



THE TIME BETWEEN THE CONFIRMATION TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT AND THE PLANTING DATE IDEALLY HAD TO BE LESS THAN TWO WEEKS TO AVOID THE FIRST SNOW OF THE SEASON.



PORT CARLING Large Tree Installation

(A.K.A. THE WHITE PINE THAT MOVED TO MUSKOKA)

by Chris Morrison

Douglas Wood Large Tree Services of Rockwood is well known in the industry for their fleet of tree spades and decades of experience supplying and moving large landscape trees. What is less commonly known is they have been moving really large trees during this time as well.

“Large” is a relative term of course and for most landscape trees moved by spade, this would be up to 20 centimetres diameter and 8 metres in height though some exceptions can allow for moving larger sizes than this. The practical limitations of tree spades become their height, width and weight relative to the Highway Traffic Act and the need to avoid oversize permits on a daily basis. Transplanting of trees requiring even larger root balls actually still harkens back to the earlier times of hand digging and drum- lacing, though with the advantage of modern equipment. While moving large trees can be expensive, it none the less happens and the following recent example highlights some of the considerations and challenges in such a project. This project was a collaborative effort between Bartlett Tree Experts and Rockscape Design, both of Bracebridge, and Douglas Wood Large Tree Services.

It began with a call from Bartlett Tree Experts to discuss what could be done to replace a significant tree which had been removed from a landscape near Port Carling. The tree was a classic windswept Eastern White Pine and a suitable replacement was needed. To make it more interesting, the tree had to be planted prior to snow fall which would terminate any safe access to the site and it was already November.

There are a lot of White Pines in Muskoka, but not many to be found with a relatively compact root system growing in a soil type which would ensure root ball integrity. As a result, the most suitable replacement tree that could be found was located 180km away in Belwood. This tree was chosen partly based on its known past which included a root pruning about 20 years ago. The Pine measured 40 cm in diameter and 12.5 metres in height (16 inches and 40 feet respectively).

The time between the confirmation to proceed with the project and the planting date ideally had to be less than two weeks to avoid the first snow of the season. This proved to be just enough time to dig and wrap the root ball and allow it to freeze for a bit more than a week, and an additional four days to load, transport, plant and integrate the tree into the existing landscape. There were multiple trips made during this period to the planting site to sort out logistics and take measurements.

The size of the root ball dug was 12 feet in diameter and it weighed in at 33,000 lbs. This is about the maximum practical size limit for transporting by roadway.

Before any planting could take place, some site preparation was required to accommodate the new tree’s deeper root ball. The original tree’s root system sat in a shallow depression in the Canadian Shield which required blasting with dynamite to provide sufficient depth. This service was arranged by Rockscape Design of Muskoka along with all the equipment and landscape supplies necessary to finish the project. Other site challenges that needed addressing were how to protect a million dollar granite stone driveway from heavy equipment and how to maneuver a 33,000 pound root ball between a pair of stone pile gate pillars which were just 3 inches wider than the root ball itself.

A 65 ton crane was required to load the tree in Belwood, and another in Muskoka to unload it. The trip to the planting site which had been carefully planned still had a few delays to safely clear bridges and overhead utility lines. The crane in Muskoka was required to set up twice; once to transfer the tree from the highway float to a smaller truck which could negotiate the winding final kilometer of the trip and a second time to plant the tree. By the end of that day, the tree was set in place at grade, only requiring a thorough watering and final landscape detailing to be completed the following day.

All the planning, measuring and re-measuring proved its worth as did being able to depend on our partners for their expertise. Having local talent like Rockscape’s crew on site to assist, and Bartlett to handle all of the tree aftercare allowed us to focus on the actual transplanting. There were a lot of hours put into this project, but everything did get finished on schedule and just before major snow. The new tree now stands naturally in its surroundings with virtually no sign of all the activity which took place to put it there. A very satisfying experience for everyone indeed. 🌲

