



Ben Tresselt will reach out to members as new chair of TCIA Board

Benjamin G. Tresselt III, president and owner of TCIA-accredited Arborist Enterprises Inc. in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was sworn in as chair of the TCIA Board of Directors during a ceremony at Winter Management Conference 2013 on St. Kitts in February. Tresselt has been a TCIA Board member since February 2006.

Tresselt has spent most of his adult life working with trees. While he and his wife, Tina, started his company (and joined the National Arborist Association) in 1991, but he began working with trees even earlier.

“I started working in the industry during high school for Bartlett,” he says. “My father was a manager in the Exton office. I started part time doing storm cleanup.”

After high school, he attended the Mount Alto campus of Penn State University for forestry. Afterward, he did stints for Bartlett, working for a landscape firm, and as a logger felling trees. That last job drove him back to the tree care industry, with Bartlett’s Lancaster office for a year. Then, with the encouragement of his wife, he went out on his own.

Together, they were successful almost immediately. Tresselt notes that they never lacked work, because they have always been willing to roll up their sleeves and do whatever it takes. Arborist Enterprises has grown to 18 full-time employees today.

In a profile after being elected to the Board in 2006, Tresselt related that, “Business had been more challenging in the previous five years than his first five in business.” So how do the most recent five years compare?

“Even more challenging,” he says. “Probably working twice as hard for just as much work. The challenge now is really figuring out what the heck people, mostly prospects, want. They’ll say, ‘Hey, come out and look at my trees.’ Even after prequalifying and questioning them ahead of time we’ll, go out and look at their trees, provide them a detailed proposal of the care we recommend and then they’ll say, ‘I don’t want that.’ So it’s really become very challenging finding out exactly what people want and seeing how or if we can give it to them.”

“We spend a lot of time educating clients. It’s something we’ve done since the start, and we continue to do today; you have to.”

Tresselt joined TCIA as soon as he started in business because of its focus on the business side of running a tree care company, he said in 2006: “The organization has been instrumental in helping with OSHA regulations and business practices ... We have our focus on the trees. So often we don’t have time to keep up with regulations that affect us.”



Q&A with Ben Tresselt, New Chair of the TCIA Board

Q. How has TCIA changed over the years?

“TCIA still does a very good job of keeping us informed on things that may be outside of our purview because we are concentrating on our clients and our tree care services.”

He pointed to recent changes with material data sheets and hazard compliance. “TCIA’s great for stuff like that. Safety things are always important for us. We’re always looking for new and better ways to make our jobs safer and allow our people to come home safely, to do their work safely. It’s always nice to see what kinds of trends are going on outside our region. So TCIA has always been very helpful there; it just keeps you on the cutting edge of business and the way things are going. And it’s a great resource, too; if you ever have any questions or concerns it is an email or a phone call away.”

Tresselt has been an ISA Certified Arborist for 22 years and in 2005 became one of the first 60 persons to become an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist. He is past president of the Penn-Del Chapter of ISA and the DeMuth Museum and serves on the board at the Woodward Hills Cemetery in Lancaster. He is a former board member and is a supporter of the Tree Research Endowment & Education Fund (TREE Fund). He has ridden in the Tour Des Trees the last four years, including starting it last year when he had to abandon it when he broke his collar bone while riding on the third day of the annual five-day, 500-mile bicycle ride. But he won’t be riding this year.

“With the amount of TCIA travel I want to do this year as chair, I don’t think I’m going to have the time.”

Q. Have there been any surprises in your time on the Board so far?

A. “I wouldn’t say anything surprising. One thing that was eye opening was the number of other very qualified and knowledgeable members who want to serve on the Board. I found that quite enlightening. And then, sitting on the Board with some of the people over the years has just been such a great personal and professional benefit for me – seeing how they operate, becoming friends, learning and understanding how they approach and look at things. I can, at times, be a very headstrong person. That inclination isn’t always the most astute approach when working to accomplish collaborative goals with a diverse group of very intelligent individuals. You can be successful without that getting in the way all the time. So I have definitely acquired some very

helpful leadership and management attributes from my time serving on the board that have been and will continue to be very helpful to me.”

Tresselt took his company in a more professional direction in 2006 when it became the third company in Pennsylvania to earn TCIA Accreditation. At that time he said the industry “should be much more of a profession and less of an industry.”

“We are not farmers, landscapers or tree fellers,” he said at the time. “We need to be elevated in the public’s eye and to do that we need to clean up our own house. You can’t promote yourself as a professional if too many people in the industry aren’t acting professionally. It is a shame to me the way some people price their services, the way they look, and the way they act.”

So we asked him, has any of that changed in his seven years on the board and what, if anything, he would try to do about it as chair.

Q. Have there been any changes in the advancement of professionalism within the industry since 1996? Do you have plans for this issue as chair?

“A little bit, but we still have a long way to go. As far as what I can do – continue operating our business as an example of professionalism. Be the best business possible every day in how it operates and what it does. Let other tree care businesses know there are certain ways a professional tree care business should do things; there are certain ways that a business should not do things.”

Q. What, in your experience, do you think brings value to the chair position?

A. “Leadership, integrity, honesty, depth of knowledge.”

Q. Any specific priorities as chair?

A. “Try to get out as much as I possibly can and visit with as many members and potential members as I can throughout the year and throughout the country.”

“We don’t have as much exposure in certain parts of the country as we could or should have. There are a lot of regions outside of the Northeast U.S. where they know of us but don’t really see a benefit in us as an organization because we just don’t have a lot of presence. I am only one guy, I can only do so much. But I am going to try to do as much as I can this year. I have a pretty active travel schedule for the year.”

Q. Any final comments?

A. “I just hope the membership appreciates the efforts the Board puts forth, because you’re talking nine or 10 high-powered people in this industry who take a lot of time out of their personal and professional lives to do the best they can. I can honestly say out of the 20, 30 or 40 people I’ve had the (pleasure) of serving with, there hasn’t been a one who hasn’t done it for completely altruistic

motives. They were absolutely genuine about their helping the industry, helping the association, and there were no hidden agendas. Serving on the board requires total dedication and many sacrifices for the betterment of the association and the continued success of the commercial tree care profession.