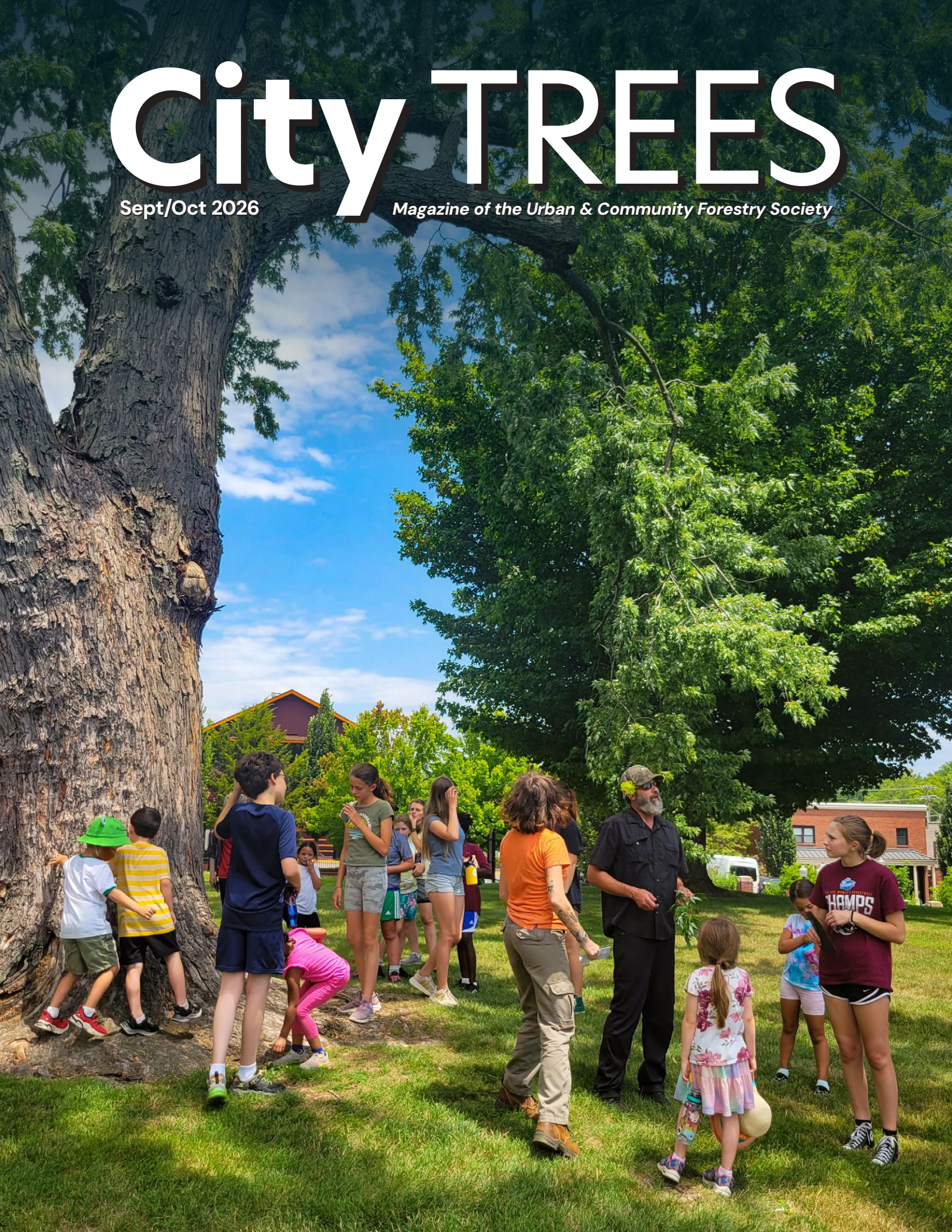


City TREES

Sept/Oct 2026

Magazine of the Urban & Community Forestry Society





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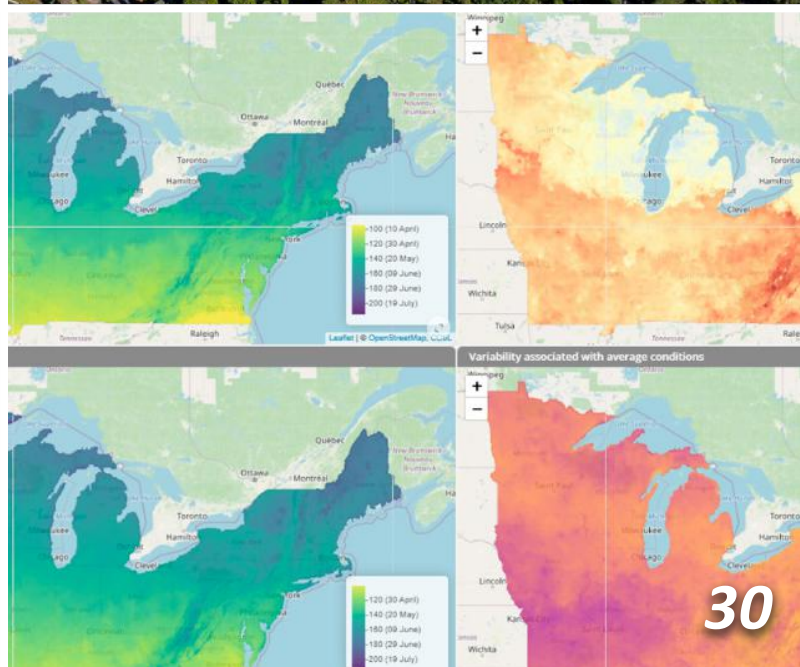
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Photo by Jamie King



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President's Message

David Lefcourt



As summer begins to wind down, the work of urban forestry continues at full pace. Worldwide, UCFS Members are preparing communities for the changing seasons while advancing projects that strengthen, protect, and expand our urban forests. Whether managing mature tree populations, planning new plantings, responding to emerging pests, or engaging residents, your work demonstrates the tremendous value of our profession. Every tree preserved, every tree planted, and every partnership built contributes to healthier, more resilient communities.

This is also an exciting time for our Society as we prepare to gather for the Urban and Community Forestry Society Conference this November in St. Louis, Missouri. Our [annual conference](#) is one of the greatest benefits of UCFS Membership, offering exceptional educational sessions, a field tour, networking opportunities, and the chance to exchange ideas with colleagues who understand the unique challenges and rewards of urban forestry. Whether you are attending for the first time or returning to reconnect with friends and colleagues, I encourage you to register soon. I look forward to seeing many of you as we learn from one another and continue advancing our profession.

