

Edward H. Scanlon — Progenitor of I.P.P.S. and Other Ambitious Endeavors®

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At various times throughout his life, after graduating in forestry from University of Michigan, Edward H. “Ed” Scanlon (1903–1976) was an urban tree manager; expeditor of the hopes of other people; author, editor, and publisher; steadfast organizer of tree-related organizations; self-proclaimed wandering arborist; as well as purveyor of distinctive trees or, as he called them, Tailored® Trees (Fig. 1). He amassed an abundance of loyal followers and a widespread legacy of Tailored® Trees now growing in cities globally. Moreover, he championed the formation of what is now the notable International Plant Propagators’ Society (I.P.P.S.).

THE URBANTREE MANAGER

Ed Scanlon began his career with urban trees as arborist for the City of Santa Monica, California. On the recommendation of the well-informed commercial arborist, Charles Irish, Sr., Scanlon was appointed Commissioner of Shade Trees for the City of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1946 (Michalko, 1957). He continued in that position until 1955 when he resigned to pursue urban tree opportunities in the private sector.

“When I came to Cleveland as Commissioner of Shade Trees,” Scanlon said, “I had a meeting with the Mayor and the Cabinet, and the Mayor said, ‘Well, what do you think of the situation?’ and I said, ‘Well, Mr. Mayor, there’s only one thing that we know in this field, and that is the trees that shouldn’t be planted, and all of them are on the streets of Cleveland. What I’m going to do is experiment.’ All in all, in about 10 years, we planted over a hundred species and selections, and any tree that I thought had even an outside chance of surviving on the street, I planted. Well, we came up with some pretty good ones, so in my talks to garden clubs, I began to refer to trees that I thought should be used on the streets as ‘tailored’ trees, because in effect that is what they are...” (This and other non-cited quotations herein are from Edward H. Scanlon’s presentation at a 3-day “Symposium On Silviculture for Improving Environmental Quality in Communities and Outdoor Recreation Areas,” Utah State University, Logan, Utah, October 9–11, 1973, Philip A. Barker, program chair.)

Scanlon was a pragmatist. He realized that street trees were really crops, not unlike corn and wheat. If corn and wheat were not planted together in the same field because of different rates of growth, among other reasons, shouldn’t urban trees be



Figure 1. Edward H. Scanlon, 1903–1976.

managed likewise? Therefore, while managing for tree diversity among streets, he usually planted each street with one kind.

Uniformity of trees on a street or street segment, Scanlon thought, made for more efficient tree management, provided a common denominator for the generally diverse style of houses, and greatly enhanced the street's visual quality. What street planted with diverse species, he asked rhetorically, eclipses the community pride and visual impact of a uniform row of flowering cherry trees or trees with other distinctive traits?

Sure, Scanlon knew the risk of urban tree monoculture, having had to replace hundreds of Cleveland's elm trees killed by Dutch elm disease. Yet, considering the rarity of a calamitous event, monoculture was as reasonable for urban trees, on a street-by-street basis, as for field crops.

He and a collaborator, Kirk M. Reid, lamented the crowding of street trees and pointed out the unnecessary cost of planting and maintaining more trees than was desirable (Scanlon and Reid, 1947). Most trees, they contended, could be planted at 50 ft. Scanlon (1942) urged that trees attaining mature sizes like southern live oak, coast live oak, and American elm be planted at least 100 to 125 ft apart.

Scanlon disfavored letting householders choose the kinds of street trees to be planted in front of their homes. He often used the analogy of a doctor allowing a patient to choose from a potpourri of pills. The professional urban tree manager, he thought, must address many factors, imperceptible to most householders, and must not abrogate his/her professional responsibility.

THE EXPEDITER

Ideas and hopes of others were opportunities for Scanlon. When the late John Michalko was horticulturist with Cleveland's tree program, he unsuccessfully urged local nurseries to clone several distinctive trees that he knew of. Enter Scanlon in 1946 as Cleveland's new Commissioner of Shade Trees.

Mutual dependence ensued, with Michalko the idea man and Scanlon the expediter of those ideas. Michalko, for example, had observed for several years a columnar maple tree with ascending branches growing along a road at the Bowhall Nursery in the Cleveland area. When shown the tree by Michalko, Scanlon promptly sent budwood, collected from the tree by Michalko, to an Oregon nursery for propagation. Thus began production of what was dubbed the Bowhall maple, which Scanlon eventually patented (P.P. 1722) and sold as *Acer rubrum* 'Scanlon' or the Scanlon red maple (Scanlon, 1974b; Scanlon, 1976).

In another example, Michalko showed Scanlon a more narrow form of a maple found at Windsor, Ohio, near Cleveland, by Newton G. Armstrong, brother of Norm Armstrong, a well-known commercial arborist in the 1950s. As with the Bowhall maple, Scanlon cloned this tree, creating the popular Armstrong maple (*A. ×freemanii* 'Armstrong'), now considered an *A. rubrum* × *A. saccharinum* hybrid.

