



# 2012 Awards of Distinction Recipients

ISA has been honoring members and industry professionals with the Awards of Distinction since 1963. Honorees are recognized in such categories as research, publishing, education, and advancing the cause of the organization. The winners are selected by a diverse group of experts in arboriculture. Look for feature articles on each of these winners in upcoming issues of the *Arborist News*.



## **Helping Arboriculture Become a Safer Profession** **Dr. H. Dennis Ryan**

—Award of Merit

Professor and Author  
University of Massachusetts  
— Amherst  
Amherst, Mass

“Many people like to think they reach success on their own, but someone is always helping you along the way,” says Dr. Dennis Ryan. “I always knew I would end up in this business and I believe a lot of people are responsible for making me who I am today.”

This year, Dr. Dennis Ryan was chosen to receive ISA’s highest honor, the Award of Merit. It is awarded in recognition of outstanding service in advancing the principles, ideas and practices of arboriculture.

As a young man, Ryan wanted to become a forest ranger, but with no jobs in the field, he planned to quit school and join the Navy. His parents intervened and sent him to Bristol County Agricultural High School.

He remained focused on jobs in commercial arboriculture while he was in school and eventually went on to receive advanced degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he has been a professor for more than three decades.

Dr. Ryan considers ISA the premiere organization for arboriculture worldwide. He’s been involved with ISA for nearly 40 years, serving on various committees, including the ANSI Z133 committee, which has been challenged to find safer ways to work in the industry. The author of more than 200 articles and numerous presentations, Dr. Ryan continues to guide colleagues and future arborists in the profession.



## **Lifelong Passion for Arboriculture** **Susan Murray**

— Alex L. Shigo Award for Excellence in Arboriculture Education

ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, Professor, Author  
Kwantlen Polytechnic University  
Langley, British Columbia

Much of what Susan Murray was learning about arboriculture while a university student in the 1970s she had to discover on her own. After earning her degree in Agricultural Sciences from the University of British Columbia, Murray joined ISA’s Pacific Northwest Chapter (PNW). It became a main source of information about the industry.

“I would go to (ISA) meetings and be one of the few women there,” remembers Murray. “It was a male-dominated profession, but everyone was a community of learners who loved to share their passion and knowledge of trees, so it was inclusive. I never felt like an outsider.”

In the mid-1980s while completing her master’s degree at the University of British Columbia, Murray was unsure of what to write for her thesis. A fellow ISA member, Jim Clark, suggested she research and write about development of an arborist certification program for the local chapter.

The PNW Chapter implemented a certification program for arborists based on Murray’s research. In 1992, aspects of her work were incorporated into what is now ISA’s Certified Arborist Program.

Murray has co-authored books, served as a speaker and Board member, and is motivated by what happens in her classroom. She helps bring arboriculture education into the digital world by blending her courses with online lectures.



## **Dedicated Educator and Volunteer** **Dr. Tom Smiley**

— Alex L. Shigo Award for Excellence in Arboriculture Education

Researcher, Author, ISA Volunteer  
Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories  
Charlotte, N.C.

Dr. Tom Smiley’s research and expansive range of knowledge in the arboriculture field make him one of the most sought-after experts in the industry.

Smiley has been teaching arborists and urban foresters for the better part of his career. He was a graduate instructor as a student and now serves as an adjunct professor of arboriculture and urban forestry at Clemson University in Charlotte, N.C.

It’s been almost 25 years since Dr. Smiley began his work as an arboriculture researcher at Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories. His experiments have been integral in teaching classes for arborists, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Technicians and industry professionals who visit the Bartlett Lab. His expertise has also led to invitations for speaking engagements around the world.

“I have the opportunity to support arboricultural education both through ISA and directly with the arborists in my research work at the Bartlett Tree Expert Company,” admits Dr. Smiley. “Both of these groups strive for the highest level of knowledge that can be put into the practice of arboriculture.”

His commitment to ISA runs deep. As chair of the ISA Best Management Practices (BMP) Committee, Dr. Smiley served as the lead author on several of the BMP manuals, including one on tree risk assessment. He also volunteers his expertise as a technical reviewer of articles, book chapters, and educational materials. In addition, he records podcasts for ISA, which focus on the science of the industry to help arborists and urban foresters learn more about their profession.