As we approach the conference, I also want to recognize the dedication of our UCFS Board of Directors and Committee Members. Throughout the year, these volunteers devote countless hours to strengthening our Society, enhancing member benefits, planning educational programs, and ensuring UCFS continues to grow and evolve. Their leadership and commitment behind the scenes make our success possible, and I sincerely thank them for their service.

I also encourage you to support the Urban Forest Foundation. Through scholarships, the Foundation will invest in the next generation of urban forestry leaders while strengthening our profession. Every contribution, regardless of size, helps create opportunities that benefit our members, our communities, and the future of urban forestry.

Thank you for your continued dedication to urban forestry and your commitment to UCFS. I wish you a productive rest of the year and look forward to seeing many of you in St. Louis this November.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Lefcourt".

Executive Director's Message

Leslie Berckes



The time has come—our full leap into Accreditation is here! As of September 1, 2026, all communities can apply for UCFS Accreditation in pursuit of the Steward or Champion level. Through Accreditation, you can show your community, your leadership, and the members of this Society the meaningful work you do to grow a world-class urban forestry program.

This moment has been four years in the making—an indication that the UCFS Accreditation program was redeveloped with a great deal of thought and care. Around the time I came into the role of executive director, there were questions about whether the UCFS Accreditation program should even continue. Was there room for it among other UCFS offerings and within the broader urban forestry world? Would people want to put in the time and effort? Should we just end it now?

