



## Tree of Spades

By Sharon Spaeder

What if the lovely backyard view you've enjoyed for years suddenly included distant high tension wires or a neighbor's new pool? Your first thought might be – a screen made of large evergreen trees would block the unwanted view and maintain privacy. In another scenario, what if you had to move, leaving behind a big tree, maybe a favorite source of shade or perhaps one you planted the day your teenager was born?

In either case, you might want to call in the big guns, or rather, the big spade. That would be Big Tree, LLC, a West Chester company that specializes in the removal and installation of – you guessed it – big trees. Big Tree is only one of

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*Above: Big Tree is a West Chester company that specializes in the removal and installation of – you guessed it – big trees.*

*Right: Ed Rasbach, who has managed Big Tree for several years, has a college degree in ornamental horticulture and has worked in the landscaping field for over 30 years. The Marshallton resident finds his work quite rewarding.*



a few in the area who own the unique equipment required to complete a job of this nature: Tree spade trucks. These trucks are each outfitted with an enormous apparatus composed of four hydraulic spades that expand to the width of the earth surrounding the tree and, contract to uproot its entire root system in one fell swoop.

Ed Rasbach, who has managed Big Tree for several years, explains why landscape contractors, and individual homeowners, call upon Big Tree.

“Some people have moved to a new place and might have specimens with sentimental value that they want to take with them,” he says. “Some might want to move an existing tree because they like the tree, but it’s in the wrong location. An evergreen tree might be relocated to furnish screening or maybe they have a shade tree, but it’s in the wrong spot or too close to the house.”



“Sometimes it may be one tree; sometimes it may be a dozen or more. Recently we performed a job at Germantown Academy where a landscape contractor hired us to move



nine trees. They were putting up a new building, and the trees were in the way. Some of them were quite valuable, so rather than having them bulldozed over, they opted to move them elsewhere on the property. We also planted 38 trees for a horse farm near Radnor Hunt. Owners added a new entrance that meandered through the property, and they wanted trees along that lane.”

Besides moving trees, Big Tree specializes in finding the trees people want. Big Tree sells evergreen trees, shade trees, fruit trees, flowering trees, ornamental trees, and shrubbery. Customers tell Ed the type of trees they desire in terms of height, girth, and species, and



he then locates them using many area growers or at his own 45-acre tree farm. Most customers desire a tree with a “beefy” trunk and a nice branch spread – all features that would necessitate using a large tree spade. However, Big Tree sells most tree sizes and sometimes utilizes its 48-inch truck mounted tree spade when moving and selling smaller trees.

“We have three different tree spade trucks and can dig a pretty big ball of earth,” Ed adds. “Every now and then

we'll hand-dig and either move the tree with a loader or crane, perhaps because it's too close to a building, possibly too large or wide to use the tree spade."

If you've ever shared the road with a Big Tree spade truck, you'll be happy to know that its drivers are certified by the Department of Transportation (DOT); safety is the number one concern, and Big Tree complies with the rules of the road for this type of equipment.

With a college degree in ornamental horticulture, Ed has worked in the landscaping field (garden center, botanical garden, grounds maintenance, and nursery and landscape contracting) for over 30 years. The Marshallton resident finds his work quite rewarding.

"I think what's satisfying is when you see someone through from start to finish," Ed relates. "Customers may come to me with a specific idea and budget in mind, so I try to help them find what they need. After the tree is in and, as I'm pulling out, I see the happy homeowners admiring their tree. One tree can make a huge difference."

"I recently put a new tree in at a home in Hershey's Mill. Everything on the property was a green type of plant or tree, so we put in a lovely red Japanese maple, bringing in another color dimension. The maple was stunning with the warm colors of the house behind it, and it looked like a completely different place when we were done. The homeowners were thrilled, and that's what makes my job fun."

*If a tree can change your landscape or an unwanted*

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*view, the answer is simple: think Big! •*

**Big Tree**

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