



JARRAFF
All-Terrain Tree Trimmer



5 MODELS

IN THE FIELD

ROW MAINTENANCE

4x4 JARRAFF

Apple Tree Service: Making it Clear ROW Maintenance & Tree Trimmer in Arkansas

With a long growing season in his region, Rick Henderson and his Apple Tree Service crews stay busy. The North Little Rock Arkansas based tree trimming/Right-of-Way (ROW) maintenance company is gearing up for 30 years in business in 2008 and Henderson (owner/president/CEO) hasn't lost a bit of energy, enthusiasm or enjoyment for his job.

He said "I started the company with one employee. After a stint in the military and I completed school, I came back and everyone thought I was crazy. Here I am out trimming trees with a college degree. But I had a long term plan to build a utility tree service. And that's what I did."

Apple Tree Service employs between 150 and 175 people depending on workload and the season. The company's territory primarily covers the state of Arkansas with additional crews in Oklahoma, northeastern Texas, northern Louisiana, western Mississippi, and southern Missouri. To cover that territory effectively and efficiently, Henderson has built a company dedicated to skilled employees and safety, as well as reliable, well cared for equipment.

Safety

Education, certification and overall safety are at the core of Apple Tree Service. Henderson takes much pride in the safety-training program his crews go through. He said, "Safety is the most important and having come from the background of being a tree trimmer and doing the work myself, I think I have a first hand knowledge of the challenges. And I'd venture to say that we probably have one of the best safety programs out there."

All of Henderson's crews are ANSI certified as required by law. In addition, all Henderson's crews go through an extensive in-house training program that includes various training modules and testing programs. According to Henderson, each Apple Tree Service employee needs to complete 46 individual lessons before they



become a certified tree trimmer. The program also includes several written examinations, as well as the required viewing of over 40 safety videos, available in English and Spanish. Henderson also said company drug testing prior to employment, after an accident, as well as random, has been a part of the company program for years.

Henderson said, "I feel like everyday we create jobs for families and I think it's an obligation that too few employers take seriously these days when they treat their employees like numbers. That's not the way we treat our employees. Every one of our line foremen is CPR certified. This is all at our own expense; no one makes us do this. Safety is everything. I can't think of anything that's more important."

Equipment & Maintenance

According to Henderson, Apple Tree Service's equipment compliment includes eight Jarraff All-Terrain Tree Trimmers (Jarraff Industries, St. Peter, MN), 150 trucks, over 50 aerial lifts, 50 chipper dumps, 60-75 chippers and numerous pieces of ground clearing and land clearing equipment. To keep the equipment running at its best, Henderson has a 7,000-square-foot maintenance garage employing seven full-time mechanics. In addition, five service

PROJECT PROFILE:

Contractor: Apple Tree Service

Location: North Little Rock Arkansas

Equipment Used: Jarraff 4 Wheel Drive All-Terrain Tree Trimmer

Specifications: Row Maintenance, 6 State Service Area

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trucks are constantly on the road, responding to maintenance calls over a four state area.



Henderson keeps very precise maintenance and parts records. Everything from adding a piece of equipment to oil changes, knife blade changes to an engine replacement in a bucket truck is recorded and archived on computer. That gives the maintenance supervisor the ability to look back and see which pieces of equipment require service more than others, and where potential abuse or misuse problems are occurring.

Henderson said, "There are only a couple things you can realistically control in the tree trimming business. You can control your labor and you can control maintenance, but many other items included in overhead render you powerless.

Without the maintenance side, tree trimmers wouldn't have a job. Without tree trimmers, maintenance wouldn't have a job. I have to get them together and remind them of that all the time. Maintenance says, 'The tree trimmers are tearing them [equipment] apart.' And the tree trimmers say, 'Well, maintenance isn't fixing them right.' And I go, 'Hey, you guys sound like you're on opposite teams, but guess what, you're wearing the same uniform!'"

In addition to keeping exceptional maintenance records, Henderson keeps his crews motivated by offering contests for "The Cleanest Truck of the Month" and other incentives with gift certificates for employees and their families. He said, "We wash our fleet once a week. Some may consider this overkill, but this is just an example of my pride in building the company. Whether a truck is brand new or whether it's four or five years old, I would dare say nobody could tell the difference. I want my equipment looking top-notch all the time."

ROW Maintenance Productivity

To effectively manage a territory the size of Apple Tree Service's, a system needs to be in place. Over the years, Henderson has developed that system, but ultimately, he explained, "The key is how you manage your projects. We do probably 60 percent of our work as by the mile or lump sum. And that's where the Jarraffs and the

specialized equipment really come into play. A Jarraff for example can do up to five miles per week while your average bucket crew can only do about 80 percent of one mile. We do have an hourly crew, but I think the industry is getting away from that. We have projects now that we're doing by the foot. We have projects we do by the circuit and we're even doing a project now by the pound, which is unique."

No matter how the project is specified, productivity is the key, and that is where Henderson's specialized equipment, like the Jarraff have a big impact. The Jarraff is a completely self-contained tree trimmer with track and wheeled configurations. A hydraulically powered, non-conductive fiberglass boom provides cutting height up to 75 feet. The boom is shock resistant and has a 90° range of motion. The Jarraff provides operators with dynamic field operation, including a 360-degree range of motion and a 40-degree lateral tilt. According to Henderson, it provides productivity and safety, reducing labor requirements and keeping crewmembers on the ground instead of in the air.



Much of Apple Tree Service's work is dictated by the cycles, the growing cycle and the trimming cycle. The growing cycle in Henderson's area is quite long, running from early March through late October. The trimming cycle for most utilities in the region varies between five and seven years. And while the growing cycle and the trimming cycle may dictate when and where crews travel, the company has established a solid process for attacking almost any ROW maintenance project.

Henderson said, "What we do on a project is send in our brush cutting equipment first to clear the way for the Jarraffs. Then we send in our Jarraffs and go through the whole system, getting everything we can. The Jarraffs are faster, but they don't leave everything as aesthetically pleasing. But then the bucket crews and the climbing crews come through to finish up the job."

Storm restoration is also a part of Apple Tree Service's business and again the Jarraff tree trimmer plays a key role. Henderson stresses he is not a storm chaser, but the company has responded to various storm related incidents within its territory, most notably,

the major ice storms that hit the Texarkana area in 2000.

Henderson said, "In a storm situation, people just want their lights back on. To get the power on, you can do it a lot quicker with a Jarraff. If you take a bucket truck in there, you're only going to get about eighty percent of a mile or maybe a mile in a workweek. With a Jarraff you can do five times that. You go in there, clip the limbs and get the lines ready to be pulled back up. And then, once the power is back on, you can take your time with the buckets, go back in there and dress them up if need be."

Since the major ice storms of 2000, storm restoration work has diminished as many of the ROWs affected have been cleaned up to prevent just such an occurrence in the future. But with the region's long growing season and Apple Tree Service's reputation for quality, there should be plenty of work ahead.



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