2027 IAA Conference: Presentation Descriptions

January 19–21, 2027 | Indiana Arborist Association

Tuesday, January 19

Welcome, Introductions and Updates

Time and presenter: 8:15–8:45 AM | Lindsey Purcell, Executive Director, IAA; Peter Fife, IAA President

Welcome, introductions and IAA updates.

IAA Annual Awards Program and IAA Apprenticeship Program Updates

Time and presenter: 8:45–9:30 AM | Steve Lane, Response growth Collective

Current information about the US Department of Labor approved Registered Arborist Apprenticeship Program. Recognition of efforts in our chapter and state. Richard Karber, AEP, Awards Chairperson.

Competing Legal Interests in Street Trees

Time and presenter: 9:30–10:30 AM | James Komen, One Arboriculture Inc.

No presentation description was supplied in the source agenda.

UTREE: A Generative AI platform for Advancing Urban Tree Inventory and Scenario Planning

Time and presenter: 11:00 AM–12:00 PM | Brady Hardiman, Purdue University

UTREE is a National Science Foundation-funded research project that seeks to democratize access to urban forest information by combining satellite imagery, artificial intelligence, and urban environmental data within a web-based decision-support platform. This presentation will provide an overview of the uTREE platform, demonstrate current capabilities using Indianapolis as a case study, and discuss ongoing efforts to support urban forest planning, stormwater management, climate resilience, and community investment.

Trees and Health: Learning from Green Heart Louisville

Time and presenter: 1:00–2:00 PM | Dr. Theodore Smith, University of Louisville

The Green Heart Louisville Project is a groundbreaking community-based clinical trial examining whether strategically planting trees and shrubs can improve environmental conditions and human health in urban neighborhoods. This session will introduce the project's innovative "trees support human health" approach, research design, and emerging findings, with special attention to ancillary studies exploring how changes in micro- and macro-biodiversity may influence human health and well-being. Together, these studies demonstrate the value of integrating ecological and public-health research to inform healthier, more resilient cities.

You Have Lots of Things to Maintain, Why Not Add Traffic to the List?

Time and presenter: 2:00–3:00 PM | Matt Krausher, Indiana Department of Transportation

If you do work on or near roads, this is for you. We will discuss the various elements of maintenance of traffic, appropriate setups, and pertinent resources that apply any time you are conducting work on a roadway or your work has the potential to impact the motoring public or pedestrians.,

Digital Forestry Tools and Analysis for Arboriculture and Urban Forestry

Time and presenter: 3:30–4:30 PM | Aren Flint, Davey Resource Group

Discover how AI is transforming arboriculture and urban forestry, enhancing tree health monitoring, species identification, and maintenance practices. Learn about risk assessments, drone technology, machine learning models for climate resilience, and AI's role in helping you do your job faster and better. This presentation offers a glimpse into the future of our profession through innovative AI applications.

Wednesday, January 20

Vegetation Management - Brush and Weed Control Application and Timing

Time and presenter: 8:00–9:00 AM | Greg Ressler, Red River Specialties/Azelis

Selecting the correct herbicides for your program and when to apply them.

An Introduction to Consulting

Time and presenter: 8:00–9:00 AM | Concurrent | Aaron Dickinson, Arborcology Consulting

You know trees. But could you turn that knowledge into professional advice people are willing to pay for? This practical introduction challenges certified arborists to look beyond traditional tree care and explore consulting. Learn the opportunities, disciplines, professional standards, common pitfalls, and first steps to building a successful consulting practice.

Case Law Illustrations in Utility Vegetation Management

Time and presenter: 9:00–10:00 AM | James Komen, Class One Arboriculture Inc.

How do utility managers keep the public safe without cutting down all the trees? Utility companies are held to a very high standard of care when handling the dangerous instrumentality of electricity. But although they have significant rights and interests in managing trees in and around utility rights-of-way, their control over tree management is not absolute. Thus, competing interests in tree management in and around utility lines often become a source of conflict. This presentation tells the stories of several cases addressing these concerns.

SOPs in the Trades

Time and presenter: 9:00–10:00 AM | Concurrent | Dean Ricci, Ricci Landscape Management

Most trade businesses don't need a binder full of procedures. They need the right few, written the right way. In this session, Dean Ricci, Jr. introduces a flow-based approach to standard operating procedures and shows how to tell when a process truly needs an SOP and how to think it through step by step. You'll see how AI can help you draft an SOP in minutes instead of hours, and why simple steps often make the biggest impact on quality, consistency, and profit. You'll leave with a practical framework for building SOPs that your crews actually use, without creating a library nobody reads.

So, You Think Your Aerial Lift Will Magically Save You?

Time and presenter: 10:45–11:45 AM* | Wesley Tregilgas, Wright Tree Service

Truck mounted aerial lifts are one of the most common pieces of life support and access for our industry. They are also one of the most bought and sold pieces of equipment in our industry making secondhand ownership very commonplace. There is this false sense of protection that somehow if one owns a utility rated aerial lift that they are safe from electrical hazards and yet not knowing at all what it is really capable of protecting them from. This session will go over the critical components of the aerial lift as a part of the

pre-inspection one must never overlook, review some actual aerial lift accidents that occurred and what were the key failures, and spell out what actual electrical protection one has in the aerial platform.

