

Position Statement

TO: Whom It May Concern
FROM: Concerned Plant Appraisal Practitioners
DATE: November 27, 2020
SUBJECT: 10th Edition Is Not Generally Accepted Best Practice

The Guide for Plant Appraisal, 10th Edition (CTLA 2019) suggests (p. 4) that it “...in many ways...functions as a summary of best practices...”

We, the undersigned, as individual plant appraisal practitioners, do not accept the 10th Edition as a generally accepted, complete, or exclusive expression of best practice in plant appraisal.

Background. The 10th Edition was developed between 2004 and 2018. Draft manuscripts were released in 2012 and 2017. Appointed review committees composed of experienced practitioners rejected both drafts as inadequate and conceptually flawed; and recommended starting over rather than simply editing the drafts (see e.g., ISA-PAVC 2012, 2017).

Despite the recommendations from appointed subject matter expert review committees, the Boards and Executive Directors of the seven CTLA organizations endorsed publication of the 2017 draft substantially as written. The 10th Edition was released in August 2018 (CTLA 2018a). Within months the first printing was withdrawn, to correct formatting, typography, and other errors (CTLA 2018b). A second printing, released in July 2019 (CTLA 2019), still contained errors and significant conceptual flaws. In November 2019 some of the 10th Edition worksheets were discovered to be unworkable. Revised worksheets have been released (ISA 2020) and are included in the 10th Edition Revised (CTLA 2020). Revised worksheets, alone, do not solve the other problems inherent in the 10th Edition.

10th Edition Experience. We have purposefully waited over two years since publication of the first printing to make a formal statement. We have observed ISA’s admirably responsible revision process. Unfortunately, these revisions do not address the deep conceptual flaws in the 10th Edition.

Some of us have read the 10th Edition but continued to use the generally accepted 9th Edition (CTLA 2000). Some of us have used and will continue to use the 10th Edition, such that it is.

We have found that the 10th Edition, while it makes some notable contributions to practice, contains ambiguities, contradictions, deficiencies, errors, and significant conceptual and logical flaws. Its new methods and terminology are untested by extensive practice experience and thus, by definition, cannot be generally accepted best practice.

Those of us who use the 10th Edition have found that it requires extraordinary effort in adjustments, departures, and explanations; and we have to work around the many flaws in order to credibly solve real world appraisal problems.

Some of us have completed the available 10th Edition training and have found that it does not resolve inherent 10th Edition practice problems. Because it closely follows the 10th Edition, the available training cannot resolve those practice problems. Completing the available training is not the issue. The 10th Edition itself is the issue. Because the available training is an entry level introduction to the

10th Edition which incorporates the 10th Edition's flaws, trainees do not form a peer group that can define best practice or a standard of care in plant appraisal.

The Way Forward. The path to generally accepted best practice must be through extensive experience and use. Best practice is not created by mere publication of new and untested methods. The 10th Edition, as noted above, was known to be deeply flawed prior to publication. It remains so, even after reprinting. It has been openly criticized within the plant appraisal community (e.g. Dunster 2019a).

Over time, with additional corrections in the 10th Edition, clarifications in a secondary literature (e.g. Cullen 2018, 2019, 2020; Cullen and Komen 2019; Cullen and McNeil 2020; Cullen et al 2020; Dunster 2019b; Komen 2019), and court decisions (e.g. Romkey v. Osborne, 2019 NSSC 56), parts of the 10th Edition might eventually emerge as best practice. A future 11th Edition might embody an experience based and truly generally accepted best practice.

For the foreseeable future, however, best practice in plant appraisal will require significant professional judgment that is not constrained by the narrow letter of the 10th Edition.

To conclude, the undersigned individual plant appraisal practitioners do not accept the 10th Edition, in its 2020 form, as a generally accepted, complete, or exclusive expression of best practice in plant appraisal.

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Signatures

This position statement is made by the undersigned individual plant appraisal practioners who may be joined by other practioners who endorse it.

Lew Bloch. Involved in landscape design-build, nursery and arboriculture since the 1950's. Landscape Architect. ALCA/PLANET representative to CTLA 1994-2007. Mid-Atlantic Chapter of ISA, Lifetime Achievement Award. Honorary Life Member of ASCA. Member of ISA-PAVC since 2011. Member of TCIA Appraisal Task Force. TPAQ qualified. Author of *Tree Law Cases in the USA*.

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Scott Cullen. Involved in arboriculture since 1971. ISA Certified Arborist. ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist. Connecticut Licensed Arborist. New Jersey Licensed Tree Expert, TPAQ and TRAQ qualified. Licensed real estate broker. Masters degree in real estate development and investment, and graduate level education in real estate appraisal. Published, on tree appraisal, in the peer reviewed literature. Member of ISA-PAVC since its founding. ISA representative to CTLA 2011-2014. Long history of service on industry boards and committees.

Dr. Julian Dunster. Involved in arboriculture since 1974. Registered Professional Forester (two degrees in forestry), Registered Professional Planner (PhD. in Regional Planning and Resource Development), ISA Certified Arborist, ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist, ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualified. Past President PNW Chapter of ISA. Honourary Life member of ISA and PNWISA. Served as ISA representative to CTLA. Member of ISA-PAVC since its founding.

John Harris. Involved in arboriculture and urban forestry for over 30 years. Undergraduate education in natural resource management, graduate education in business administration and in forest economics. ISA Certified Arborist, ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist, NYS-DEC Cooperative Consulting Forester, SAF Certified Forester and member of SAF Economics, Policy & Law Working Group. TPAQ and TRAQ qualified. Member of ISA-PAVC since 2012. Member of Lambda Alpha International Land Economics Society.

Tim Johnson. Involved in arboriculture since 1961. Experienced in all aspects of tree health management throughout the United States and overseas. BS degree in ornamental horticulture. ISA Certified Arborist. ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist. TRAQ qualified. Long history of service on industry boards. Past chairman of the board of TCIA (formerly NAA) and recipient of TCIA 2009 Award of Merit. Past president of ASCA. Chairman of the ANSI A300 Accredited Standards Committee, 1991-2011. Featured speaker and trainer at numerous regional, national, and international seminars and workshops.

Dr. J. James Kielbaso. Emeritus Professor of Forestry, the Michigan State University. Member SAF Science Advisory Board, Chairman of the Michigan Tree Valuation Committee, ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist, Michigan Registered Forester. Past President of ISA and the Michigan Forestry and Park Association. Honourary Life Member of ISA. Served on the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council. Member of ISA-PAVC since its founding.

Joe McNeil. Involved in arboriculture since 1970. ISA Board Certified Master Arborist. ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist. TPAQ and TRAQ qualified. Past Board, ASCA. Past chair, ASCA Standards of Professional Practice Committee. California Community Colleges past faculty in arboriculture. Member of ISA-PAVC since its founding and chair since 2004.

Guy Meilleur. Involved in arboriculture since 1965. Practicing tree and landscape appraisal since 1992. Practicing as an appraisal expert witness since 1998. Author, educator, and researcher on tree care since 2002. Teaching appraisal at conferences and universities since 2005. ISA Board Certified Master Arborist. Vice-chair ISA Education Committee 2004-2010. Member ANSI A300 Tree Care Standard Committee 2007-2014 and primary author of A300 Part 8.

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