



One-stop service gives added market traction

Vermeer size-reduction kit has helped build a versatile and highly successful arboreal services company in Finland



Finland is Europe's most heavily forested country, with woodland covering three quarters of its territory. No surprise, therefore, that forest industries dominate the Finnish economy. But trees and tree care also play a big part in everyday life. Most property owners have trees that need to be managed.

"Yeah, I reckon there's plenty for a woodman to do around here," acknowledges Janne Storlöpare, owner and operator of Sahauspalvelu. "But there's also plenty of competition. Building a business from scratch is never easy – even building a tree care business in a country that's full of trees."

Sahauspalvelu offers a comprehensive arboreal service to customers in and around the southern city of Lahti, about an hour's drive from Helsinki. Since starting up in 2012, Storlöpare has built a strong reputation across the region. An important factor in his success has been his ability to read the market and align his services.

"Customers in general, but especially ordinary householders, don't like having to go to several different contractors to get a job done," says Storlöpare. "If you've got a couple of trees in your yard that are diseased or getting too big or whatever, it's a pain getting in one firm to fell them, another to process the timber, and then a third to get out the stumps and level the ground. That's why my aim is to provide a one-stop solution."

Storlöpare believes that the ability to offer a turnkey service depends on two things: expertise and machinery. Although he already had a degree in forestry, he has now obtained a degree in arboriculture as well.

"The idea is to have in-house knowledge of managing all the different types of tree we encounter

here. Plus, comprehensive insight into the lifecycle of wood, from planting to end product."

With a view of putting his expertise to practical use, Janne is also building up an impressive machinery park. Back at base, Sahauspalvelu now has its own bandsaw installation, producing sawn timber that's sold for use in a variety of building and manufacturing purposes. For site work, the firm has a small fleet of Vermeer mobile machines.

"We've got an SC362 stump cutter, a BC190XL brush chipper and two S925TX mini skid steers," confirms Storlöpare. "In my eyes, Vermeer is the clear market leader. So why make life complicated when I can get all the machines I need from them?"



Sahauspalvelu handles an increasing volume of emergency response work, where Storlöpare finds the versatility of his Vermeer mini skid steers a huge advantage.

"You never know quite what you're going to find when you arrive onsite," he says. "So, you want to cover all the bases if you can. The S925TX enables us to do that because we can switch attachments and use the same machine for multiple purposes. We've got tree and shrub grapples that we can use to pull out smaller trees and a set of forks for lifting lengths of trunk after sectioning them with the chainsaw."

"The wood splitter attached to the skid steer is also ideal: you can take it almost anywhere on worksites because the machine runs on tracks. The bucket attachments are really useful too. There's a scrap grapple bucket that's ideal for moving brush and limbs around."

"My Vermeer dealer told me they've got something like 80



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attachment options in total. We don't have them all, of course, but having a number means we can travel out to an unseen site ready to tackle a variety of situations."

The value of having the know-how and the hardware to deal with a wide range of challenges was illustrated when the region was hit by a major autumn storm.

"We got a call from the owner of a farm near Kuivanto," recalls Storlöpare. "They had a stand of aspen close to the buildings and several had been uprooted and either come down or been left teetering. One had gone right through the roof of a barn. The buildings were out of action until the trees were seen to.

"We went in and dealt with everything: we cleared the tree that had hit the barn, took down the ones that were unstable, logged and removed the trunks, and cleared and chipped the brush. Our one-stop service shortened the window before the structural repairs could begin and the business could get back to normal."

Like a lot of the sites where Sahauspalvelu works, the farm was accessible only by a narrow, unpaved track.

"Everything had to be taken in on a small low-loader. It's often like that, which is why power-to-footprint really matters. With the S925TX mini skid steer, you get as much horsepower as any other mini skid steer on the market, plus loads of torque, in a really compact form – it's only about a meter wide and stands chest high," Storlöpare explains, before adding with a wink, "So even Leevi can use it. Eh, Leevi?"

His assistant takes the jibe in good humor: "He likes to wind me up. It's true that the mini skid steer is easy to use. There's just one joystick for everything so you can operate the arm at the same time. I find the enclosed platform and failsafe systems reassuring, too."

"At the end of the day though, it comes down to efficiency," adds Storlöpare. "The mini skid steer does the work of two laborers. We can work faster with a smaller team, making us very competitive on price and turnaround time."

A lot of Sahauspalvelu's scheduled work is for private householders, felling yard trees. The ability to provide a comprehensive service has given the firm real traction in this segment of the market.

