an ecocentric view. It is similar to the inherent need to protect our waterways and streams and lakes.

But there will be a tree service there to ask no questions while happily accepting removal requests, which I'll touch on later. Tree removals rake in the big bucks, and there's an industry behind that notion supplying it with ever faster ways of destroying them.

When one has just a pinch of understanding or appreciation of nature, arbitrarily removing ancient organisms comes off as hilariously selfish. I'm not talking about removing tiny buckthorn trees growing between your fence. I'm talking about mature and veteran trees, the huge ones, the ancients. The ones that have served their communities for centuries. These are the trees that offer the most ecosystem services.

Why does tree poaching exist?

Property law in the United States allows for it, plain and simple. You have the right to maim and destroy nature on your property, just as the tree services have the right to sell it to you. There are some exceptions to nature destruction: in certain areas near me, wetlands are protected. A slow progress towards conscientiousness, but progress nonetheless.

The timeless copout of tree guys is "if I don't do it, someone else will." Nothing indicates they don't fully grasp their responsibility to nature quite like using that statement to justify their actions. Room for growth and maturing. Arborists are supposed to defend and support nature but have wholly lost their way. Arborists working for poaching outfits have discretion over their climbing and rigging, but not necessarily their arboriculture. And I have a serious problem with that.

Jack says that accepting "if I don't do it, someone else will" is a reflection of the industry culture. It downplays the importance of our roles, and it downplays your own ethics each time you justify unnecessarily killing a tree. It shows that money still takes precedence over doing the right thing, over reputation, and over standards. Instead of "how fast can you remove that tree," a more profound and rare skill is "how effective are you at convincing owners not to remove their trees."

The tree care industry lacks accountability and oversight. It is one where nature ethics are such a foreign concept that some tree companies don't even realize they are poachers. After a tree is destroyed, it is easy for someone to say it was unsafe. The evidence is gone. It is difficult to challenge after the fact. Enforcement against poaching or malpractice is nearly totally absent and inherently difficult.

The manufacturers and the products supplying this industry help perpetuate poaching of trees too. There are more people in the industry interested in the Instagram-glorified fast destruction of trees than there are those interested in the way of the tree. The manufacturers have won the attention of the tree cutters and so-called "arborists", and the tree companies themselves are designed to do what the industry supplies them with. A perfect match.

Continued on next page...



A trio of mature oaks on my street were maimed with enormous removal cuts against their trunks. "Properly made" cuts by the book, yet implemented in an unwise way. This is malpractice for so many reasons. Same trees, different angles.

Sure, people know that “Certified Arborists” exist. If you don’t know what that is, a “Certified Arborist” has passed an introductory qualification for working with trees. This standard is treated as the gold standard. It is the baseline. It is not an end but a beginning. Plenty of Certified Arborists are poachers. That credential is a tool like any other and, hence, can be misused (or not used at all). And most importantly, credentials don’t teach ethics.

There are a number of so-called arborists around me that admit when they’re asked if they’re a Certified Arborist by a client, they respond with “Yes I am an arborist.” Despite not being a Certified Arborist. See how that’s problematic? To be an ‘arborist’ you just need a chainsaw, unfortunately. There really is no barrier of entry.

Having a basic understanding of trees doesn’t really get tree cutters paid more. Being productive does. Sure, getting your Certified Arborist certificate might get you a pay bump, but nothing much changes for the field workers with no agency over their work. They’re given a work order and expected to be productive. Not great if those creating the work orders also do not have a deep understanding of nature and trees and have no quality control.

The evidence for this claim is abundant. Take a look in your own neighborhood. Exposed heartwood, large removal cuts made on primary stems, lion-tailing, a lack of peripheral crown work, non-existent soil care, etc. It is easy to find tree work done in haste and not in care. It is commonplace.

Evidence for poaching, though, is a bit less obvious since it results in absence. Neighborhoods with mature and veteran trees are particularly susceptible to poachers, especially ones that were developed without clear-cutting. Check out the photo below.

