



2023 Annual Conference Recap

By: Dudley Marburger
Past President

One of the jobs given to the Past-President is to write a conference recap. Our organization is always finding ways to attract young people. So for my recap I interviewed my 21 year old son, David. This is his second conference. And my 18 year old daughter, Sarah. This is her first conference. As they wrote their answers down I will simply transcribe them here. First David then Sarah.

1. What did I think overall?

Great to see an industry come together.

There was a real sense of comradery among the attendees which made me feel comfortable at the conference as a younger person.

2. Favorite class?

John Ball's Electrical Hazard Program was very insightful on the dangers of our industry.

3. What can improve?

If every person brought canned food, we would have an immense quantity to donate.

4. What did I think about the

food/facilities?

The food was excellent and well worth the value of the Conference.

Fairmont is the perfect location.

5. Favorite part?

Talking to people from all over the NW and making new acquaintances.

Learning new things from people in the industry who have ALOT more experience than me.

Inspired me to continue to educate myself.

If all these old guys still have things to learn, then I certainly do.

Sarah's take:

What did I think overall?

Everyone was very friendly and supportive, and the general environment was encouraging through the conversations I had. There are a lot of very intelligent people, and it was refreshing to see other women there, and on the board.

Favorite class?

Temperature Challenge Plant Disease and Abiotic Issues of 2022, Eva Grimme. It was a very engaging, a fun environment and, was definitely different from the other classes.

What can improve?

There were a few times when someone else who was attending a class was being disruptive and talking when the instructor was talking. I found this to be very distracting, and if people could step out or be respectful to their peers, it would be much less distracting.

What did I think about the food/facilities?

The food was amazing and had a nice variety, but I wish there'd been a few more healthy options like more fruit, salads, and vegetables.

Favorite part?

My favorite part was meeting so many intelligent, friendly people. I didn't feel singled out at all because of my age and/or experience, and I met a lot of interesting people.

And there you have it. From the youth in our organization. Once again we have knocked it out of the ball park. We continue to make adjustments that only increase the quality of our annual conference. Great speakers, deep insights, great facility and great attendees, what else to say. Excellent job AMTOPP.

Sam Strickland Awarded Honorary Member

With a unanimous vote by the Board of Directors during the February 1, 2023 board meeting, Sam Strickland of All Things Green Inc. was awarded Honorary Member status.

All organizations have a few people that come along and take on more than what is required of them, taking on the spirit of the organization in all they do. Taking on more than expected is not to say they are perfect, as we all go through rough patches. But, when the dust settles, their strengths and heart for the organization come front and center.

For those of you who do not know Sam or what he

See Sam page 7



Left to Right: Jason Stringer, Director; Sam Strickland, Dudley Marburger 2022 President, (back) Tom Molitor, 2023 President

President's Message



Much like winter of 2022/2023, there is never a dull moment in the tree industry.

I started my company in 2009 with my flatbed truck, 2 saws, and climbing gear.

At 22 years old, my real world education began.

From there I dreamed of the tall trees that the buckets couldn't reach, the big equipment that did the log lifting for me, and the super crew that I didn't have.

At the time, It was solo work with an old chuck and duck chipper and throwing big cut rounds. I wanted to be the tree problem solver and the hired gun.

Eventually, I learned a few more tricks and found a few pieces to the puzzle.

I learned how to articulate in trees for pruning with just one rope.

Then I learned how to use cranes efficiently, the importance of clear communication, and how to move wood like a freight train. All very helpful tools, however, they were only some solutions to ever changing problems.

I have always found it interesting how there is always more to learn about trees.

A climber could "know it all" about their craft, but there would still remain an entire world of business, logistics, equipment, entomology, and more that they would be missing out on.

Working with trees has been my higher education, and I will never be done learning. When I solve today's problems, I will have tomorrow's problems. Then, I will solve tomorrow's problems too, only to be met with new problems.

That is what we do though, we solve problems, and we work with people. Working with trees and working outside is the most enjoyable part of this industry.

People will always be a challenge in any industry, but we need to recognize that how we help people and deal with problems is going to correlate with our success.

Everyone makes mistakes, but how we fix our mistakes is how we can do better.

Creating a better industry for the people who work with trees is why I joined AMTOPP.

AMTOPP has helped me become a better leader, look past my daily routine, and do more for the greater good of the tree industry. I would like to see the continued success and prosperity of this industry for both employee and employer. Luckily for our membership and for myself, the AMTOPP board members are as engaged, and driven as ever. I am lucky to have such a great team to work with going into this season. Please stay tuned for some dates, and I look forward to seeing our members throughout the year.

Tom Molitor
2023 President



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Passing of the gavel - 2022 President (R) Dudley Marburger hands off the presidential gavel to Tom Molitor

Synopsis of Board Meeting 2/3/23

By: Owen Nickol
Secretary/Treasurer

Hello to everyone and I want to thank you for the opportunity to be your secretary/treasurer for the 2023 year.