"As well as being convenient, an all-in solution is more customer friendly," Storlöpare says. "After all, you're working in someone's home environment. If you go in, take down a tree and clear-off leaving a gaping hole, the customer's probably not going to like it.

"It's much better to proceed sensitively, giving advice on conserving this tree and suggesting some pruning to that one. Where we do need to take a tree out completely, we do a thorough job removing the timber, chipping the brush, taking out the stump and levelling the ground where it was. A neat and tidy job means a satisfied customer."

Storlöpare's customer-focused philosophy is clearly reflected in his machinery choices. His BC190XL brush chipper is invaluable when it comes to delivering a turnkey service for homeowners.

"Ordinary people, especially people in cities, have no use for brush from the canopy of a felled tree or for smaller branches removed by pruning, and usually, they have no way of disposing of the stuff," he explains. "Reducing it to chippings that can be used on the garden or taken from the site is really helpful. Being able to do that for them makes the package we offer more attractive."

What drew Storlöpare to the Vermeer BC190XL was the rugged design, and the machine has lived up to expectations.

"We use it pretty much around-the-clock and it takes everything in stride," he says. "Nothing slows us down.

"We opted for the 2.2 liter diesel engine because of the power and the torque. No other chipper in that size bracket has the brawn to match it. Yet it isn't nearly as thirsty as you might expect; I've been really pleased with the fuel economy."

That characteristic is due to the chipper's engine load management technology. The diesel's power output is constantly adjusted to match the processing load, so it doesn't use more fuel than it really needs.

Onsite, it's usually employee Mikko who loads brush into the chipper: "Feeding it couldn't be easier," he says. "It's the right height, for one thing. I've come across other chippers where you were always having to bend or stretch, and the auto reverse and refeed feature is great – you

don't have to fight with the brush that doesn't immediately feed smoothly."

Mikko adds that the chipper is particularly useful on urban sites: "If we're managing roadside trees, the timber can be chipped onboard our truck. If we're working in a wooded city park, the chips can be immediately scattered and left to decompose naturally, enriching the soil. So there's no need to bring bigger trucks with cranes onsite when you're dealing with something relatively minor like a limb that's come down."

Another vital part of Sahauspalvelu's all-in-one yard tree service is stump milling.

"Our stump cutter was the first Vermeer machine we bought. It won me over, you could say," Storlöpare recalls. "Working in domestic yards, city yards in particular, often means getting machines through small entrances and into awkward places.

"So, the SC362 caught my eye, on account of the narrow design. But it packs a real punch; it's 35 hp and has the torque to handle really stubborn stumps. The light weight is another plus. In addition to transport advantages, it means less damage to turf around the stump. With a petrol engine, there's less noise, less vibration and less smell. So we like it, and our customers like it."

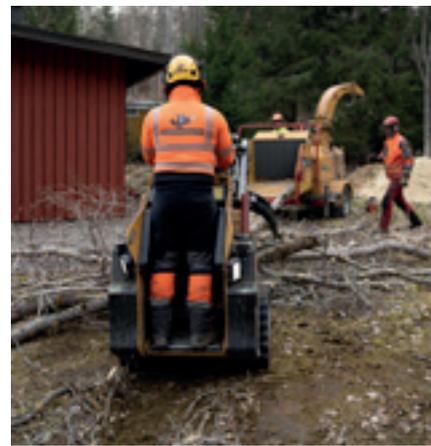
Serviceability is also important to Sahauspalvelu. "At the end of the day, time is money," asserts Storlöpare. "Every hour we spend servicing a machine is an hour we don't spend doing paid work for customers.

"So, it's good that I can always rely on Vermeer when I need information or parts. Most spares are available at short notice from the Finnish dealer, and even things that have to come from the US only take a week.

"Another plus is the neat cutter design on the SC362 – cleaning and replacement are a breeze. The belts are straightforward too – they're all on one side and easy to get on and off. You get the idea that the people who designed this machine put a lot of thought into every feature."

Ultimately, that's the key for Storlöpare. His loyalty to Vermeer is underpinned by his general sense that the company understands the real-world challenges faced by owners.

"Sahauspalvelu is a forward-looking business," he says. "In our



marketing, our positioning and our operating methods, we're always looking to move with the times, to embrace new technology and new working methods. I reckon Vermeer is a company that thinks like us, constantly innovating to make our work easier, more efficient and more sustainable."



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