

Taking Arboriculture to the Streets

It is an honor to write to you as the new President of ISA. For me, this is a dream come true. Since my father, Frank E. Gamma Sr., joined ISA (then National Shade Tree Conference) in the 1950s, the ISA conference became our annual family vacation. I became acquainted with ISA at age 11, in 1974, when my parents attended the Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Back in 1974, manila rope, tar cans on saddles, pistol grip hand saws, Whisper chippers, and Homelite chain saws were the norm. The International Tree Climbing Championship was called the Jamboree. Lauren Lanphear was thin and Don Blair had a full head of hair. A lot of things have changed since then. I grew up and so did ISA.

Inspired by the arborist world around me, I graduated from the University of Missouri with a B.S. in Horticulture. I returned to the family business and became involved in our local St. Louis Arborist Association. The St. Louis Arborist Association was, and still is, a strong local group of dedicated arborists with monthly meetings to discuss tree and tree industry issues. We began local efforts to publicize the benefits of trees and to educate the public about the credentials and benefits of arborists. Due to the technology of the time, our grassroots arboriculture education efforts were similar across the country. Local ISA Chapters and NAA (now TCIA) did their best to promote arborists and the benefits of trees on small budgets. And then, it seemed, we grew up again.

Over the years, the International Society of Arboriculture solidified itself as a global organization; we expanded industry education, established the ISA Certified Arborist program, and spread public awareness. We are trained through universities and certification programs and we have continuing educational opportunities. Presently, we are unfolding new ways to seek more knowledge about trees through e-learning. Through ISA educational programs and its catalog of publications, ISA continues to meet the educational needs of arborists. The education possibilities have never been better.

Today, we also have an arborist certification program that has raised the bar of education and the notoriety of arborists. The ISA credential has undoubtedly heightened awareness of the profession of arboriculture. The credential is used by municipalities, utilities, and commercial arborists for placement of key work positions, providing a benchmark of competency. Consumers are better served by the ISA credential, and awareness of proper tree care is becoming more widespread at the general public level. And now it seems, we have the opportunity to grow up yet again.

The “green movement” is spreading across the globe

and it couldn't be a more exciting time to be an arborist. Integral to environmental responsibility, arborists are *the* profession of tree care and preservation. During my tenure as ISA President, I intend to use the momentum of the green movement to heighten public awareness of the profession of arboriculture and benefits of trees. I feel that the time is ripe to take our experience, credentials, and ability to promote environmental health to the streets in a bold, new way.

Over the next few months, the ISA leadership will be looking into using technology and a concerted effort with our allied industry organizations to carry the environmental benefits of arboriculture to the public. It is our mission to educate the public, and now is the time to dedicate time, talent, and resources to this goal. Together with our loyal and dedicated staff, and an army of talented volunteers, we can achieve this goal and make it a reality. Yes, the ISA is going green and with your help, we're taking it to the streets.

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By Tim Gamma

ISA President