The first meeting of the new board was immediately after the conference. Board Members were all excited to discuss how the conference had broken records with attendance.

A quick review of the Evaluation Sheets provided useful information regarding speakers, topics, and suggestions on how we can improve in areas. Moving on the board discussed different ideas and strategies for the next conference and how we could all work together more productively.

Sam Strickland, who assisted with delivering the food to the Anaconda Food

bank, called in to report that the total pounds donated came to 758.3. While not hitting our 2,000 pound goal, it was still a good haul.

Another item of business was setting dates and locations for the board meetings held throughout the year, and if we would be combining them with a field day or training day. Watch for dates and locations for board meetings in the newsletter and emails.

Over all it was a very productive meeting. I would encourage all that can attend a board meeting to do so. As always feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about anything pertaining to AMTOPP.

Owen Nickol
oxan@ronan



April 14- Quarterly Board Meeting - Vermeer Mountain West, 7710 S Frontage Rd, Billings, - 10AM -3PM

July 27-28 - Field Training Workshops - Lake Inez -
More information to come.

July 28 - Quarterly Board Meeting - Lake Inez, 860 Loon Lane, 10AM - 3PM

October 13 - Quarterly Board Meeting - Belgrade - 10AM - 3PM

To Be Determined:
September 27 - Saluting Branches



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The logo for Wilbur-Ellis features a stylized green plant with three leaves and roots. The text "WILBUR-ELLIS" is in a bold, green, sans-serif font, with "Ideas to Grow With" in a smaller font below it.

Icons for Facebook and Twitter.

When Trees Don't Drop Their Leaves

By: Dr. Eva Grimme
Associate Extension Specialist II;
Arthropod Diagnostician
and
Mrs. Abi Saeed
Extension Horticulture Associate
Specialist,
Montana State University.

In the fall, deciduous trees prepare for winter by stopping chlorophyll production in their leaves, rewarding us with various beautiful colors of yellows, oranges, and reds. At the same time, abscission cells are produced between the branches and leaf petioles which results in shedding of the leaves. Sudden cold snaps early in the fall can interrupt this normal process and kill leaves immediately. When this happens, instead of vivid color displays and normal abscission, leaves quickly turn from green to brown and remain attached to the branches.

We saw this sudden browning of leaves occurring across the state this past fall. This was especially common in aspen and other poplar trees, which drew our attention by holding on to their brown and brittle leaves into the winter (Figure 1). This unusual sight raised the question "Is this harmful to the trees"? In some cases, there might be an increased risk of branches holding onto larger



Figure 1: Aspen trees still holding on to their leaves in March 2023. Photo by Eva Grimme, Montana State University.

amounts of wet and heavy snow, which can result in breakage and should be monitored carefully. Generally though, healthy trees are going to be fine. Dead leaves will break off over time due to mechanical forces like wind and snow or pushed off by the new expanding buds in spring. Giving affected trees some extra care like providing supplemental water during dry periods and ap-

plying a layer of organic mulch (such as arborist wood chips) around the base of trees will go a long way in supporting tree vigor.

So, why do some tree species, especially oak and beech trees, seem to hold on to their leaves every fall (Figure 2)? Botanists have studied this phenomenon and refer to it as "marcescence" which is defined as "withering without falling off" (Merriam-Webster) or "the withering and persistence of plant organs that are normally shed" (Wikipedia). Several theories have been developed describing the potential benefits of foliage marcescence. Foliage remaining on branches during winter may deter herbivores from browsing by making it difficult to reach the stems. Also, the release of remaining leaves in the spring may increase the amount of organic matter and therefore provide the trees with additional essential nutrients.

Regardless of the reason for leaves sticking around on our trees during this winter, we can all look forward to longer days and new expanding buds, knowing that our trees will soon be covered in new, luscious greenery.

Happy Spring!




Figure 2: Oak with marcescent foliage.
Photo by Hardyplants
at English Wikipedia.







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2023 Board of Directors: Back row L to R: Trevor McKeith; James Roberts; Steve Jonas; Tom Molitor; Chris Galanti; Front row L to R: Jason Stringer; Garrett Dotson; Dudley Marburger; Cooper Elwood; Lydia Hesar; Owen Nickol



Natasha Kay, Rocky Mountain Tree and Turf Supply was the luck winner of the door prize (battery operated chain saw and battery) donated by STIHL

*Tree Amigos Inc.
receives the
President's Award
for
"Duty Above and Beyond"*



Left: 2023 Secretary/Treasurer Owen Nickol welcomed by Lydia Hesar; outgoing Secretary/Treasurer and 2023 Vice President.