All Things Biochar: An Arborist's Guide

Time and presenter: 10:45–11:45 AM* | Concurrent | Zack Shier, Joseph Tree

How does biochar work? What makes a quality biochar? Can it be used in alkaline soils? In this presentation, Zack will review the research, standards and real-world case studies defining biochar use. Whether granular, liquid, or mixtures of multiple products, this presentation aims to teach the working arborist how to understand and utilize biochar and accompanying products in their PHC practices.

The Unintended Effects of Paclobutrazol on Plants

Time and presenter: 1:30–2:30 PM | Chad Rigsby, Bartlett Research Laboratories

This session will provide an overview of the anatomical and physiological effects of paclobutrazol on woody plants, and will discuss the uses of paclobutrazol that are supported by the scientific literature.

Consulting Arborist Panel Discussion

Time and presenter: 1:30–2:30 PM | Concurrent | Lindsey Purcell; Aaron Dickinson; Jud Scott; Andrew Mertz and Peter Fife

Join an engaging panel of established consulting arborists and emerging ASCA Registered Consulting Arborists as they explore the opportunities, challenges, and evolving expectations of professional consulting. From building a successful practice and establishing credibility to navigating ethical responsibilities and complex client relationships, panelists will share practical experiences and lessons learned. This interactive discussion offers valuable insights for arborists considering consulting as a career and experienced professionals seeking to strengthen their practices.

Common Plants that are Toxic to the Skin

Time and presenter: 2:30–3:30 PM | Andrew Mertz, Duke Energy

This presentation will focus on plants commonly known (and not so known) that are responsible for most plant-caused dermatitis in the eastern United States. Everyone has heard about the common toxic plants like poison ivy and oak, however, there are many others to be aware. This presentation will talk about different types of dermatitis, types of exposure and the first aid recommendations.

Too Hot, Too Cold, Too Dry, Too Wet: Understanding Environmental Stress in Landscape Plants

Time and presenter: 2:30–3:30 PM | Concurrent | Kyle Daniel, Purdue University

Heat waves, cold snaps, drought, and flooding can all have lasting impacts on the health, appearance, and survival of landscape plants. This presentation explores how plants respond to environmental stresses, how to recognize common symptoms of damage, and the physiological changes that occur during adverse conditions. Attendees will learn practical strategies for selecting, managing, and caring for trees and shrubs to improve resilience and reduce stress-related decline in the landscape.

Stoaked on Oaks

Time and presenter: 3:30–4:30 PM | Mark Ware, Rainbow Ecoscience

Oak trees are iconic and ecologically vital trees in our landscapes—but across the northern hemisphere, they are showing symptoms of stress and decline. This discussion will describe the causes, symptoms, and management strategies for oak tree decline in urban and suburban environments. We will discuss common biotic and abiotic stressors affecting oaks, and integrated management approaches including, soil management, pest & disease management, and tree resilience strategies.

Wood Decay and Fungal Identification

Time and presenter: 3:30–4:30 PM | Concurrent | John Bonkowski, Purdue University

We will discuss the causes of wood decay of trees, their symptoms and signs, and how to identify associated pathogens. We will also cover what can be done in the field to evaluate internal decay to assist with tree risk assessments.

Thursday, January 21

Tips on Performing Site Assessments, Soil Sampling, and Interpreting the Results

Time and presenter: 8:00–9:00 AM | Michelle Catania, The Morton Arboretum

Many times when a tree is in decline, the standard practice is to take a soil sample for laboratory analysis. Having a keen understanding of proper sampling protocols is important, but understanding what those results mean is imperative for creating a management plan. Keep in mind laboratory results mainly focus on the chemical composition, it is necessary to also perform site assessments to understand the soil

physical and biological components. This talk will leave time at the end for discussion, since exchanging ideas is how we all learn..

After the Storm: Crown Restoration Pruning of Storm Damaged Trees

Time and presenter: 9:00–10:00 AM | Jake Miesbauer, The Morton Arboretum

The Storm damage is a common issue faced by urban tree managers. Sometimes trees are severely damaged and need to be removed. Many more, however, receive moderate levels of damage and can be saved. When tree branches get damaged during storms they typically respond through the production of sprouting branches. Sprouts are a critical component in replacing the tree's photosynthetic capacity. As the new branches grow and develop, restoration pruning becomes an important process to help improve the structural integrity of the tree crown. This presentation will cover the process of managing trees that have been damaged in storms, from first response after the storm, through the crown restoration process.

The Best of the Best in Transportation

Time and presenter: 10:30–11:30 AM | Dr. Fred Whitford, Purdue University

Fred will share his best of the best tips for transporting pesticides and equipment that he has learned working alongside pesticide application industries.

New President Welcome and Past President Recognition / TCC Update

Time and presenter: 11:30 AM–12:00 PM | Peter Fife, IAA Board President; Aison and Brian Gresham, ITCC Committee Co-Chairs

New president welcome, past president recognition, Tree Climbing Championship update, and announcement of IAA Tree Fund raffle winners.

So Now What? Emerging Threats, Old Friends, and What's Next

Time and presenter: 1:30–2:30 PM | Eric Biddinger, IN Department of Natural Resources

A look into the future of pests and diseases in Indiana.

State Chemist Updates

Time and presenter: 2:30–3:30 PM | Aaron Kreider, Investigator, Office of the Indiana State Chemist

No presentation description was supplied in the source agenda.

Additional Conference Activities

Climbers Corner: Demonstration Area in Trade Show Hall; exact schedule TBD.