That is the habitat of big urban trees. Where you find prey, you find predators. See the contrast between the two photos? These are one street away from each other. The homes are all built in this neighborhood between 100 and 80 years ago. These are established neighborhoods with deep and spreading canopies that tree companies remove mindlessly. This isn’t arboriculture. This is poaching.

How is poaching done?

There are many ways this is done.

The door-hanger flyer is a classic technique of tree poachers. They’ll prowl for neighborhoods with large trees. Where they find them, they’ll hang advertisements on doors with some general recommendations. “Call us for expert tree service!” or some silly claim like that. Anyone who knows about trees knows there are no such things as tree experts. Only, perhaps, experts in killing them, which is a different thing. Less consequential services are appropriately advertised with door hangers, not ones that deal with keystone organisms.

Another similar tactic is to mail flyers to physical addresses saying, “We’ll be in your neighborhood soon! Let us know if you need trees removed.” As if you know whether or not a tree needs cutting down. Decisions that affect environmental health should not be left up to people who don’t like or don’t know about trees, ya know?

Sometimes, poachers have good camouflage, hidden behind credentials and accreditations. Part of the tree care business is to not look like a poacher. But do not be fooled; always ask critical questions. Ask why-questions, push back, have the dialogue. A good arborist or company will not poach trees and will not solicit work. Period.



A heavily poached street. You can see a non-poached area in the background on the right.



A non-poached street two streets north of my home.

Continued on next page...



A line separating properties where trees were poached and trees were not poached.

A client requesting the removal of a large, irreplaceable tree is complicit in its being poached. Effectively putting a bounty on their trees. Once a poaching outfit becomes successful enough, the company no longer has to prowl neighborhoods for prey. The clients will offer up their trees, either knowingly or unknowingly, to the axe. A company boasting they've been in business for 40 years is meaningless. In an industry that is painfully slow to change, this reads, "We've killed many trees."

Our Problem

During my two and a half years in this neighborhood, that pine I mentioned is the seventh large front yard tree that I was familiar with that was killed, and I'd say 6 of those 7 were poached. The other, I believe, was somewhat justified as a legitimate risk to the house it was next to, and I seldom see that. This doesn't factor in the unknown number of trees removed near me that I wasn't aware of. While those numbers might not seem low, multiply that by every neighborhood with mature trees across decades.

It isn't just a problem for my neighborhood, though. It is a problem for your neighborhood, too. Urban trees aren't commodities like in a timber plot grown for harvesting. The trees removed by poachers aren't done so for some prized timber or some forestry product.

They aren't turned into paper. They aren't turned into someone's house. They aren't made into utility poles. They are often removed for their own deliberately destructive purpose or from the naivety of their owners. They are put through a chipper, destroying them. And then re-sold to you as mulch.

Any solicitation about your trees should be met with extreme caution and extreme skepticism. Immediately recommending that your trees be removed should be met with the same critical suspicion. There are justifiable reasons to remove certain trees. But is it realistic that entire streets of front yard trees are removed because they are all high risk? Is it realistic that someone can make that judgment call from just a quick glance at a tree? No.