Raffle and 50/50 Winners

One night stay at Fairmont with \$50 gift certificate -
Doug Thares
\$300 Scheel's Gift Card - Tina Dial
\$700 Cabela's Gift Card - Joe Parsons

Craig Stensby won the 50/50 - for the second year in a row - he bagged \$770 of which he gave \$100 back to AMTOPP! Thanks Craig

Congratulations to all the winners!
Thank you for supporting the Scholarship Fund with the raffle ticket purchase.

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Tailgate Safety Meeting

Safely Transporting Equipment and Materials on Trucks and Trailers

Taken from "The Edge" March 1, 2023, issue; NALP's weekly newsletter with a link to NALP Safety Training Manual

Introduction: Loading, unloading, and operating trucks or truck-trailer combinations involves many potential hazards for you and those with whom you share the road. Driving a loaded vehicle irresponsibly or neglecting to properly secure equipment, materials, and plants in a pickup bed or trailer can result in serious injuries and fatalities. If you're involved in such an accident, you could face criminal negligence charges. Repeated violations of our policies regarding safe driving and properly securing loads are likely

to lead to termination of your employment. Today, we'll review ways to safely transport equipment and materials.

Ask Crew Members These Questions:

What are some things you should do before loading/unloading a truck or trailer or getting on the road?

- Receive training in load securement, the proper way to drive while towing a trailer, and how to back up a trailer.
- If you'll be using a roll-off truck or trailer, receive training on the particular model you'll be using and understand all operating and safety guidelines.
- Ensure the engine is shut off, the

parking brake is set and the wheels are chocked before loading/unloading.

- Load and unload on level surfaces.
- Keep trailer decks free of dirt, oil, and debris.
- Use the correct trailer hitch and

ensure the trailer is properly connected to the towing vehicle. Make sure safety chains are in place.

- Check all truck and trailer lights. Replace any defective bulbs before driving. Check the

trailer light hook-up socket for loose wires or corrosion.

- Check the pressure and wear of all truck and trailer tires.

- Ensure everything in the pickup bed/trailer is properly secured. If you're driving a loaded vehicle, you're responsible for the way the cargo is secured, whether or not you placed it on the vehicle/trailer.

- Make sure the vehicle is rated to tow the trailer. Check the truck's owner's manual for maximum weights allowed.

- Ensure the gross combination weight rating of the trailer hasn't been exceeded. This limit

should be stated on the trailer or in its operator's manual.

What are some guidelines to follow when securing loads?

- Follow our written policy regarding cargo securement. You'll find this in your employee handbook and within our overall safety policy.

- Secure plant pallets or flats, fuel containers, and tools such as rakes, shovels, line trimmers, ladders, etc. with tie-down straps or bungee cords.

- If you're transporting small trees or tree saplings, secure them in an upright position.

- Use chains or straps with ratchet load binders to secure equipment.

- Cover loads such as mulch, planting bed rocks, and yard debris with a tarp so objects won't fly out and strike vehicles behind you.

- To reduce sway, make sure the load



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Through the proceeds from the sale of raffle tickets each year, the AMTOPP Scholarship Fund receives money to use in paying out to an FFA member, bound for college, and a 4H Club. The \$500 Scholarship amount may not be much, but it is better than nothing. There are discussions going on to increase the amount, in addition to adding another Scholarship. Hopefully this will be decided on this year.

The 2023 FFA Scholarship recipient is Maya Roginske, from Joilet, Montana. She is a senior with plans to pursue a degree in environmental sciences through Bozeman's ag department. After obtaining her degree, she plans on becoming a volunteer at the peace

corps.

Maya had this to say about her goals. "When I first joined FFA and found my love of agronomy, I knew this was the career path I wanted to pursue. Talking with so many people and colleges at FFA conventions really helped me push to study in the ag department. I am proud to say that I have the knowledge and skills from FFA to be better prepared for my career path. My short-term goal when starting my academic journey in college is to learn as much as I can about my degree. I already have knowledge about agronomy from doing competitions but I would like to learn more so I can be more excited to earn a job and start working on something

I love doing. My long-term goal is to earn a good-paying job involving the environmental field, I would love to work in new places and meet new people. I hope to make a positive difference in my field and grow as a person."



Safety, continued from page 6

is properly balanced. When the load is spread over a trailer, keep heavier items near the center.

- Don't overload a truck or trailer or stack the load too high.

What are some precautions to take when driving a loaded truck or truck-trailer combination?

- If the combined weight of the truck, trailer, and load you're transporting exceeds 10,000 pounds, stop at roadside inspection stations. Have a copy of a medical examiner's certificate stating you're physically qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle.

- Accelerate and come to stops gradually. Sudden speed changes can cause the load to shift or the trailer to jackknife.

- When towing a trailer downhill, use the same gear and speed as when going uphill.

- Make slow, wide turns when towing a trailer.

