

Saving Trees and Benefiting the Mountain Area Land Trust (MALT)

By Joan Spalding

What a dilemma! Cut them “down or try to save them so there are trees left; if the pine beetle skips over the mountains to our Evergreen area. In the near future, will we have to look at the same prospects the ski areas are considering to prevent erosion and maintain some aesthetic appearance in our area? A recent Denver Post cited a program being explored to inject some of the trees to ward off the beetle at a cost of \$100.00 per tree over a period of five years.

Two years ago MALT and Spalding Trees initiated a program that would benefit MALT financially, save trees for transplanting and give a tax benefit to landowners. Landowners would contact Spalding Trees to sell them usable trees from their property. Spalding trees would pay the money for the tree to MALT and the landowners would take the tax donation. Sounds like everyone could benefit.

With such a win-win for everyone let’s see how this program can work this year. If you have trees and would like to be part of this project to put extra money into the MALT coffers, these are the requirements to sell your trees.

Think about a machine the size of a cement truck backing up to a tree. Once close to the tree the large bucket with four separate blades tilts off the back of the truck. The blades are opened up and the driver backs the truck so the blades are around the tree and the blades are locked. Then separately the blades dig an 8 ft diameter and 5 ft deep hole around the tree. Once this 12,000 lb. ball is secured, it is lifted unto the back of the truck and the tree is tied down for transportation. The holes are covered with plywood and 2x10s and when the truck comes back to the field with the dirt ball from the next tree the hole is filled. The dirt from the first tree is left to fill the last hole in the fall.

With this type of operation it is important that the truck not hit large rock or the blade will not go down. The tree cannot be located on a steep hill or the truck can’t back up to the tree, though some incline is do-able.

What should a saleable tree look like? Ponderosa pines and Lodge poles from 10 to 30 ft tall, if they are growing by themselves are good candidates. They should be full all the way around and not have their branches cut 15 feet off the ground. Spruces and Douglas Firs have a more compact root system so a larger tree can be dug. Examples are the 35 ft Spruce Community Tree and the companion 43 ft White Fir located at the Lake House.

It’s important to allow 4 ft. between trees for the size of the spade. For example, some people want to remove a beautiful tree that was planted too close to the house. But in order to spade the tree an account must be made for the overhang of the house and the size of the spade; four feet from the trunk of the tree and the edge of the spade plus the overhang is required.

This program will allow trees to be saved by planting them in places where people may

want privacy or they want to enhance their homes with large native trees. Spalding Trees gives a 2 year warranty because their program involves not only planting the tree but treating it with 3- part growth stimulant process, building a drip irrigation system individual to the species and size of the tree, mulching and recommending a spray program for two years while the tree is established in its new location.

Saving trees by selling your trees gives them new life and helps MALT conserve lands in the mountain area. A real WIN-WIN.

To find out more call Spalding Trees at 303-526-1256. They have been planting trees for 20 years in the Evergreen area and belong to the Society of Commercial Arborists.