One UCFS Board Member was vocal in saying “get rid of it,” which, we later found out, was a strategy they employed to see how much the rest of us would fight for Accreditation. It generated a useful conversation, as going to the extreme of “do away with it” freed our minds to all possibilities since we were no longer narrowly focused on what something looks like in this present moment.

After the decision was made to proceed, surveys, focus groups, testing, revisions, and many debates ensued. It led us to what you’ll read more about in this issue: an Accreditation program made by and for urban foresters. Something that sets the bar high but achievable. A program with four overarching standards and over a hundred criteria that you can benchmark against or use to chart your way. A way to show municipal or organizational colleagues in multiple sectors that you’re a serious and dedicated professional with high standards for yourself and your program.

I hope you feel proud of how far the urban forestry profession has come and see your unique and needed role in that evolution. We did this together, UCFS Members!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leslie Berckes".

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Apply for UCFS Membership Online



The Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS) is the membership home for people who make or support daily tree planting and care decisions in communities of all sizes. Join us to build your confidence and competence, and to experience the unique camaraderie of those who know and understand your work!



Apply Today!

City Trees is the online, bimonthly magazine produced by the Urban & Community Forestry Society. The UCFS is a Professional Affiliate of the International Society of Arboriculture.

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Welcome New Members

Name	State/Province/Region	Country	Name	State/Province/Region	Country	Name	State/Province/Region	Country
Alessandro Rubino	DC	USA	Grace Currie	DC	USA	Matthew Werle	TN	USA
Alexander Bachman	IL	USA	Grant Spooner	NH	USA	Melvin Martinez Ordonez	DC	USA
Amy Oester	DC	USA	Greg Fletcher	AB	CAN	Michael Record	NY	USA
Andres Prieto	CUN	COL	Grey Franks	ON	CAN	Molly Ackerman	DC	USA
Angel Sotelo	CA	USA	Gus Bettenhausen	IL	USA	Natalie Holmes	DC	USA
Arika Berwanger	PA	USA	Hailey Wright	TN	USA	Nathan Linklater	DC	USA
Avery Perreault	DC	USA	Helena Ydrefors		SWE	Nayeli Marin	CA	USA
Avraham Penso	CT	USA	Holden Turner	NH	USA	Nicholas Hugo	PA	USA
Barbara Nunez	CA	USA	Hugo Holke		SWE	Nicole Orsvarn		SWE
Barbra Walker	NJ	USA	Hyla McQuaid	DC	USA	Olivia Mitnick	OH	USA
Benjamin Fedor	PA	USA	Illyana Christian	DC	USA	Owen Savader	CT	USA
Bette Allen	NM	USA	Isobel Watson	DC	USA	Owen Colbath	MA	USA
Bryan Maulen	VC	COL	Jackie Suntrup	WY	USA	Patrick Johnson	MA	USA
Bryna Donnelly	PA	USA	Jacob Prosser	AZ	USA	Pufei Xie	BC	CAN