- Use turn signals and allow plenty of distance between the truck/trailer and other vehicles when changing lanes or entering traffic flow.

- Maintain at least a 5-second following distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you.

- Check the position of the trailer often using the truck's

mirrors.

- Don't exceed the speed limit.
- When backing up a trailer, always use a spotter and proceed slowly.

Sam continued from page 1

has contributed to AMTOPP, here are a few things:

- Sam was instrumental in setting up the AMTOPP Scholarship Fund for 4H and FFA recipients

- He was involved with and fought for legislative issues that affected our industry

- He has financially supported AMTOPP in many ways

- He helped steer others to take on leadership roles, getting them involved with the AMTOPP Board of Directors

AMTOPP has grown because of people who have gone above and beyond. Those who stumbled yet found a way to get back on the mission. Those who desire to share their knowledge and mentor newcomers. Those with the best interest in mind for the organization they are passionate about.

Thanks, Sam, for your commitment to AMTOPP.

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Years Of Service Awards

Company Name	Contact	City	Years of Service
Alpine Sprinklers and Landscape	Adam Reynolds	Kalispell	New Member
Arboristic Tree Consulting LLC	Jennifer Jolliff	Bozeman	New Member
Montana Tree Care	Colton Johnson	Clancy	New Member
Green Magic Lawn	Gavyn Ahlgren	Billings	New Member
Watershed Consulting	Eric Witmer	Missoula	New Member
Mission Lawn and Landscape	Adam or Michelle Wood	Polson	5 Years
Yellowstone Environmental Contracting, LLC	Zac Mader	Miles City	5 Years
Rootbound Arborist	Ben Bain	Bozeman	5 Years
All Access Equipment LLC	Ryan Polonski	Wilmington, MA	5 Years
NorMont Equipment Co	Luke Stewart	Great Falls	5 Years
Trees for Life, Inc	Ian MacCallum	Big Fork	10 Years
The Personal Gardener	Richard Hathaway	Bozeman	15 Years*
Frontier Lawn and Landscaping	Ron Konesky	Havre	20 Years

**Correction: The 15 year service award was given to The Personal Gardener, Richard Hathaway; upon further research into the archives it was found that the award should have been for 20 years instead of the 15. We apologize for this mistake and will honor Richard at the 2024 conference with a 20 year pin.*

Thank you Richard for your years of dedicated support to AMTOPP.

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Submission Guidelines

Below are recommended guidelines for collecting and shipping sample submissions. . The tips listed here cover the majority of the

submissions we receive, but it should be noted that aquatic plants and mushrooms have their own specific guidelines.

- Keep samples as fresh as possible.
- Avoid exposing samples to direct sunlight and refrigerate if possible.
- Send sufficient plant material.
- Collect samples that show various stages of the problem and include a healthy plant or plant part for comparison.
- Whenever it is practical, include roots or the entire plant or a clump of plants. If that is not possible, include a branch or send a twig. Detached leaves or parts of

leaves are seldom useful.

- Avoid sending dead plants or plant parts, they are not useful for accurate diagnosis.

• Figure 1: Photo of two plants in plastic bags, one fully wrapped, the other only around the roots

- Package samples in crush-proof containers.

• Never send samples in a flat paper envelope – the post office machinery can cause extensive damage.

- If you are sending a plant that includes roots, keep some soil around the root ball and off foliage.

• Wrap the root ball in plastic and secure with a rubber band around the base of the plant (figure 1). This prevents the soil from damaging the leaves during shipping.

- Loosely enclose the foliage in plastic or paper.

• Do not add water or wet paper towels to sample submissions.

Shipping Instructions

- Samples can be dropped off. The Schutter Diagnostic Lab is normally open for walk-in submissions from

9:00AM to 12:00PM, Monday through Friday (Be sure to check with the Lab to see what COVID-19 restrictions currently apply).

- Mail packages early in the week to arrive by Friday.
- Do not mail fresh samples on a Thursday (unless using overnight mail) or Friday. Store the package in the refrigerator over the weekend and mail on Monday. We want to avoid samples sitting at the post office over the weekend.
- Include completed sample submission form with pertinent background information.
- In-depth background information will help us identify the problem or organism and is essential for timely management recommendations. Details allow us to provide more accurate diagnoses.
- Include photographs illustrating the problem if possible.
- Make sure photos are in-focus.
- Email photographs to diagnostics@montana.edu. Include your name, contact information, and the date your sample was shipped.
- For additional assistance with sample submission, please contact the Schutter Diagnostic Lab by email or telephone.

Contact Information

Phone (406) 994-5150

Email - diagnostics@montana.edu

Schutter Diagnostic Lab
Montana State University
119 Plant BioScience Bldg
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Figure 1: Bag only the plant roots and some soil (left), do not wrap the entire plant (right)



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Trudie Southwick - amtopp@amtopp.org - (406) 204-0100

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