Ruining the neighborhood

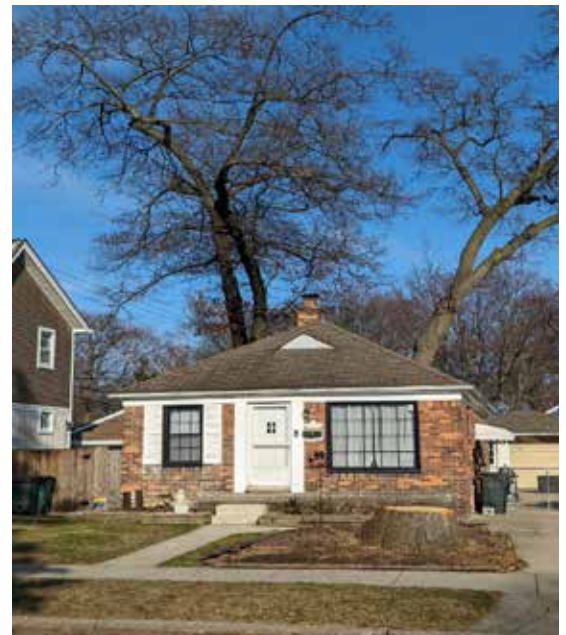
In my own neighborhood (an urban place), I'd say about 80% of the remaining mature/veteran trees are in backyards. And this isn't because the neighborhood was designed that way. Backyard trees are more likely to become veterans and ancients because it is harder for poachers to get their bucket trucks back there to kill them, and most tree services don't have exceptional climbers (despite what they think). It is harder for them to convince people to pay the prices for backyard bounties.

Less urban places with larger yards are more likely to have their backyard trees poached. But the point remains that front yard trees are easier to access, therefore faster to kill, and more likely to be poached for profit.

Some weeks after our neighborhood received door-hanger flyers from some poachers, I saw a large crew drive through my neighborhood with their banners. Two chip trucks, a bucket truck, one towing a bobcat loader too. A crew equipped for killin'.

Sometimes trees do need to come down, but I know my area; I know how companies roll here. Around midday I took another walk in the direction that the crew drove to find a favorite white oak of mine had been destroyed.

I counted 130-145 rings (kind of hard to keep track with many small rings) on a 4-foot-high stump. This oak was not even in its veteran stage yet; it was a massive and gorgeous sentinel. Just entering its prime. I'd admired this tree every single time I walked by it. And it was poached. What took 150-ish years to grow was defeated in 4 hours. I know tree guys; they're proud of that.



I wish I had a photo of this oak before it was poached. It was a lovely tree. You would have loved it.

Continued on next page...

I can say with frustrated confidence that I looked at and enjoyed the tree more than 100 times. More than whoever hung that door hanger. While I never thoroughly analyzed the tree, I can say this tree lacked obvious concerning features. It was a low-risk tree. Was this tree removed because someone did not want it? Or was the tree removed because poachers duped the owners? I don't know.

But it is one less impressive front yard tree in my neighborhood. It is one less veteran from that once full forest that used to be here. It is one less habitat for the wildlife here. It is less carbon sequestered. One less amazing tree. It is less. And a tree company is responsible for that.

Their declining presence in my neighborhood is a problem for nature itself and, therefore, us. The trees here are not replaced at a sustainable level like they are in a natural forest. Some poachers will ruthlessly pillage entire neighborhoods while claiming replanting is a suitable outcome. It's funny that municipalities and tree companies are just jumping on the greenwashing bandwagon while the general public is catching onto this deceptive practice. Practices like these can destroy whole swathes of neighborhoods. I see this in the city I live in. Certain pockets or streets have big trees, while others are desolate.

What to do about this

I don't know. But I do know this is a starting point: to describe the playing field as it is.

The Find an Arborist tool that locates Certified Arborists is a weak tool to find good arborists. That certification is an introductory level one. And while it is important, having passed that exam doesn't mean that an individual is qualified to serve trees. I know plenty of CA's who are poachers or who just hunt credentials for a pay raise. They don't give a shit. It's business. And again, these credentials don't teach ethics.

Perhaps this is an embryo of an idea: an independent organization of good arborists. An organization where entry requires one to be approved by other good arborists who verify that their practices are ethical, regardless of their industry credentials. A peer-approved membership, not one where you pass a simple test.

Anyway... once the poachers have hunted the mature and veteran oaks from my neighborhood, they'll move on to another neighborhood. A small handful of veterans might remain because there are some good arborists around, there are people who care about the importance of nature who tree companies do not fool.

