



Tree Talk

By Judson R Scott, Vine & Branch Inc, Arboricultural and Horticultural Consulting

You have bought a wooded lot. It is the lot you have dreamed of all your life. The trees are magnificent. You imagine waking up with the windows open the birds singing the leaves rustling. Now you have to figure out how to build your dream and keep your trees alive in the process.

One of the greatest challenges in the construction industry today is to successfully build on a wooded lot. Success is easy to measure. Are the trees alive or dead? Are they thriving or declining? Will they stay that way?

According to Craig Kaiser of Coldwell Banker- Kaiser Homeowners pay 30% more for a wooded lot. You then entrust it to a builder. In effect you entrust the builder with the \$30,000-50,000 premium you have paid for the lot and with you dreams. Now what do you do?

It is imperative that the chosen "builder of dreams" learns every thing he can about caring for your prized possessions. To many builders, trees are a nuisance to deal with during the building process. It seems that they are always in the way. You the property owner love them though. As a matter of fact they are like your children or part of the family.

So what are you should you expect your builder to do? What procedures can he take to protect your prized possessions? How can you get the information that you need to successfully build on a wooded lot?

The first thing to do is to add a Consulting Arborist to the building team. The American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA) is a good source to find top quality Consulting Arborists who have the qualifications to consult on projects such as yours. If there is not an ASCA member in your area check with The National Arborist Association, International Society of Arboriculture, and the Arbor Day Foundation. These organizations all offer awards for "building with trees" and for "construction site tree preservation". Find out if any of the winners are in your area. The International Society of Arboriculture also has a program that allows Arborists to become "Certified". A Certified Arborist should have at least a basic knowledge of construction site tree preservation.

Once you have found a Consulting or Certified Arborist and before site clearing, plan a meeting with the Arborist, the builder, the architect and the landscape architect to work on a plan to build the home, install the landscape and hardscape, and to keep the trees alive in the process. The Arborist should be one with experience in "Tree Preservation" and "building with trees". Check his or her references. See if you can go to a site that he helped plan tree preservation for two, three or even five years ago. Talk to the Arborist about trees; see that he knows his stuff.

Many builders may think "Hey I don't want this guy telling me what to do!" I want to build the house without some pesky guy saying, "Wait! What about that tree? What about those roots? Really if used correctly an Arborist can add value to your team in many ways. First having an Arborist as part of your team will add an agent that is solely looking after your trees and your

investment. Secondly an Arborist can advise you and the builder that preservation of all trees is not possible. Sometimes a tree is structurally unsound and should be removed. Thirdly the use of an Arborist in the planning stage can help to prevent very costly mistakes, which damage trees and cost you money in the long run.

Watch this column in upcoming issues for actual step-by-step Tree Preservation procedures that will help you build successfully on a site with minimal disturbance to the trees. When done properly, tree preservation should save you money often spent on costly trees removals and plant health care.

Note on the Author

Judson R Scott is a Registered Consulting Arborist (RCA) with the American Society of Consulting Arborists. As a RCA he advises Attorneys, Developers, Golf Course Superintendants, Architects, Engineers, Insurance Companies, as well as homeowners concerning their trees and landscapes. He can be reached at Vine & Branch INC. 317-846-1424 or by email at Treeconsultant@aol.com.

© Judson R Scott, Vine & Branch Inc. 2002 all rights reserved. No reproduction without expressed permission.

www.vineandbranch.net