



# Thrifty Tree Growing with Military Precision



A Thrifty Tree Service crew member makes use of an aerial lift to remove the fruit from a king palm.

By Janet Aird

When Dave Aviram immigrated to California from Israel, he looked for work in an industry that was compatible with his background.

“I fell in love with California and tried to see what business I could fit in,” Aviram says. “I was born on a farm and have been

in agriculture since day one. In 1996, I got the opportunity to work as a ground guy in the tree industry. I really liked how people cared about trees in California and I loved the industry.”



**Dave Aviram**

Aviram also had spent 12 years in the military in Israel: the Air

Force Academy, the Israeli Army, and a special unit, where safety is paramount. Aviram noticed his tree care company’s sloppy safety practices and brought them to the attention of the owner, but nothing changed.

When he was offered a partnership in another company, Thrifty Tree Service in Reseda, in 1996, he joined as an equal partner. Thrifty, which was founded in 1985, had a three- to four-man crew that worked on residential properties.

“Two years into the partnership, I saw that the business had a lot of potential,” says Aviram, now company president. “We started doing commercial and industrial work and tried to get into government and public works. We invested in tools and equipment, and I started studying for my ISA-certification. In 2001, my partner left the company. That’s when I really took a big risk.”

Aviram bought more vehicles and equipment, including 71-foot aerial lifts and roll-off trucks. He’s become an ISA-certified arborist, a licensed contractor and pest control applicator, a Mauget certified applicator, an Arbor Jet system tree injection applicator and a Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP).

The company now serves Los Angeles and Ventura counties and employs approximately 20 workers in the field. Aviram’s three children, all students, work in the

company during their summer vacations. His two sons, Roy and Omer, work in the field and his daughter, Leah, works with the office manager.

Approximately half of Thrifty’s business is residential and commercial, and half municipal.

Most of their work for municipalities, including the City of Los Angeles, consists of pruning and health care for trees on rights of way. Some 15 to 20 percent is brush clearance for the Los Angeles Fire Department.

“We do a lot of plant health care for customers who want to save their trees,” Aviram says. “For me, to save trees is my goal. I use the most expensive medications – insecticides, pesticides, herbicides, systemic and other products. I’m proud of the percentage of success we have saving trees.” For drought-stricken trees, Aviram uses the highest-quality product on the market to help keep moisture in the root zone.

Although trees grow quite well in the forest without supplemental fertilization, urban and suburban soils may lack the vital nutrients that trees need, according to Aviram, so Thrifty provides fertilization

services as well.

They also do cabling and bracing, tree planting, tree relocation, tree removals, and consultations. The company's Certified Arborist provides consultations, tree reports, tree value estimates, tree risk assessments, tree preservation planning, and tree problem diagnosis. With the growth of the economy and new construction, Thrifty Tree Service provides the tree reports for developers.

All the crews that prune trees are supervised by certified arborists. Most tree trimmers are certified tree workers. All of Thrifty's field employees are trained in all levels of safety, including equipment, aerial safety and first aid. There are two CTSPs, including Aviram. Crews are trained quarterly, either in-house or with outsourced trainers.

"I run the business like the army," he says. "Spending 12 years in uniform leaves a mark.

"Every morning, everybody shows up in uniform for inspection. We talk to every sin-

gle person to see if there is anything suspicious, like drug or alcohol use. We inspect all the equipment prior to working. At the work location, we find a safe place to park and set up barricades with traffic cones and proper signage. We check the location for any issues, such as landscaping, fences, the roof, skylights, and we take the proper steps to protect the property. At the end of the day, the drivers return the vehicles and report if any equipment needs repairs."

The company donates time and crews to nonprofit organizations. More than 50 percent of its business comes from repeat customers and some 25 percent comes from customers' referrals. The little advertising they do is online.

"It's because of the quality of our work," Aviram says. "I'm not the cheapest contractor in the industry."

Thrifty Tree Service earned TCIA Accreditation in 2014.

Aviram signed up for Accreditation because of a conversation he had with a TCIA member at a conference. "I hadn't


heard of the program," Aviram says, "but as soon as I achieve one goal, I seek another."

It took only three months to become accredited from the time they applied.

"We didn't really do very much," he says. "Just what we'd already been doing. The inspector came and inspected the company, and we passed the same day."

In the next few years, he'd like to see the company continue to grow. He's also thinking about trying to help owners of other tree care companies increase their knowledge about the business. "One of the problems in this industry is a lack of knowledge," he says.

Thrifty's accredited status already has been noticed by one of their municipal customers. The City of Agoura invited them to be a vendor at the City's Expo in August 2015. "We featured the health care of trees during a drought," Aviram says. "We had a big crowd. It was a big success."

Thrifty Tree Service's slogan is, "We will do everything to save trees," says Aviram. 

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*We're looking forward to increasing our bottom line with Accreditation."*

*Ted Ranney | President and Owner  
Skyline Tree Service & Landscape, Inc.  
St. Charles, Illinois  
Accredited since 2013*



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