The tree care industry is one that deserves critical suspicion because it is rife with poachers and low-quality work. Tree care lacks oversight, and enforcement of poaching tactics isn't really existent (neither is enforcement against other malpractices). Predatory companies want the most out of a job, regardless of how it affects nature and our communities. You know, business. They've gotta pay off big trucks and big chippers, and they've gotta kill trees to do it.

“Why else did we buy these things if we aren't gonna kill trees?!”

To make matters worse, that's what they think arboriculture or tree care is. Tree care to most tree companies is tree killing. Do not work with poachers. They are not the defenders of your trees. Protecting your trees has to be your priority. Not just for your own sake but for all of those who benefit from your trees. You may be the tree's keeper, but you keep it for all of us.

Defending your trees is climate action. Defending your trees is advocating for the rights of nature. Defending your trees is caring about the community you live in. Tree First forever.

REMINDER OF AVAILABLE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The NAA board would like to introduce a new scholarship for newly certified arborists. This scholarship will allow the individual selected to attend the 2025 TCIA conference and be reimbursed for up to \$1,000 in registration and travel expenses. One applicant will be selected from the submitted applications. The new scholarship can be found under the membership tab.

In addition to the new scholarship, NAA has a Continuing Education Scholarship Application available on our website for students and individuals new to the tree care industry or working to obtain their Certified Arborist accreditation. The scholarship can be found under the membership tab.

Scan for fillable form



NAA SCHOLARSHIP FORM

Scan for fillable form



TCIA SCHOLARSHIP FORM

FOSSIL TREES: PART TWO

By Mark Peyton, *The Village Naturalist*

In a previous essay, I discussed the ginkgo tree, probably the oldest tree species in the world, with fossils dating back 200 million years. It is very, very rare “in the wild,” and had people not cultivated it, it would be extinct.

Jeff Kennedy pointed out to me that there is a second species of tree here in Gothenburg with a very similar story—the Kentucky coffeetree. This tree is also very rare “in the wild” and, if not cultivated, would either already be extinct or soon be.

The story for both trees revolves around the need for plants to disperse their seeds. The seeds are the “eggs” of the trees, and the last thing you want as a tree is your young hatching (germinating) right next to you. That would create competition between the parent and offspring. As a tree, you need to get your young away.

One way is to create a hard outer coat on the seed that the young baby plant cannot break through. That way, if it falls on the ground next to you, it won’t “hatch”, but, at some point, they have to hatch, so you surround the seed with a fruit. The fruit is sweet, tasty, and full of sugars and proteins.

Animals eat the fruit. Within their digestive system, the fruit dissolves quickly, but the seeds have that tough outer covering that slowly dissolves away (scarification). Some seeds are destroyed, but most pass out of the animal’s digestive system when it poops. The baby plant can now break out of the weakened seed, which is literally embedded in fertilizer!

This is the way that plants extend their range. Animals carry the seeds to new locations, and this is why neither the Ginko nor the coffeetree have been able to expand their ranges! No known animals eat the fruit from either tree!

No one really knows what happened to the animals that once ate the Ginko fruit, but the coffeetree is very similar to the Acacia tree of Africa. There, elephants and rhinos eat the seed pods. Acacia seed pods, like the coffeetree seed pods, are toxic! However, large animals like the elephant can eat the pods and not die. They grind up the hard seeds, and then the seed remains in their huge stomach for a long time before being pooped out.

We had elephants in Nebraska. We call them mastodons and mammoths. They were probably hunted to extinction. The toxin of the coffeetree is similar to caffeine, nicotine, and cocaine. If you and I eat the seeds (untreated), we will overdose. The mastodons were so large; however, it may have just given them a “buzz,” some paleobiologists even suggest that the large mammals may have developed an addiction to the seeds!

The coffeetree got its name because people would use the seeds to make coffee. The coffee from the Kentucky coffeetree was said to be awful, but with sugar, it was tolerable. When Stephen H. Long made his way across Nebraska in 1820, his expedition took with it “coffee” made from coffeetree beans. If you want to try it, you must roast the beans at 300°F for 3.5 hours to be sure you’ve destroyed the poison! Me, I’ll just stick with my Folgers!

