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LIVING AMONG TREES ESSENTIAL FOR OUR CITY'S QUALITY OF LIFE

Filed under: [Guest Columns](#) — Maria Saporta @ 9:14 pm

By Guest Columnist **SPENCE ROSENFELD**, *founder and president of Arboguard Tree Specialists*

Maybe I was particularly vulnerable to the irresistible nature of trees. From a very young age I just had to climb them. Later I built a treehouse and lived among the branches of a giant Black Cherry for most of my High School summers. In college I decided my career would be to work with people and trees.

Finally, I took the bold step of starting a special kind of tree care business designed to bring people and trees close together. Looking back now at nearly 60 years of age, I feel like one of the most fortunate people in the world.



There really is nothing quite like a tree. Trees look big and tough and stand tall as if firmly anchored to the earth. But in reality they are delicately balanced on a pedestal-like root plate and can be easily toppled by the turbulent forces of nature. Trees seem to grow in slow motion, don't make a sound, change naturally with the seasons, and gracefully stand in the same spot without a single complaint. We often forget they are even alive.

Trees miraculously survive extremes in temperature and rainfall, but their biggest threats come from the challenging and harsh conditions of our urban world. Urban trees, like street smart kids, must figure out how to live in sterile soils devoid of organic matter where rain water is collected in drains via curb and gutters.

Their roots are often cut, crushed, covered, or smothered by impervious pavement. Their leaves are scorched by reflected heat from our glass and steel buildings and powder coated with the dust of particulate pollutants in the air. Some unfortunates are scarred and wounded by cars or heavy machinery.

It just can't be easy being an urban tree.

Yet we need our trees. They are critically important to our quality of life. Trees define the character of our homes, neighborhoods, parks, streetscapes, campuses, shops, and offices. Trees bring shape, color, texture, and beauty to our world.

We can now measure the Carbon they sequester and store, the pollutants they remove from our air, the floodwaters they absorb, and the cooling they provide. Trees, we are finding, collectively form the largest Carbon sink on earth. They will soon be recognized as a key component of sustainability and an integral part of "Green Buildings and Communities."

The "Sustainable Sites Initiative" currently being developed, awards credits for trees and greenspace. This initiative will undoubtedly one day be incorporated into the LEED certification program. Trees also add great value to our properties and therefore quietly contribute to our economic prosperity.

Atlanta is full of success stories where careful planning, design, implementation, and commitment have neutralized conflicts between development and trees. Post Properties well understood the importance of trees and green space to their residents. In the 1980's and 90's, they built thousands of homes on hundreds of acres at 45 projects while preserving native trees and planting new trees.

The UPS Corporate Campus was built in native woodlands in Sandy Springs while barely disturbing a single leaf. It stands today over a dozen years later as a premier example of tree preservation for the entire world.

Recently, the new Atlanta Botanical Gardens Visitor Center opened against a backdrop of beautiful mature native trees complete with ADA compliant pathways. This project is another where trees and people have been brought together through successful urban arboricultural development.

Currently the PATH foundation is constructing the Tanyard Creek Trail through an existing wooded park. By combining "root bridging" technology, organic soil therapy, and modifications to construction procedures, the PATH will be built where people can walk or bike under the shade of adjacent mature trees.

Atlanta is still a "City of Trees."

It's true that thousands of trees have been lost as our city has grown and developed. But thousands more have been planted to replace our canopy and reforest our urban communities.

Often, development projects become a battlefield where the value and importance of trees meets the threat of tree removal or mortality head on. However as these and many more examples show, where there is a will, there is a way, and solutions can often be found to challenging problems.

That's the kind of work I've always wanted to do; bringing people and trees successfully together.

Note to readers: In the interest of full disclosure, Maria Saporta hired Arboguard and Spence Rosenfeld in 1984 to see if two large trees, including one large water oak, could be saved when she was constructing her home on a 13th of an acre in Midtown. Today, thanks to the Arboguard's sensitive care all these years, both trees are still living. Maria asked Spence to write this guest column in admiration for all he has done in our region to protect our trees. She is not receiving any favorable customer treatment in return.