

# The Guide for Plant Appraisal: Overview of the 10th Edition

By Jim Clark

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In 2012, the Council of Tree & Landscape Appraisers (CTLA) released a draft of *Guide for Plant Appraisal, 10th Edition*. Member organizations provided comments and suggestions. The responses resulted in a reboot of the preparation of the 10th edition, as well as several changes in Council representation. The Council looks forward to the release of a second draft in the near future. In anticipation of the new draft, the Council thought it would be valuable to review some of the goals for the new edition.

First, the 10th edition will build on and strengthen the approaches and methods presented in previous editions. Earlier versions of the *Guide* focused almost exclusively on the cost approach. While the cost approach will continue to be emphasized, the 10th edition will strengthen discussion of both market and income approaches. Where needed, the 10th edition will correct errors and offer clarification. The strengths and weaknesses of each plant appraisal approach and method will be identified. The 10th edition will also incorporate recent research relevant to tree appraisal, particularly related to contribution of trees to real-estate market value and the value of environmental and ecological benefits provided by trees.

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The Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA) represents seven supporting organizations within the green industry. The CTLA is responsible for developing industry consensus methodologies for determining the value of vegetation in the landscape. Representatives to the council collaborate as authors of the *Guide for Plant Appraisal* and act as conduits for individuals from the supporting organizations to participate in the development and review process of the *Guide* through membership and participation in a review group. The supporting organizations include:

- AmericanHort
  - American Society of Consulting Arborists
  - American Society of Landscape Architects
  - Association of Consulting Foresters of America
  - International Society of Arboriculture
  - National Association of Landscape Professionals
  - Tree Care Industry Association
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Second, the new edition will discuss the concepts that form the foundation of plant appraisal. Previous editions of the *Guide* did not cover this topic and instead focused largely on methods. Given the feedback the Council has received from member organizations, it is clear that a framework of the appraisal process is also needed. The 10th edition will bridge the gap between concept and practice with a more detailed discussion of the appraisal process, as well as identifying the purpose and use of the appraisal.

By including discussion of concepts and process, the 10th edition will give readers a better understanding of, and guidance on, the practice of plant appraisal. For example, throughout the 9th edition are comments that plant appraisers should consider their results in the context of real-estate market value. The reasons behind these statements are not always clear. The 10th edition will strive to provide a conceptual background to such direction.

Third, the 10th edition will align plant appraisal with the concepts and terminology employed in the general practice of appraisal. This goal is similar to that of the International Society of Arboriculture's effort to align tree risk assessment with the general practice of risk assessment. While plant appraisers face unique circumstances, the ideas and concepts that we employ are the same as for general appraisal. To this end, *Guide for Plant Appraisal, 10th Edition* will adapt general terminology and, where necessary, modify it to better fit plant appraisal. These changes in terminology will be the subject of upcoming articles authored by Council representatives.

The new edition will also discuss the organization and context of appraisal reports, again adapting general appraisal practice to the unique field of plant appraisal. As another example, plant appraisers have described the result as an "appraised value." This is not a term used in general appraisal practice. The 10th edition will refer instead to the "assignment result," and distinguish between cost estimates and value estimates.

In the Council's view, a successful 10th edition will achieve these three goals. It will build on previous editions of the *Guide* by providing a conceptual basis to plant appraisal, by describing the appraisal process in some detail, and by aligning plant appraisal with the general

practice of appraisal. This will provide a stronger foundation for the practice, and enhance the overall credibility and stature of plant appraisal.

I'd like to offer a personal perspective on the 10th. Several years ago, I attended the Wildlife Fire Litigation Conference, an annual meeting of attorneys, state and federal agencies, insurance representatives, fire investigators, and a few consulting arborists. During a presentation on tree appraisal, an attorney in the audience observed, "People who write the *Guide* are experts on trees, but they may not be experts on the value of trees."

As Council members Bret Vicary and Dick Gooding noted in an *Arborist News* article, published in 2007, the *Guide*, "should provide sufficient detail to enable the appraiser to follow a systematic process for defining the appraisal problem, identifying the proper appraisal approach, and developing a credible conclusion."

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