NAA SILENT AUCTION DONATIONS

The Nebraska Arborists Association’s (NAA) silent auction will take place at the Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference on January 21, 2025, at the Embassy Suites Hotel, in Lincoln, Nebraska. The NAA is the primary organization in Nebraska providing education and training for future Certified Nebraska Arborists. Our annual regional winter conference is open to arborists, horticulturists and all others interested in proper tree care.

Proceeds from our silent auction go to the NAA education fund. This fund provides NAA Arborist School scholarships to individuals who want to become a Certified Nebraska Arborist but otherwise would not be able to attend our training and educational classes because of funding constraints.

Please consider using our silent auction as an opportunity to promote your company. Silent auction forms can be filled out online via the QR code below and emailed to staff@nearborists.org or mailed into the association office.



Download Fillable Form



Funds raised at the silent & live Auctions go towards educational scholarships.

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2025 MEMBERSHIP DUES

The 2025 NAA membership renewal notices were emailed and mailed in November.

They will be mailed a second time to those not yet renewed in December. Membership dues must be returned to the NAA office by December 15, 2024.

Each renewing certified arborist will receive a new certification card upon renewal. When recertification fees are not paid within 90 days, certification status will be forfeited. Please call the NAA office if you have any questions about your membership.

NEW NAA MEMBERS

Craig Bramhall
Alex-Hajek-Jone
Kaleb Kunik
Armando Marquez
Rio May
Jason Miller
Nick Soper
John Thompson

NEWLY CERTIFIED ARBORISTS

Lane Allen
Bryce Eisenmenger
Marshall Jaros

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LINCOLN, NE

**ATTENDEE
REGISTRATION**



**EXHIBITOR
REGISTRATION**



“Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches,
letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights.”

– **Pauline R. Kezer**

Keynote Speakers

Tuesday, January 21, 2025



Opening Keynote: Pruning - Are We Doing It for the Tree or to It?

John Ball, South Dakota State University

John Ball Professor, SDSU Extension Forestry Specialist & SD Dept. of Ag. Forest Health Specialist. John supports the citizens of South Dakota in his role as a Professor, SDSU Extension Forestry Specialist & South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Forest Health Specialist at the South Dakota State University campus in Brookings, SD.



Closing Keynote: Arboricultural Myths: The Science Behind What Works, What Doesn't, & Why

Linda Chalker-Scott, Washington State University

Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott has a Ph.D. in Horticulture from Oregon State University and is an ISA certified arborist and an ASCA consulting arborist. She is WSU's Extension Urban Horticulturist and a Professor in the Department of Horticulture and currently the editor of Western Arborist, the WCISA's magazine. Linda conducts research in applied plant and soil sciences, publishing the results in scientific articles and university Extension fact sheets. She is actively involved in enhancing the scientific literacy of her audiences by teaching them how to assess the credibility of information from print and online sources.

Wednesday, January 22, 2025



Opening Keynote: Make or Break Your Day: Communication
Nicole Benjamin, 2 Dog Crew, LLC

Nicole "Carni" Benjamin, an ISA Certified Arborist, began her journey at Heartwood Tree Service, where she navigated a steep learning curve and gained diverse experience in tree work. Transitioning to subcontracting with her husband in 2018, they undertook a range of projects from utility work to treehouse builds. Nicole has worn multiple hats in the industry—groundie, climber, crew leader, owner, and safety officer—acknowledging the importance and respect each role deserves. Based near Charlotte, she and her family and senior Portuguese water dog traverse the USA for tree climbing events, workshops, and conferences.