Michalko had succeeded Scanlon as Commissioner of Shade Trees, City of Cleveland, and was newly retired when I had an opportunity to interview him at a meeting of the Metropolitan Tree Improvement Alliance (METRIA) at Kirkland (near Mentor), Ohio, in 1988. The foregoing information attributed to him is based on notes I took during our visit together.

AUTHOR, EDITOR, PUBLISHER

Scanlon started publishing a magazine about trees in 1937, which he soon named *Trees Magazine*, subtitled, *American Journal of Arboriculture* (Scanlon, 1974c). It was initially published bi-monthly and then quarterly.

Trees Magazine was Scanlon's "bullhorn" to apprise trans-continental readers of arboricultural issues. A popular page in each issue, written in a folksy style, was titled, "Along the Way with...Ed Scanlon." Besides expressing kudos to people he recently had met and about trees he had seen, he announced vital statistics, and reported on his latest and forthcoming travels, worldwide. This popular magazine about urban trees had no equal but unfortunately, ceased publication upon Scanlon's death in 1976.

THE ORGANIZER

Scanlon was an energetic organizer. "It is the belief of *Trees Magazine*," he proclaimed, "that a new organization is badly needed and would be enthusiastically supported by progressive nurserymen, scientists, and arborists" (Scanlon, 1951). He proposed naming such a group the "Plant Propagators' Society." Barker (2006) has described the subsequent organizational meeting of plant propagators, put on by Scanlon in Cleveland, Ohio, November 8–9, 1951. The concluding statement of the article symbolizes Scanlon's input: "Through timely intuition, Edward H. Scanlon tossed a pebble in the water, making ripples that have radiated worldwide; resulting in what is now the esteemed International Plant Propagators' Society."

Noteworthy, also is Scanlon's early efforts to organize what are now two sub-groups of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). These are ISA's present Western Chapter, successor to the Western Shade Tree Conference, which Scanlon (1974c) founded in 1934. Three decades later, in 1964, he instigated formation of the Society of Municipal Arborists (SMA) to vitalize the role of city arborists. Society of Municipal Arborists later became part of an ISA working group known as the Municipal Arborists and Urban Foresters Society (MAUFS). Subsequently, the name of this working group was changed back to the earlier name and the acronym, SMA.

He also co-chaired and spoke at two Street Tree and Utility Conferences in Cleveland, Ohio (Scanlon, 1955 and 1957). These national meetings promoted mutual understanding between urban tree managers and utility personnel of problems inherent in managing co-existing trees, street lighting, and electric and communication services (Perkins, 1957).

THE WANDERING ARBORIST

The world was Scanlon's garden and the trees therein were gold nuggets for his camera. What he found were included in his slide-illustrated lectures. Interesting comments accompanying each slide are exemplified below.

"I was in a hotel bar in Brussels talking to the fellow who ran the place. He asked what I was doing there, and I said, 'Oh, I'm interested in trees.' 'Did you ever see the cherries out at Boitsfort,' he asked. The next morning I went out, in the fall of the year, and I thought, 'next Spring I will be here,' and I was, for 5 years in a row. These kanzan cherries are positively gorgeous."

"For several years I tried to get a picture of these sheared Lavalley hawthorns in bloom in Antwerp and never did until this one. I was going through there, coming

up from Brussels, and all of a sudden I noticed these trees in full flower, which I'd forgotten all about.

"This is a pyramidal European hornbeam in Eindhoven, Holland, one of the most magnificent and low maintenance trees I have seen."

"Here are some sheared trees in Algiers, like those I first saw in *Life Magazine* about 1960. Not until 1964 was I able to go there because of the unstable political conditions. After getting this picture, I walked down a street like a farmer, you know. Suddenly I saw on my right two cops and machine guns and over on the left was 35 or 40 kids. I thought, oh, brother! I got back behind the guys with the machine guns and went on down the street to my hotel. The concierge said he had gotten me airline tickets back to Paris for Wednesday, as I had requested. I said, 'Change them to tomorrow.' A few days later the leader in Algiers was overthrown." An illustrated account of Scanlon's quest of these Algerian street trees was first published as a noteworthy, news item in 1965 in the Cleveland (Ohio) Plain Dealer (Condon, 1976).

Throughout his life, Scanlon crusaded for the use of distinctive trees in cities. He was absorbed with such trees as Vienna's weeping European hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* 'Vienna') (Scanlon, 1974a) and used scions he got from it to propagate other clones (Scanlon, 1976a) (Fig. 2). He planted two of the resulting clones at his home, which he called the Rancho, at the Cleveland suburb of Olmsted Falls, Ohio, in January 1976, 2 months before he died (Anonymous, 1976). They replaced a healthy, 25-year-old Japanese pagoda tree (*Sophora japonica*), which, according to Scanlon (1975), "was a mess of blossoms in August and later of fruit — and so we cut it down."

