

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 7, 2019
From: Concerned ISA Members
To: ISA Board of Directors

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Subject: Guide for Plant Appraisal, 10th Edition

As many of you know, ISA is the copyright holder and publisher of the *Guide for Plant Appraisal*, which is authored by the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA). The 9th Edition was published in 2000, and after an inordinately long drafting process the 10th Edition was published in August, 2018.

We, the undersigned¹, wish to draw the Board's attention to serious and significant concerns with the 10th Edition as published.

As you may know, a number of typographical errors and simple mistakes have been identified by CTLA, ISA staff, and readers of the 10th Edition since publication. ISA has released a Corrigendum dated November 27, 2018², pending a reprinting. On December 21, 2018 ISA took a bold and responsible step, announcing that it would provide the reprinted 10th Edition to all original purchasers, free of charge by the end of February, 2019.

Our concern is that these initial corrections are incomplete and are insufficient to justify the effort and cost associated with the second printing. As we continue carefully reading through the first printing, it

¹ Several of the undersigned served on ISA's Plant Appraisal and Valuation Committee-PAVC (established *circa* 2002) and reviewed 10th Edition draft manuscripts in 2012, 2016, and 2017.

² http://www.isa-arbor.com/portals/0/assets/pdf/CTLA_Corrigendum.11.27.18.pdf

is increasingly obvious that the 10th Edition contains many technical mistakes, ambiguities, contradictions, inconsistencies, and inadequacies in addition to those in the Corrigendum, which itself contains mistakes. At best, these issues reveal sloppiness in final manuscript preparation and haste in publishing, and at worst inadequate understanding of the subject matter (resulting in technical inaccuracies in either case).

Beyond these editorial and technical issues we feel there are deep conceptual flaws in the 10th edition. PAVC had advised in 2012 that the manuscript could not be fixed by editing and tweaking, and should be started over. A perceived need to publish quickly was deemed more important than starting over. Six years later the resulting August, 2018 ISA publication must already be corrected and reprinted at substantial direct cost and indirect staff costs.

At this point we bring four concerns to your attention:

- 1) Re-printing the *Guide* by the end of February (or even the end of March), 2019 in the absence of a thorough review to identify issues in addition to those in the limited Corrigendum raises the specter of successive, expensive re-printings and further erosion of user confidence.
- 2) There is already concern and confusion among users of the 10th Edition because of both the Corrigendum and additional issues being discussed in public fora. Many of these users work in demanding insurance and litigation settings. Multiple re-printings will cause chaos for those users and the public they serve, and for rank and file plant appraisers
- 3) The December, 2018 issue of *Arborist News* printed a CEU article by CTLA presenting the Core Concepts found in Chapter 2 of the 10th Edition. It is part of a planned series of such articles. This is troubling because by printing this series ISA is endorsing a product now known to be technically flawed. The result is that these articles portray the 10th Ed. as best practice when in fact it remains deeply flawed. Until flaws are identified and addressed, CEU quizzes in the articles may also contain errors subject to this revising and reprinting process. It is an educational precept that you “don’t teach what must then be untaught.”
- 4) ISA (as well as partner organizations) continues to advertise, sell, and ship the first printing. This is wasteful of time and energy for staff and users, and puts purchasers in the position of unknowingly relying on a book soon to be corrected and re-printed. And that is disingenuous if not bordering on misrepresentation.

To be very clear, our concerns are not based on either antipathy towards the concept of a 10th Edition, or resistance to change. We welcome important concepts introduced by the 10th Edition. However, neither the enormous volunteer efforts of the CTLA authors over a period of eighteen years, nor impatience of the market, justify a conceptually and technically flawed publication. It reflects poorly on the ISA to publish, promote, and sell such a product. More importantly it is a disservice to ISA members, other users of the *Guide*, the courts, and the public.

The ISA Board of Directors has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that all ISA publications meet a standard of excellence, and all expenditures of staff time and of money are prudent and well timed.

Respectfully, we ask the Board of Directors to delay the re-printing, cease publication of 10th Edition CEU articles in *Arborist News*, and suspend advertising the sale of the first printing until the many problems in the 10th Edition can be fully identified and a proactive plan of action developed to deal with them. Anything less is leading the industry astray and not promoting excellence in practice.

Respectfully,



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