



Arboricultural Practices: Framework for Ethical Professionalism*

Lindsey Purcell, Urban Forestry Specialist

Executive Director, Indiana Arborist Association

Arboriculture has evolved into an applied science over many years and basic concepts have forged the way for our industry and continue to influence our practice and philosophy. New research findings continue to expand on the concept of tree care with new practices, applications and health care techniques. To maintain a credible, reputable profession, I believe it is necessary to adhere to a set of principles which strengthens and builds upon the science. These are principles which binds us to a **responsibility of care**, not just the application of care.

What do we have available to us to help guide our profession and our efforts in a unified, consistent manner? Many of us have professional credentials which indicate our level of knowledge and representative skill set such as the ISA Certified Arborist, or similar certification. This provides some guarantees of a consistent body of knowledge across our industry and somewhat ethical interaction with a client. It doesn't ensure consistency in care or good business practices. This is what led me to consider a long-standing, historical set of guidelines which are science-based, yet interactive with the patient (tree), the practitioner and the client. To create a framework for ethical practice with accountability to the "patient". The modern arborist should be directed by a universally accepted set of guidelines, which connects responsible practice to the basic principles of arboriculture.

The Oath, adapted into Basic Principles for Ethical Arboriculture

- *I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.*
 - **Respect the scientific gains of others.**
- *I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism.*
 - **Apply all measures required, avoiding overtreatment.**
- *I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.*
 - **Arboriculture is an art as well as a science.**
- *I will not be ashamed to say "I know not," nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery.*
 - **There is no shame in "I don't know".**



Arboricultural Practices: Framework for Ethical Professionalism*

Lindsey Purcell, Urban Forestry Specialist

Executive Director, Indiana Arborist Association

- *... tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life.... But it may also be within my power to take a life;*
 - **Understand that not all trees can be saved.**
- *I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being...*
 - **Remember to treat the tree, not just the issue.**
- *I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure.*
 - **Prevention is preferable to cure.**
- *I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings...*
 - **We belong to a society with an obligation of respect.**
- *...May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my calling and may I long experience the joy of healing those who seek my help.*
 - **Act to preserve the science and practice and enjoy the experience of your discipline.**

This philosophy should be considered as guide for the practitioner of modern arboriculture. They deliver basic criteria for evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of arboricultural practices and for deciding upon which is the better choice for short and long term objectives. Outcomes should be known and considered prior to any intervention. *This is what separates the professional from the pretender.*

People are concerned for the planet and we as a society want to help the Earth and create a more sustainable, improved quality of life. As air and water quality decrease, we are taking a more serious look at this perfect biological machine... the tree. It is the foundation of our survival on the planet. The patriarch of our landscape. The oldest living element in the ecosystem. Why shouldn't our activities be governed by an oath or directives which guide our practice and protect our most precious resource?