### **Breaking Down the Language Barrier**

**Pedro Mendes Castro**

—Award of Achievement

ISA Certified Arborist/Utility Specialist, Environmental Engineer CEMIG

Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais (Brazil)

At first, Pedro Mendes Castro didn't like the specialist job he accepted at a large utility company. But he soon learned to appreciate the focus on arboriculture and recognized urban forestry as invaluable to the quality of life in Brazil.

Eventually, Castro volunteered for many large-scale projects to advance ISA's mission in his hometown of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. During his time working with ISA's Brazilian Society of Arboriculture (SBAU) and with the support of ISA staff, Castro focused on translating the arborist certification exam and study guide to Portuguese.

"Most of my co-workers here are arborists in a general way," says Castro. "They recognize ISA as an important organization for arboriculture and the world, but few are interested in becoming certified because the exams were only offered in English and Spanish."

Last year, 20 people took the newly translated exam, but Castro expects that number to double once he's finished translating the accompanying study guide.

Many credit Castro with the recent growth of certification in Brazil and the advancement of ISA's mission there. In an effort to improve safety standards among workers, he also helped bring about the first ever tree climbing championships to Brazil.

Castro tries to learn as much as possible about how trees grow on an urban landscape and hopes through science and education, he can help provide a better environment for generations to come.



### **The Tree Communicator**

**Tom Mugridge**

—Honorary Life Membership

ISA Certified Arborist, General Manager  
Forest City Tree Protection Co.  
South Euclid, Ohio

"I began working at Forest City Tree Protection, Co., when I was in 7th grade, first pulling weeds and climbing trees with my childhood friend, Warren Lanphear," recalls Tom Mugridge. "By the time I reached college, I was on the job full-time."

Now General Manager with Forest City Tree in South Euclid, Ohio, Tom Mugridge grew up with the company and a history steeped in community involvement. This year's Honorary Life Membership Award winner is a former president of the Ohio ISA Chapter, active with the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), and the ANSI A300 Committee. He's also one of Ohio's first certified arborists to become an ISA Certified Arborist.

"ISA is a way to elevate the people who care about trees by teaching them the science of the industry," Mugridge explains. "ISA brings professionalism to this kind of career where our people are seen not as someone who just prunes trees."

Tom established strong ties to his community as the lead person in Arbor Day donations to the Cleveland Botanical Garden. He regularly attends symposiums about protecting trees from Dutch elm disease. In addition, Mugridge was a member of the Forest City Tree team awarded for their work in saving an English oak sapling given to former U.S. Olympic Star and Ohio native, Jesse Owens.

"Being involved with an organization like ISA makes me better as an arborist," says Mugridge. "We are professionals who care deeply about what we do."



### **Go Outside and Play**

**Dr. Michael Raupp**

—R. W. Harris Author's Citation

Author, Professor  
University of Maryland  
College Park, Md.

Dr. Michael Raupp remembers his mother telling him to "go outside and play," as a child. He considers it the best advice anyone ever gave him.

Dr. Raupp applies this credo in his daily work. His goals include creating sustainable landscape systems and preserving biological diversity in the ecosystem with an emphasis on bugs that eat other bugs. His research as a professor in Entomology at the University of Maryland in College Park and his numerous books, articles, and professional papers are among the reasons Raupp is this year's winner of the R.W. Harris Author's Citation.

"One of the most satisfying things about my job is that I have a unique opportunity to couple theory with practice," admits Dr. Raupp. "I view my work with arborists through professional organizations like ISA to be one of the most important things I do. Writing books and publishing papers is a way for me to make a real contribution."

Dr. Raupp enjoys solving practical problems to develop environmentally sustainable ways of managing insects. His research led to the development of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs where arborists could control pests on plants in a more sustainable, greener way. His *Managing Insects and Mites on Woody Plants* is a book that provides arborists with the tools to successfully control pests.

Guiding people toward a better understanding of the natural world around them is another of Dr. Raupp's contributions to arboriculture. His award-winning website, **Bug of the Week**, reaches out to everyone, bringing entomology to life.



