

ISA'S ARBOR BASE INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE: WHAT IT CAN DO FOR YOU

by Paul A. Johnston¹

Abstract. The ISA Arbor Base Information Clearinghouse is designed to aid arborists and tree trimmers in locating information, products, and services relative to work in the green industry. For a small fee, arborists can gain access to the latest information which may help their work be more efficient and potentially increase profits.

Résumé. La banque d'information sur les arbres de l'ISA est désignée pour aider les arboriculteurs à obtenir de l'information, des produits et des services reliés à des travaux de l'industrie verte. Pour un prix minime, les arboriculteurs peuvent avoir accès à l'information la plus récente qui peut les aider à travailler plus efficacement, et potentiellement, à augmenter les profits.

The "yellow pages" of the green industry has arrived with the introduction of Arbor Base, a computerized information system designed to aid arborists and tree trimmers in locating information, products and services relative to the arboriculture industry.

Arbor Base was developed by Environmental Consultants, Inc. (ECI), for the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Research Trust in response to an industrywide need for a resource center. It is an information clearinghouse providing members and non-members of the ISA with assistance in problem solving through references to literature, new procedures, and to products and service suppliers in the field. Now arborists throughout the country can gain access to the wealth of information pertaining to the arboriculture industry without costly, extensive, and time-consuming research.

Arbor Base collects, classifies, and distributes information in three major categories and provides access to each: existing databases, products and services, and special needs of Arbor Base users.

Existing databases constitute a library of information comprised of data from trade, research and technical journals, as well as popular literature—information that can facilitate the identification of problems and expedite their resolu-

tion. AGRICOLA, the database prepared by the National Agricultural Library, is included in the existing databases. Determined to be the most useful of all existing databases, AGRICOLA concentrates on technical and scientific publications. Nearly 2,500 other databases are available as resources.

Access to information regarding products and services is provided by Arbor Base. While Arbor Base cannot endorse the products and services listed, it provides names and addresses of producers and suppliers. Data on industries and small businesses serving the arboriculture industry also is accumulated for the system.

The special needs category includes information supplied to Arbor Base by members and users of the system. Designed to be an information exchange, it provides references to literature of information which has addressed a topic of interest to an Arbor Base subscriber. The special needs category also may include solutions developed by Arbor Base users.

To maximize the potential of Arbor Base, a user first defines the problem they want addressed and then prepares a specific question. The objective is then identified, such as specific response or general information. To narrow the range of possibilities, the following pertinent data are supplied:

1. Whether data are desired only for a specific state or region
2. Whether the problem is an urban or rural situation
3. The species involved
4. If the problem is insect related
 - location of damage (e.g. leaves, twigs, bores)
 - type of damage (e.g., chewing, boring)
 - season of occurrence
5. If the problem is disease related
 - general symptoms

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- signs of fungus fruit present (mushrooms, etc.)
- stains present

Typical questions addressed to Arbor Base involve insect and disease problems, pesticides, herbicides, climbing techniques, roots and root damage, and environmental concerns. However, Arbor Base is open to any questions or problems in the arboriculture industry.

Any or all of the Arbor Base services are available by telephone or by mail. Costs for the service typically range from \$30 to \$40, which includes the service charge as well as the charge

for computer time. ISA members receive a \$10 discount on the Arbor Base service charge. In the United States the toll-free number is 1-800-ISA-TREE. Users in Pennsylvania, Alaska, and Hawaii can call 215-322-4040. Queries also can be mailed to Arbor Base Information Clearinghouse, 207 Lakeside Drive, Southampton, Pennsylvania 18966-4527.

*Vice President
Environmental Consultants, Inc.
207 Lakeside Drive
Southampton, PA 18966*

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Swim, J. 1986. **Getting your employees involved in safety.** *Arbor Age* 6 (2): 12-14, 16, 18.

Our approach over the years has been to hire or appoint a safety director who would be told to "make those people work safely." The director, of course, would write a new safety manual, new safety rules, and new slogans, set up safety meetings and come up with penalties for not working safely. The long-standing frustration in this approach was that it did not work. Accidents continued to happen, claim costs continued to escalate and many safety directors would leave the company in frustration. Judging from poor work records up to that point, the experts were obviously neither a safety director nor the upper-management person writing rules and regulations from the corporate office. The answer is obvious. The person performing the work has the most knowledge of and the most control over the task being performed. The field employee is the expert who can solve the problem. You need to ask the expert. On the surface this seems simple, and basically it is. The first task for either a large or small operation is to get ideas and information from the field employees. Then it must categorize the information into specific job tasks. It must formalize its findings into a usable safety and training manual authored by the experts who do the work it covers—the field personnel. The experts must be involved and stay involved.