

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM OF THE PENN-DEL CHAPTER¹

by John B. Ward

Abstract. The Certification Program of the Penn-Del Chapter is called *Certified Arborists of Pennsylvania & Delaware (CAPD)*. A candidate must fulfill basic requirements and pass a series of three examinations with a minimum grade of 75. The examinations include written, oral and field identification.

Everyone would agree the main reason for a certification program is to improve the profession of tree care. Certification gives the potential client a list of arborists who have worked to pass examinations to increase their knowledge. Clients realize that a person who has gone to this trouble has interest in his work and will bring that interest to the clients' trees.

As you all know tree work is one of the easiest businesses to get into. You work for a tree business for 6 months, learn a little, buy a pick-up and chain saw and away you go! Certification is not going to eliminate these people; but it gives the client a choice. A choice between a professional, certified arborist or a tree cutter.

People who want to preserve their trees will pick the Certified Arborist. So, being certified is good for your business and good for the profession of arboriculture as well.

We started thinking about a certification program approximately 20 years ago. At first, we were considering a state regulated, or licensing program, but after years of trying to get a bill sponsored, we decided to develop our own program through the Chapter.

Our program is the Certified Arborists of Pennsylvania & Delaware or CAPD. We started working in 1976 and for 5 years the certification committee worked along with the Penn State University Extension Service to formulate our objectives. We developed a Constitution and By-Laws (after many meetings, writings and re-writings). We retained a lawyer to check out the Constitution and By-Laws to make sure everything was legal to protect the

Association and individual members. In 1981, we certified the first arborists. We now have 16 certified arborists. We were fortunate from the beginning to have Penn State University Extension Service help us.

What Our Program Is About

The main reason for arborists' certification is to *improve* the tree care industry. The goals are: 1) to promote the use of industry approved arboricultural standards as they apply to safety, business ethics and tree care techniques, 2) to explain and promote the certification program to consumers, and 3) to promote and encourage continuing *education* in Arboriculture.

Administration. A Board of seven directors administers the CAPD. The directors are elected by the members of the Penn-Del Chapter of the ISA. Directors elect a chairman, secretary, and other officers.

Eligibility. A candidate must:

1. Be a member of the Penn-Del Chapter of the ISA.
2. Have the current minimum insurance coverage for property damage and public liability.
3. Have 2 full consecutive years of experience in arboriculture.
4. Successfully complete the examinations.

How To Apply. A candidate must:

1. Request an application form.
2. Complete application form, attach letters of employment verification, proof of insurance, and appropriate fees and send to the Secretary of CAPD.

Examinations. Consist of 3 parts: written, oral, identification. Penn State University assists the Board of Directors in making up the examinations. Areas of knowledge to be tested include: tree identification, insects, diseases, materials and chemicals for tree care, pruning, tree safety,

1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in Quebec City, Canada in August 1984.

tools, and equipment. A passing grade is 75 in each part. Each exam must be passed. A different exam is given each year. An applicant who fails may re-apply the next year. Any grievances would be submitted to the CAPD Board.

When an applicant applies he is sent a brochure explaining the program and a list of recommended study materials along with an application. It is explained to the candidate that CAPD members must attend at least one educational meeting on tree care per year.

We also have a brochure available to garden clubs, municipalities, and other interested groups and individuals which explains the certification program. Along with this brochure is sent a directory of the names and addresses of the Certified Arborists. This directory also includes a statement that CAPD is not responsible for the work of its members.

Our Good Points and Some Problems

We feel that we worked hard in developing our program. We tried to think of problems that may develop before we finalized the program. We believe the exams are difficult enough to be worthwhile. A candidate must study and review to prepare in order to pass the exams. We have about a 50% passing rate.

We believe the exams *must* be difficult enough to demand study or the program will not be worthwhile.

Problems. Because of the degree of difficulty of the exams I feel some potential certified arborists are hesitant to take the exams. They feel that they can't pass.

Publicity. We are trying to get articles into newspapers and other periodicals concerning our certification program. We feel it is important to make the public aware of what is available to them. We have also done some advertising in local papers as a group of Certified Arborists in our area. Overall, we feel we have a good program and we want more people to take advantage of it.

Policing. We feel that by making the exams difficult enough to be worthwhile and making sure of an applicant's credentials, the type person we are certifying is going to do quality work. If a case arises where we receive justifiable complaints against an individual, the Board of Directors has the power through the Constitution and By-Laws to take action.

In conclusion, I feel we have developed a good program. We would like more arborists to become certified and we want to publicize our program so that the public is more aware of it. Certification is a step in the right direction to improving the profession of arboriculture.

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ABSTRACT

VAN DE WERKEN, H. 1984. **Why use obsolete fertilizer practices.** Am. Nurseryman 159(7): 65-71.

Obsolete recommendations concerning tree fertilization are still found in current publications. They erroneously relate the amount of fertilizer to be applied to trunk diameter, when it should be based on the spread of the tree's root system. Also, the formulations that are recommended, such as 5-10-5, 4-12-4, or 6-12-12, are based on tests with agronomic field crops rather than shade trees. Despite three decades of scientifically designed tests by horticulturists and arborists, and extensive publication of their work, few practitioners pay attention to their findings. Many extension workers, garden writers, and book authors continue to perpetuate obsolete concepts.