Bryon Salladin	CT	USA	Jair Hincapie Almeciga	CUN	COL	Quentin Ikuta	MN	USA
Callista Millar	DC	USA	Jake Musser	CA	USA	Raewyn Rozak	DC	USA
Carlo Mumford	QLD	AUS	James Poirier	MA	USA	Ray Hendrix	NM	USA
Carlo Valerio		NLD	Jane Hu	DC	USA	Rebecca Rooney	WA	USA
Casey Allin	CO	USA	Janet Olanrewaju	DC	USA	Rheanna Konrad	DC	USA
Channon Clamp	SC	USA	Janice Lam	ON	CAN	Rolando Rosas	CUN	COL
Charles Bayley	NY	USA	Jasmine Eisener	DC	USA	Ryan Lukosius	SA	AUS
Christina McLaughlin	NY	USA	Jenna Bennett	DC	USA	Rylan Adams	DC	USA
Claire Noll	MI	USA	Jennifer Jung	NJ	USA	Sandra Sandoval Venegas	VC	COL
Clare Titus	RI	USA	Jessica Deal	PA	USA	Sara Hagarty	DC	USA
Cole Hubbard	NH	USA	Jessica Weber	CA	USA	Sarah Harttung	FL	USA
Craig Melvin	TN	USA	Jordan Halunga	ON	CAN	Sarah Dixon	DC	USA
Dana Gresham	MD	USA	Jorge Colón Rivera	PR	USA	Scott Wheeler	CA	USA
Danielle Curtis	MD	USA	Jose Rodriguez	CA	USA	Sean Swett	CT	USA
Danielle Schumerth	MN	USA	Jovana Shrestha	DC	USA	Sèwanou ToviheSSI	DC	USA
Darwin Alexander Pucha Cofrep	CUN	COL	Juan Alvarado Corredor	TOL	COL	Sindy Tchouankap Sateu	DC	USA
Deena Bell	FL	USA	Juan Morejon	FL	USA	Sofia Svensson		SWE
Donald Schenck	Panama City	PAN	Justin Torchia	IL	USA	Sonia Chatti		SWE
Dorcas Gyan	DC	USA	Karoline Woodhouse	CA	USA	Stephen Gillooly	NJ	USA
Dorian Pierce	MD	USA	Kennedy Ordano	DC	USA	Steven Ball	IN	USA
Dustin Shordee	AB	CAN	Kurt Willson	DC	USA	Suhaila Ng	DC	USA
Dylan Wombacher	ME	USA	Kurt Peacock	CA	USA	Thais Vlasov	DC	USA
Elin Hotvedt		NOR	Kyla Horsting-Minnabarriet	DC	USA	Tim Adkins	VA	USA
Ellena Baum	MA	USA	Laura Henderson	ON	CAN	Tove Wingkvist		SWE
Emily Farrington	CT	USA	Lauren Jochum	TN	USA	Viktor Kagan	PA	USA
Emma Harper	DC	USA	Levyn Radomske	DC	USA	William Ozment	WY	USA
Emma Thordsen	WA	USA	Liam Douglas	DC	USA	Zachary Sjolander		SWE
Esi Dadzie	LA	USA	Liam Ganey	TN	USA	Zihan Lin	BC	CAN
Florian Bärn		DEU	Lisa Okai	DC	USA			
Francisco Llaguno	CUN	COL	Mackenzie Robertson	DC	USA			
Francois Sarazin	QC	CAN	Marc Lodato	NJ	USA			
Frank van Mourik		NLD	Marisa Zulaski	CA	USA			
Frank Coffey	WI	USA	Marly Davis	WA	USA			
Georgia Van Damme	DC	USA	Mary Wagener	OR	USA			

Welcome

GreenBlue Urban

In This Issue: Contributors



Bob Bell is the Director of Industry Engagement for Asplundh and has worked for more than 30 years in nearly every aspect of Utility Vegetation Management throughout the United States and Canada. Bob is a voting member of the ANSI A300 Standards Committee; he has served on the boards of the North American Transmission Forum, Midwest Chapter of ISA, and Think Trees New Mexico, and he is a past president of the Utility Arborist Association.



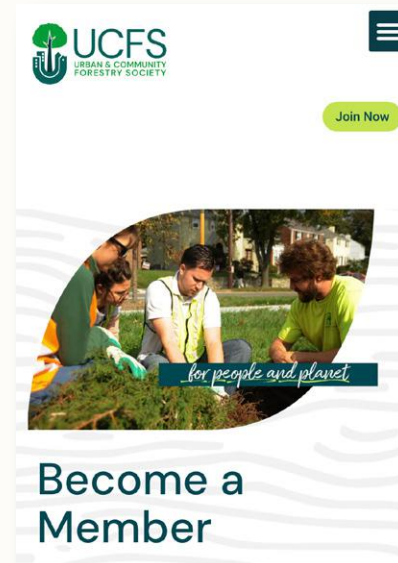
Leslie Berckes is the Executive Director of UCFS. She has nearly 15 years of urban forestry experience that includes actively managing urban tree canopy as well as helping people grow trees where they are needed the most.



