The Changing Winds of Plant Appraisal

PRESENTED BY:
Jeffrey Ling RCA
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All Plants Have Value

“The practice of plant appraisal and studies have provided methods to value plants in monetary terms... with the help of the Guide (we) can produce *creditable* and *acceptable* manner to determine *reasonable* appraised monetary value of plants.”

(highlights by JL)

Guide to Plant Appraisal, 9th Edition
Chapter 1, Paragraph 1, Page 1
All Plants Have Value

“In 1947 . . . . To devise a method for establishing the value of shade trees.”

“Any means or formula for evaluating shade trees must be flexible. . . . Always the judgment and opinions of the appraiser will be important in determining value.”

“For this reason . . . . It should be applied by an arborist or horticulturist, who is familiar with the characteristics of the trees being appraised.”

Shade Tree Evaluation, Revision II, 1970
Page 4, selected sentences
Plant • Landscape Appraisal in the 21st Century

The Guide to Plant Appraisal:
10th Edition??
9th Edition?
7th or 8th ??!!
or the 2nd??!!
All Plants Hold Value

1. Appraisal (Value) is not a fixed point, but “a reality”.
2. Appraisal (Value) is modified by philosophical, cultural, geographical and economic directives.
3. Appraisal (Value) is dependent on the character of: tree, tree-owner and the plant appraiser.

>> Baseball Umpire vs. Plant Appraiser <<
1. “Appraisal” (value) is not a fixed point, but “a reality”.

9th Edition Quote:

“The appraisal process can be defined as the act, manner, or technique of conducting the steps of an appraisal method... Every appraisal is different, and the appraiser should select the most reasonable approaches.”

The 9th Guide
Chapter 2, Pg. 11, ¶ 2
2. “Appraisal” (value) is modified by philosophical, cultural, geographical and economic directives.

Same tree, same condition, same size . . .

“The Guide for Plant Appraisal is designed to help plant appraisers determine values . . in a variety of (settings). The Guide advocates that methods be used in a reasonable manner . . Test of reasonableness . . to compare . . plant values to total property values.”

The Guide, Chapter 8, pg 99, ¶ 1
3. “Appraisal” (value) is dependent on the character of: tree, tree-owner and the plant appraiser.

“Judgment is often considered a defining characteristic that distinguishes a professional from a technician.”

The Guide, Chapter 10, pg 116, ¶ 1
What is the value of this tree?

White pine
~26’ tall
~7” dia. at 12”
What is the value of this tree?

6” Sweet Gum
In the nursery
What is the value of this tree?

4” Lilac tree
How do you appraise this situation?

Lot 45’x 80’,

All trees and stumps removed,

Contemptuous Contractor,
How do you appraise this situation? 2

Existing street,

Street extension,

Pre-damage

Approximate size of lot,
Parameters of Plant Appraisal

1. The 9th Guide lists different methodologies for appraising landscapes and trees, consideration of all, before selecting one, is imperative.
2. Reliance (sole application) of one methodology, over time, places suspicion upon the appraiser.
3. Mistakes may be embarrassing. In a contentious situation, they can be career changing!
4. New data may alter opinions.

Plant appraisals are only opinions!
Tree Appraisal

Trees provide many benefits and value to property owners in functional, aesthetic, social, environmental — and even economic — ways. Value may be defined as the present worth of future benefits. Many of these benefits can be quantified by a dollar figure, and it is the responsibility of an appraiser to assign monetary value. Appraising trees and living landscape components can be challenging, and requires training, expertise and experience.

The methods used to value trees are published in The Guide for Plant Appraisal, 5th Edition, authored by the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA). The guide is endorsed by all the major arboriculture, horticulture and real estate industry organizations. When conducting an appraisal, be sure to use the current edition. The guide describes the various appraisal processes and gives examples of each. Although it is a good tool for the valuation of plants, it is only a guide and the procedures involved require care and experience.

The purpose of an appraisal is defined by the client's needs. These needs may include tort claims, insurance claims, tax deductions, real estate assessment and proactive planning. An appraisal estimates the defined value of personal property, including plants. The tree appraisal process is used to develop a supported estimate of current value.

Unfortunately, most appraisals are done after trees have been removed or damaged. This situation requires additional investigation and might include determining pre-accident value or sampling on a local basis. The best time to conduct an appraisal is prior to any incident or damage. This is rarely done, however. If available, previous site records, tree assessments, site reviews, images and even a witness can help determine the tree pre-damage condition. With all the facts gathered, it is the duty of the appraiser to determine the appropriate method and produce an unbiased valuation. The appraiser should document all activities related to the process, from initial contact with the client — including establishing the background information on the tree — to inspecting the site and formulating values.

Regardless of the appraisal method used, there are some primary factors to consider. The four major elements involved in properly assessing the value of a tree are size, species, condition and location. A thorough understanding of each is imperative; otherwise, the appraisal will lack credibility and significance for the case.