

Growing Forward 2022

My 40 plus years in the tree care business can honestly be described as a “labor of love” with most people who have logged decades of time in the profession looking more towards their hobbies than continuing with such a challenging profession. However, even with the dark cloud of Covid hanging over all of us, Trees For Life has experienced record demand for our services in the past two years, which combined with what I believe is the most talented group of Arborists and Arborist technicians anywhere in the state - has made the tree business more exciting than ever for me. To meet the demand, we not only had to continue up-grading equipment but double down on crew training and education so that they can perform a very demanding job at a very high skill level efficiently and safely, which they do day in and day out.

Investing in our people and systems has enabled Trees For Life to tackle the most challenging jobs including bidding on and securing multiple pruning contracts with the City of Kalipsell which has resulted in TFL pruning well over 2,000 boulevard trees over the past five years.

The downside for the growing demand for our services has been the necessity of removing the increasing number of dead trees. Bark beetles have been the main culprit in tree mortality, but we are always quick to point out that beetles are not the primary reason, bark beetles bore into trees that are already stressed or weakened. Mountain Pine Beetle and Doug Fir Beetle (to name but two of many) are not unique to Flathead Valley, bark beetles are pervasive throughout the west. The Forest Service in the Southern Sierras of California calculated that from 2010 – 2015 *66 million* trees died due to an epic bark beetle infestation that was a result of a pro-longed, crippling, drought throughout the region.

Fortunately, Flathead Valley is not in the middle of such a drought but much of the State of Montana went through a serious drought in 2021, certainly a red flag for all of us here.

The threat of fire is undoubtedly the potential end result of sustained drought plus beetle equation. Last year the Boulder fire was a tragic and sobering event, burning 1,000 acres down to the east lake shore, which should be a wake-up call to all who own forested land here.

Like many professions the recent, rapid, growth in the valley has certainly expanded our customer base but repeat business has been the backbone of Trees For Life for years, we put a high value on client retention which can only be done by treating people like we want to be treated; great service done fairly, respectfully and honestly. We hope to hear from you if you have any questions about your trees and their needs this year!