### **Preserve Soils and Protect Trees**

#### **Jason Grabosky**

— L.C. Chadwick Award for Arboricultural Research

Professor, Researcher  
Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, N.J.

Dr. Jason Grabosky, a professor at Rutgers University in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Natural Resources, has paved his path in two concentrations that have impacted arboriculture.

Dr. Grabosky continued research on branch crown development based on the studies of Dr. Edward Gilman at the University of Florida-Gainesville, who had already examined the concept of how trees intercept wind. Grabosky's work has revealed how trees react to various pruning cuts involving wind resistance and the spread of decay.

Another significant contribution came as a graduate student at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.—Dr. Grabosky's development of Cornell Structural Soil. It has become an industry standard for growing healthy, vibrant trees in compact soil with limited root space.

"My biggest contribution was doing the testing to show that Cornell Structural Soil met engineering standards," admits Dr. Grabosky. "The material at Cornell University became important because we had a series of reviewed, tested materials that were evaluated in a horticultural process."

Dr. Grabosky says the study on Cornell Structural Soil is ongoing with other universities—some internationally—doing their own research.

"Ten years from now, there will be another way to look at designed soils as people become more critical in their efforts to improve them," he says. "We could list a number of researchers who I learned from. This doesn't come out of a vacuum."



### **Supporting Arborists with a Textbook for Innovation**

#### **Tobe Sherrill**

—Millard F. Blair Exceptional Contribution to Practical Arboriculture

CEO, Sherrill Inc.  
Sherrill Tree Catalog  
Greensboro, N.C.

Tobe Sherrill's dedication to trees started at an early age. His father, the late William Sherrill, a manufacturers' rep who in 1960 started Sherrill Tree in Greensboro, N.C., sold lawn and garden equipment. When the younger Sherrill graduated college, he found himself with the company selling lawnmowers and didn't care for it. He steered the family business in a new direction.

Sherrill approached his dad and suggested a new marketing approach. His father agreed and gave him \$10,000 to buy a Macintosh computer. It was 1989—the early age of desktop publishing—and it led to the creation of the first Sherrill Tree catalog.

"I locked myself in a closet for a year and that's where the catalog got its start," remembers Sherrill. "In spring of 1990, the first edition was released. It mostly featured machinery, but a line of arborist supplies like gear chippers and stump grinders were included."

Sherrill, this year's winner of the Millard F. Blair Exceptional Contribution to Practical Arboriculture, says the arborist gear was only a fraction of the initial catalog. Several years later it became half the number of items in the publication and today is considered a leading industry resource worldwide.

Devoted followers say one of the best functions of the publication is Sherrill's unique ability to reach tree climbers in rural areas who are not exposed to educational sources or events offering helpful tips and safety information.

"There are a lot of gear junkies in this business and highly efficient tools are what they spend their money. I think they want to read about it, not just see a picture and how much it costs," claims Sherrill. "People quite often are relying on our products with their lives."



### **Continuous Improvement and Discovery**

#### **Dr. Eric Wiseman**

—Early Career Scientist Award

ISA Certified Arborist, Professor and Researcher  
Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, Va.

An Associate Professor of Urban Forestry and Arboriculture in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., Dr. Eric Wiseman teaches arboriculture field skills, urban forestry, management and policy. He also advises students and their research, but it's his thinking and questioning in his study of the field that has earned him this year's Early Career Scientist Award.

"I have a lot of respect for scientists who work in arboriculture," maintains Dr. Wiseman. "It's a privilege to be considered on a trajectory to get to the level of past recipients."

Among his research interests, Dr. Wiseman consulted with the Virginia Department of Forestry on a street tree population project where he conducted municipal street tree assessments. His study included using the U.S. Forest Service's i-Tree software to count and measure ash trees across the state.

Another project involved working with one of his Ph.D. students to evaluate the number of variables that influence the growth and development of street trees. The project led to the development of the urban tree growth and longevity working group.

"Science doesn't get done unless someone values it," adds Dr. Wiseman. "We struggle with the significance of our work so we need a constituency who is for us. ISA has always been an advocate for science and research."