PURVEYOR OF DISTINCTIVE TREES

Full-page, single-tree ads in *Trees Magazine* proclaimed the virtues of Scanlon's numerous Tailored® trees. Other strategies used by Scanlon to promote his unique lines of trees were his writing about them in feature articles and in the "Along the Way" pages in *Trees Magazine*. Also, they often were specified in street tree master plans that he prepared for communities as consultant to the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. (Scanlon, 1957), the Philadelphia Electric Co., and five utilities in Wisconsin.

His company, Edward H. Scanlon & Assoc., Inc., was identified in his ads as "Growers of Tailored® Trees." The trees that he marketed generally were grown under contract by a nursery in Oregon for the North American market, and by Royal Nurseries, Oudenbosch, Holland, for the European market (Scanlon, 1975).

LOYAL PARTISANS

Scanlon was held in high esteem and, indeed, revered by his many admirers, even if adversaries thought otherwise. "Revered" is not an overstatement. Several members of community tree commissions in Utah, for instance, attended a symposium at Utah State University in 1973, for which I was Program Chair, primarily to hear Scanlon's presentation.

Indicating his wide respect and his contribution to a universal philosophy about urban trees and their management are the many condolences expressed on his passing. Even when abridged for space limitations, these filled three pages of the final issue of *Trees Magazine* (Scanlon, J.F., 1976). In the concluding condolence, members of the Snohomish County Extension Service, Everett, Washington, U.S.A., wrote to his widow, June F. Scanlon, "For years we have enjoyed Ed's efforts in *Trees Magazine* ...

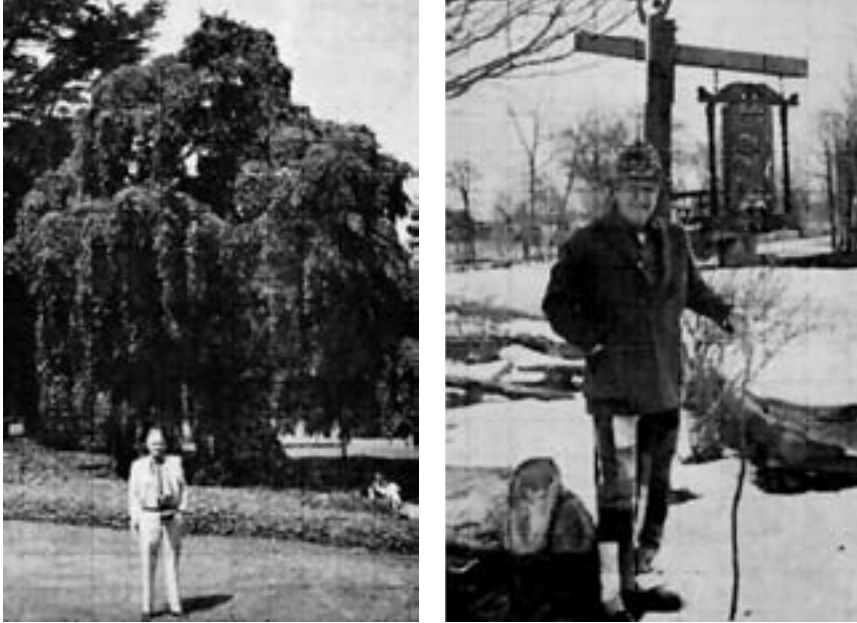


Figure 2. Edward H. “Ed” Scanlon: (left) in front of a weeping European hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* ‘Vienna’) in Vienna, Austria and (right) beside one of the clones vegetatively propagated from this weeping hornbeam tree and planted at his residence near Cleveland, Ohio

several times we have asked Ed for information and inspiration. Each letter was followed with an enthusiastic reply [from him]... We are believers of his thesis, ‘No place is complete without trees.’ He made the earth a better place to live.”

SCANLON’S LEGACY

A notable legacy is the many issues of *Trees Magazine*, which Scanlon almost single-handedly produced for about four decades, containing, among other features, praises and sometimes harsh analyses of various tree species for urban uses. The many streets of Cleveland that were planted with trees while Scanlon was Commissioner of Shade Trees between 1946 and 1955 are compelling evidence of his unrelenting search for better trees. Any that yet survive, as well as those planted elsewhere through his consultation with various utilities as noted above, are living memorials to the zealous, self-proclaimed “wandering arborist.” Moreover, they represent long-term performance trials for anyone to observe and possibly selectively propagate and plant elsewhere. Not to be overlooked is his universal influence against the widespread use of a few fast-growing trees of immense size at maturity, such as silver maple, elms, and sycamores but, instead, to plant a wide assortment of medium-sized, lower-maintenance trees.

But, unequivocally, Scanlon’s greatest legacy is his epic role in the genesis of the International Plant Propagators’ Society.

Acknowledgements. Grateful appreciation is expressed to reviewers, Greg McPherson, June F. (Scanlon) Szemer, and Alan Wagar.

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