Opening Keynote: Growing Stronger Together: The Power of Networking, Allyship, & Mentorship

Ash Connelly, SavATree | Charleston Tree Experts

Ash Connelly is an Assistant Market Leader at SavATree | Charleston Tree Experts in Charleston, South Carolina. She is also an ISA Certified Arborist and holds the TRAQ credential and serves on the TCIA Women in Tree Care Taskforce. Connelly was previously a paralegal for 12 years, where she gained a professional edge and perfected the art of networking. She seeks to advance the industry through frequent community outreach and is a regular presenter at industry conferences and events.

LODGING INFORMATION

Contact the hotel and ask for the Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference group rate.

Embassy Suites
by Hilton Lincoln
1040 P Street
Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone: (402) 474-1111

Rates*:
\$145/night (single/double)
\$160/night (triple)
\$175/night (quad)
*plus taxes

If you have any questions regarding the conference, please contact the association office at 402-761-2219 or email staff@nearborists.org.

2025 NAA WINTER CONFERENCE SESSIONS

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2025

Keynote: Pruning - Are We Doing it for the Tree or to it? – John Ball

Pruning is the most common plant healthcare practice we perform as arborists. But are we doing it for the tree or to it? We will review how our common pruning and training practices have evolved over the decades and centuries as our knowledge of tree structure and function increases. We will also cover some of the new concepts. The objective is to improve the care of our patients - the trees - and follow the Hippocratic oath “to abstain from doing harm.”

Breakout A: Water Movement in a Tree - Philip Pierce

This presentation will give an overview of transportation: roots, leaves, and trunk. It will also discuss the history of tree injection and assumptions made from these practices, the types of water in a tree (as described by Shigo), the speed of free-water movement up a tree, the injection of colored dyes in a tree, and what the color shows us. Finally, it will display samples of stained wood.

Breakout B: Tree Climber Guide & Certified Tree Climber Credential - Alex Julius

Meet with Alex Julius, co-author, to discuss what’s new about the 4th edition of the ‘Tree Climbers’ Guide. This product serves as ISA’s leading study guide for ISA’s Certified Tree Climber credential, which has also recently been updated. This session will discuss both updates. Whether you are at the beginning of your climbing career or a seasoned climbing arborist, there is something here for you.

Breakout C: Diagnostic Delusions: You Can’t Always Believe Your Eyes - Linda Chalker Scott

As arborists, we carefully consider environmental factors when diagnosing tree problems. However, what we see in the landscape is not necessarily the cause of the problems we see. There can be serious repercussions when we make diagnostic errors; not only do we miss the actual cause of the problem, but our recommended treatment can cause even greater damage to the tree or the environment. This seminar will present some common misdiagnoses. By understanding what additional information needs to be collected to make an accurate diagnosis, arborists will learn to avoid conflating correlation to causation.

Breakout D: The 2025 Edition of the Z133 is Out: Here Are the Critical Changes – John Ball

The new revision of the Z133 Safety Requirements for Arboricultural Operations will be out soon. This revision has some critical changes in how arborists work, from training to working near electrical conductors. This session will cover the key changes and the incidents they will hopefully prevent if followed.

Breakout E: What’s Wrong with this Spruce Tree? - Sarah Browning

Spruces are an important evergreen tree for Nebraska landscapes and windbreaks. But even this tough, hardy tree can struggle due to soil, planting, management issues, and several insect and disease pests. In this session, you will learn how common management missteps can cause problems for spruce trees, current best management practices, and how to identify common abiotic, disease, and insect problems.

Breakout F: 7 Questions to Ask Before Buying Gear - Alex Julius

Do you buy or use climbing equipment? With so much equipment on the market these days, it’s challenging to know what to buy and where to buy it from. And how can we be certain that what we ordered is what we think it is? How can we be responsible consumers? Learn how to interpret the nuances of climbing equipment and ensure that what you are buying is safe for use in tree care.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2025 CONTINUED...

