



Make It Your Business to Know

Today's tree care industry is experiencing tremendous technological development. There is a growing awareness of the innovative techniques and equipment being introduced to our profession as Arborists worldwide seek new ways to meet the challenges of working in the urban forest. It can be very challenging and, at times, confusing when making decisions about how, when and where to spend our time and money implementing change. After all, change simply for the sake of change is not always safe or productive.

So how do we make effective decisions regarding implementation of new tools and techniques? The criteria that I use is as follows: does this new tool or technique really have the ability to make my work safer, easier and more efficient? If all three criteria are not met, then I know that there are better ways to spend my time and money. However, if all three are met, then I will commit myself not only financially but also to the learning curve that will be involved.

Once a decision is made to apply a new tool or technique, it is more important than ever that we become thoroughly informed. It is important to choose suppliers and manufacturers that, first and foremost, strive to provide safe equipment that is well designed and up to date. Comfort, weight and versatility are also very important features to consider in the selection of equipment.

As with all developing technology, it is increasingly important for Arborist suppliers and manufacturers to understand the true nature of our working environments. However, at the same time, we must share the responsibility by making it our business to stay informed, to develop a commitment to safety and training and to comply with industry standards. When equipment and techniques are not fully understood by the manufacturer and/or misused by the Arborist, efficiency and safety are often compromised.

For example, The FrictionSaver is a false crotch designed to be used for climbing, not for rigging operations. It consists of two different size aircraft aluminum rings, connected with one length of nylon webbing. The webbing is multi-layered by wrapping and sewing in such a way as to loosely capture the rings to allow thorough inspection of wear points.

The FrictionSaver is placed in a secure crotch or wrapped around a secure limb. The climbing line is then run through the rings instead of a natural crotch. This reduces abrasion on the tree, the rope and climber fatigue.

The difference in the ring size permits a knot (or key) near the end of the rope to pass through the larger ring, but not through the smaller ring. This allows the device to be removed without revisiting the tie-in point.

There are many stories of broken teeth and stitches received from steel snaps while dislodging a rope or lanyard from below. Aluminum is far more forgiving in this respect, however the potential of injury still exists. Hardware should never be thrown from a tree or slammed to the ground in any way. This type of abuse can also lead to fracture and failure.

The FrictionSaver can be safely removed from the tree and lowered to the ground by simply attaching a throw line string below the knot (or key). It can also be installed in the tree and made ready for use without visiting the tie-in point.

The smaller ring should not be able to pass through the larger ring. This can complicate both installation and removal and greatly increase the likelihood of misuse as some type of choker sling! The rings must be able to rotate for even wear. Their symmetry allows heat to dissipate evenly, reducing the potential of damage to climbing lines. High grade air craft aluminum is strong, lightweight and durable. Though steel may tolerate more abuse, aluminum dissipates heat more efficiently than steel and it is lighter.

Unlike the sheave of a pulley, the rings do not rotate with the rope as it passes through the device. Therefore, note that the FrictionSaver is then unable to dissipate the friction and heat that can be generated during rigging operations!

It is important to inspect all equipment thoroughly before each use. "When in doubt, throw it out!" Make it your business to know the design specifications and the limitations associated with any given application.

Remember, Climb Safe! And we will "See You At The Top!"

Ken Palmer
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ArborMaster®