



Hear from the ISA Gold Canopy Partners – Bartlett Tree Experts

The ISA Canopy Partners program is a collaborative initiative that brings together industry leaders to support ISA's mission to promote the professional practice of arboriculture, inform the public about tree benefits, and provide a global network of arborists, urban foresters, and people who care for trees. In addition to supporting ISA, our Gold Canopy Partners continue to promote the professional practice of arboriculture within their own organizations by emphasizing the importance of credentialing, encouraging a culture of safety within their organization, and focusing on their employee's career development.

ISA recently spoke with President and Chief Operating Officer Jim Ingram of Bartlett Tree Experts, an ISA Gold Canopy Partner, to discuss the ways they further professionalism within their company.

What are some ways your organization promotes the profession of arboriculture within your organization, the public and within the industry as a whole?

Bartlett Tree Experts has been the global leader in scientific tree and shrub care for over 118 years, advancing the industry through the innovation and research of The R.A. Bartlett Research Laboratories, experimental grounds, and arboretum. Many standard practices, cabling and bracing, tree lightning protection, fertilization, and integrated pest management, were pioneered and shared with the industry by Bartlett scientists and managers. Bartlett coined the term "Plant Health Care" and created the first Plant Health Care Technician position, shaping how the industry approaches tree and woody plant care. I describe Bartlett to our people as a four-legged chair: science, technology, business, and safety is embedded in all we do. Technology drives the science.

Bartlett Tree Experts' ISA Certified Arborists provide plant health care recommendations specific to the tolerances of each species, focusing deeply on the history, culture, insect/disease concerns, and management of each plant species.

One of our hallmarks is our "A-Team" approach to combating major insects, diseases, and invasive species. We pool our collective knowledge, research solutions, and develop tactics to protect the environment. Another defining trait that helps promote the profession is our commitment to sharing what we learn with the green industry to help society and the profession at large.

Can you share a success story about how your company has promoted the profession?

A key part of Bartlett's success is our rapid response to major threats facing specific tree and shrub species. When Beech Leaf Disease (BLD) was first identified in Ohio in 2012 and quickly spread through the Mid-Atlantic, New England, and into Ontario, Canada, the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories immediately launched experiments to find solutions. In 2024, we achieved a breakthrough, developing successful Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies to thwart the disease.



We have pioneered environmentally responsible IPM approaches for Dutch Elm Disease, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Emerald Ash Borer, and Asian Longhorn Beetle. Every species faces unique concerns, and we craft precise, sustainable prescriptions from the soil up. By monitoring plants frequently and tailoring care, we minimize chemical use and focus on balancing ecosystems, including the use of beneficial insects to naturally suppress harmful insect populations.

Bartlett was the first company to research tick-borne diseases such as Lyme Disease, Babesiosis, Ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. This scientific work was initiated to protect our own people in the field. Bartlett's tick research has since provided valuable information for our clients and the wider profession, including information about the hazards created by ticks and how to manage those concerns.

How do you see the future of the arboriculture profession over the next 100 years?

At Bartlett Tree Experts, we benefit from our collective knowledge to help clients care for their residential and commercial properties and public lands, while protecting the broader natural resources of our country and the world. Our work goes beyond trees and shrubs; it directly impacts water resources. As clean water becomes increasingly important, the way we manage landscapes will play a crucial role in preserving water quality for future generations.

A key focus of our research on the environmental front is reducing our carbon footprint through better management of trees, shrubs, and other vegetation. We are also conducting extensive cultivar research to identify species that can thrive in a warm climate. By studying tolerance and benefits species by species, we can strengthen ecosystems and benefit the sustainability of our environment. There has been great success with Dutch Elm Disease, resistant cultivars, and ongoing work with the American Chestnut Foundation to restore chestnuts to the landscape. We partner with organizations like the Land Trust Alliance, providing guidance to help manage hundreds of thousands of acres. Disease-resistant dogwoods and tolerant elm cultivars are more examples of how species-specific research protects biodiversity.

We are advancing the research of new ash tree cultivars. Understanding plant genetics allows credentialed arborists to recommend replacing invasive or harmful species with beneficial alternatives from the same genus, improving both aesthetics and ecology.

Does your organization promote credentialing, and if so, are there benefits to being credentialed?

Bartlett Tree Experts has been a leader in professional credentialing in the industry since the company's earliest days. In 1924, our founder, F.A. Bartlett, hosted the very first Shade Tree Conference at his Stamford, Connecticut property.



This historic gathering, organized by the Connecticut Tree Protection Examining Board, brought together 33 attendees from six states and the District of Colombia to exchange knowledge and advance the field. The conference focused on cavity work and tree care practices and laid the groundwork for what would later become the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).

We also have served on industry boards that helped to develop credentials for Certified Arborist and Registered Consulting Arborist.

Is there a connection between your company culture and industry safety?

Bartlett Tree Experts operates with a deep commitment to safety, guided by three pillars: awareness, assertiveness, and accountability. Our Accident and Hazard Prevention Policy states, "Each office fosters an environment where a Safety Culture can develop and permeate every task, no matter how small." This philosophy ensures safety is not just a program, but a core value throughout every aspect of our work.

Each office manages its Safety Program as a collaborative team, supported by the industry's first Regional Safety Managers. This structure keeps our safety standards consistent while allowing each location to address its own unique challenges. Safety is the leading part of our culture. We are science-based and safety-driven with every decision and action. This value in safety is highlighted with our motto, "Safety Above All Else."

Historically, Bartlett has played an active role in shaping safety standards across the industry. We have been involved in regulatory developments at state, national, and international levels, working closely with governing bodies in the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom. Our expertise has been sought by others engaged in drafting and proposing safety regulations, reflecting the trust placed in our knowledge and experience.

We prioritize sharing information, collaborating with peers, and continually improving safety practices across the industry.

What are some of the ways in which your organization approaches employee career development?

At Bartlett, career development begins on day one through our Champion Program. Bartlett's assessment program sets the foundation for growth by fostering clear communication between supervisors and team members about individual career goals. Each year, we recognize the "best of the best" across all work types in every local office as Champions and employees who strive for excellence in their positions.



A key feature of the program is its focus on one-on-one development. Supervisors use our assessment tool to guide structured conversations, document progress, and align opportunities with each employee's aspirations. This approach ensures that career growth is intentional, personalized, and ongoing.

Our Learning Management System (LMS) complements the Champion Program by giving employees immediate access to training on the fundamentals of arboriculture. They can begin learning every aspect of the profession without waiting for scheduled programs, supporting advancement alongside industry credentials such as the Certified Arborist designation.

Champions are selected based on a set of rigorous criteria established for nine work type categories including Arborist Groundsperson, Arborist Climber, Arborist Crew Leader, Plant Health Care Specialist, Local Administrative Coordinator, Local Office Safety Coordinator, Arborist Representative, Local Manager, and Division Trainer.

As employees progress, we emphasize that true professional status comes from not only mastering the fundamentals but also teaching and coaching others. The Champion Program celebrates this achievement by recognizing individuals who represent both technical capabilities and leadership. My mantra is, "The last person hired is the most important!"