Breakout G: An Arborist Trek to Mount Everest (With a Safety Message) - David Scharfenberger

Join us for an engaging session designed to inspire you to think beyond the boundaries of your career and personal life. Through creative exploration and insightful “shameless plugs” about the Z133 safety standard, this session aims to broaden your perspective and spark new ideas. Plus, enjoy a visual journey through stunning photos of Nepal, guaranteed to leave you considering your next travel adventure!

Breakout H: Let's Get Thrifty! Tree Gear with More Than One Purpose - Nicole Benjamin

Building our climbing kit used to cost under \$500; now, with the options available, we could easily spend over \$2k. Let's discuss how to responsibly build your kit while advancing into new or different techniques and gear that might have more than one purpose or application, giving you more bang for your buck—so you can spend that money on hopped-up saws (jokes, sort of).

Closing Keynote: Arboricultural Myths: The Science Behind What Works, What Doesn't, & Why - Linda Chalker Scott

Certified arborists want the latest plant and soil science information to pass on to their clients, but how to tell what's science – and what's pseudoscience? Arboricultural professionals can quickly lose their credibility (and business) when they end up promoting products and practices that aren't based on reputable science. This seminar will focus on landscape tree care and provide arborists with guidelines for objectively evaluating articles, books, and electronic resources. For each of the myths busted, we'll also discuss alternatives that are both practical and scientifically grounded. This information is guaranteed to be of interest to arborists everywhere.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2025

Keynote: Make or Break Your Day: Communication - Nicole Benjamin

How we communicate matters, from customer to sales, from management to crew, and even amongst crew members... so much can get lost in the mix or misinterpreted. Removing deadwood from Marguerite's Magnolia can easily become removing the magnolia. “I need another rigging block!” can be interpreted as, “I think you are worse than paper cuts on my eyelids....” Let's discuss communication tactics and SKILLS that can help prevent mistakes as well as improve efficiency, morale, and safety in our workspaces.

Breakout I: It's All in the Details: A Consultative Sales Approach - Ash Connelly

Learn a proven process for forging lasting relationships between people and trees from a lead sales arborist who exceeded \$3 million in sales in only her third year while also assisting the company in scaling up to more than double its size. In this session, Ash will share an easy step-by-step process that prioritizes the customer relationship and creates an open dialogue to identify and provide solutions to a customer's needs.

Breakout J: Can You Be Rescued? Solutions to Improve Climber Safety - Craig Bachmann

In the event of an incident or injury, a well-trained team is essential. However, one factor is often overlooked - the “rescue-ability” of the climber. This presentation shares strategies and techniques to improve climber safety in both tree care and removal situations. Participants will learn to make better decisions around tree access and rope anchorage, climbing system configuration, team cross-training, and preparation of a rescue kit. With this knowledge, climbing arborists will be better equipped for self-rescue, and teams will be better prepared to rescue an injured climber successfully.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2025 CONTINUED...

Breakout K: Understanding Business Insurance in Arboriculture - Sean Popejoy

Join Sean Popejoy from USI Insurance Services for an in-depth look at essential business insurance considerations for arboriculture professionals. This session will cover critical coverage areas, risk management strategies, and how to protect your business from the unique challenges faced in the arboriculture industry. Whether you're looking to safeguard your equipment, workers, or liability, Sean will provide insights and practical tips on optimizing your insurance to keep your business secure and sustainable. Perfect for business owners, managers, and arborists aiming to protect their investment in the green industry.

Breakout L: The "C" Word (Contract Climbers) - Nicole Benjamin

Love them, despise them... Not all contractors are the same. As an owner, what are the reasons for bringing in a contract climber, and can you make it more beneficial than just "getting the job done"? As a tree worker, what's needed to be a successful contract climber?... Spoiler Alert - "bad@ss skillz" & Instagram aren't the answer. Let's talk about CCs - for business owners & those interested in turning their stable bi-weekly paycheck upside down.

Breakout M: Arborist Commercial Vehicle Requirements - Josh Beckwith

Trooper Josh Beckwith from the Nebraska State Patrol will provide an essential overview of commercial vehicle requirements for arborists. This session will cover the key aspects of commercial motor vehicle inspections, regulatory compliance, and best practices to ensure safety and legality on the road. Designed for arborists and business owners who operate commercial vehicles, Trooper Beckwith's insights will help you navigate the complexities of state and federal regulations, ensuring your operations are both safe and compliant.

Breakout N: Never Waste a Good Crisis: Learning from a Major Incident - Craig Bachmann

In September 2022, Tree133 experienced a climber fall, resulting in a severe injury. For a well-respected company owned by a recognized trainer, this was an unthinkable event that challenged everything we believed about ourselves and our culture. This presentation will share valuable lessons learned from that incident and the resulting state-level OSHA investigation. Attendees will learn practical steps to improve work planning, team communication, PPE inspection, skills development, and documentation. From this presentation, you'll learn how to build a stronger culture of safety and help prevent on-the-job incidents.

Closing Keynote: Growing Stronger Together: The Power of Networking, Allyship, & Mentorship - Ash Connelly

Join Ash Connelly for an engaging and interactive workshop focused on exploring the vital role of connections in professional growth and success. During this one-hour session, engage in meaningful conversations, exchange business ideas, and forge valuable relationships with fellow tree care professionals. Ash will share effective networking techniques and tips to expand your professional network, opening doors to new opportunities and collaborations. Attendees will also have practical tips and strategies to implement, fostering a strong network and mentorship culture that will propel business and personal growth and pave the way for long-term success.

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2025 SLATE OF NOMINEES BALLOT

This ballot has been prepared so that as members you may vote on the slate of officers as prepared by the Nominating Committee in accordance with the bylaws. In compliance with Articles VII, VIII and IX of the bylaws, the Nominating Committee has prepared a slate to be submitted to the membership. In further concurrence with the bylaws and as defined by Roberts Rules of Order, the slate lists one candidate per position. In an effort to allow individuals to review candidate information, below is information about the individual on the ballot. In order to move forward with the business of the association, it is imperative that you return your ballot by the time specified. Without your vote and active engagement in the business of the association, we will not be able to have an association to promote our profession. **Ballots need to be returned by January 13th.** Board candidates will be introduced at the start of the 2025 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference NAA Business Meeting. All members listed in this notice of the Annual Meeting are eligible candidates and have agreed to have their names placed on the ballot. The membership will vote on candidates prior to the conference. The NAA Board will have an opening to elect a person to serve as a Director. Individuals elected will officially begin his/her term on January 21, 2025, after the Annual Membership Meeting.

Amy Nakai (DIRECTOR)



Amy Nakai

My goal, as an NAA Board member, would be to bring our community of arborists together, to help grow our arborist community as a whole. I'm excited to see the importance of certified arborists as a key aspect to all of our companies for our community. I want to be a part of our local community as an NAA member to help share not only our passion, but to help build the value in hiring a certified arborist company.

As a Smile Train Advisory Board Member bringing athletes together to raise funds for a common goal is something I do often. I recruit and collaborate with a wide variety of people to help encourage and push each athlete towards a goal while also pushing them to raise funds for a non profit. My experience helping athletes not only accomplish their personal goals, but even bigger goals to help benefit a non profit would help me as the NAA director. As an operations manager I've shown that I understand the customer service aspect for the community, the procedures aspect for the business and leadership skills to grow a valuable company team.

[CLIP HERE](#)



2025 SLATE OF NOMINEES BALLOT

YOUR VOTE MATTERS! PROXY BALLOTS MUST BE RETURNED BY 01/13/2025.

- I accept the 2025 Slate I do not accept the 2025 Slate
 I abstain from voting

First & Last Name (Required)

Director.....Amy Nakai



Nebraska Arborists Association
521 First Street
Milford, NE 68405
www.NEarborists.org

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**Call the NAA office for more information at
402-761-2219 or email staff@nearborists.org.**