Biana Piscaferri is an MSc Climate Change Management and Finance Candidate at Imperial College, London. She is a recent graduate of the University of Washington, where she double majored in Environmental Studies and Economics, graduating cum laude with honors.



Dr. Kathleen Wolf is a research social scientist and has conducted a multi-decade research program on the human dimensions of urban forestry and urban greening at the University of Washington, Seattle. Now semi-retired, she continues to publish, helping to advocate for and promote the importance of nearby nature for health and quality of life.



Visit our website ucfsociety.org to learn about all things UCFS, including the Municipal Forestry Institute, Municipal Accreditation, our Arborist Exchange program, Annual Conference, and more.

Preparing for the ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional exam?

The ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional credential will set you apart!

Thinking about taking the exam?

Here's a few tips to get you ready:

- **Start with a study plan.**

Set a realistic exam date and tell people around you—letting others know of your plan can help keep you accountable.

- **Break it up.**

Break exam domains into manageable weekly goals, schedule regular study sessions, and use real-world examples to reinforce concepts.

- **Don't study alone.**

Join the **UCFS Certified Urban Forest Professional (CUFP) Group** on the Member Hub to discuss challenging topics, learn from peers, and stay motivated throughout your preparation.

Good to know!

The exam assesses your ability to apply knowledge—not simply recall facts. Focus on understanding how urban forest management, arboricultural practices, communication, and administration work together to create resilient and sustainable urban forests.

Do You Need More?

Let us know if you're interested in a UCFS-hosted CUFP Study Group.



UCFS News



UCFS Accreditation Now Open to All!

By Leslie Berckes, UCFS Executive Director

Does your urban forestry program stand out?

If so, then you've likely taken note of the progress of UCFS's revamped [Accreditation program](#) as detailed here in *City Trees*. We are excited to let you know that UCFS Accreditation is now officially open to all communities!

Through UCFS Accreditation, you set yourself apart from the crowd and prove to your community and to your leadership that you have a world-class urban forestry program. UCFS Accreditation leads you on a meaningful journey of program evaluation and development against industry standards. You will learn more about how your urban forestry program measures up—and where you want to take it.

Before diving into the specifics, let's review the difference between standards and regulations since so much city forestry work is driven by these two.

- **Standards** are, strictly speaking, voluntary and provide guidance on safety, performance, and best practices. They are developed by organizations or people in a specific industry. Standards include methods for evaluating compliance.
- **Regulations** are specific requirements that must be followed, and they may also reference standards. They are required by law and are overseen by federal, state/provincial, regional, and/or municipal governments.



Santa Monica, California Urban Forest Supervisor Madeleine Rauhe (MFI 2025) is seeking re-accreditation for her City's program through the updated version of UCFS Accreditation. Seen here is "Morty," Santa Monica's famed, massive Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*), located in Tongva Park.

The Standards



1. Urban Forest Leadership

Tree stewardship decisions are made by credentialed urban forestry professionals.

- Designated Urban Forestry Leadership Position
- Urban Forestry Professionals on Staff
- Workplace Management



2. Urban Forest Governance and Planning

Policies, plans, and funding are in place for equitable management of trees.

- Public Tree Ordinance
- Urban Forest Strategic Plan
- Data and Systems Management
- Urban Forest Funding



3. Urban Forest Management

Tree stewardship decisions are based in sound arboriculture practice with ongoing monitoring.

- Urban Forest Retention and Growth
- Enforcement, Preservation, and Protection
- Urban Forest Safety and Monitoring



4. Community Engagement

Active involvement of community members and decision-makers.

- Community Outreach Programs
- Partnership and Collaboration
- Public Relations

UCFS Accreditation is a standard built by and for urban foresters with subject matter expertise in the field. Over the course of a year and a half, your peers proposed and debated what it would mean to meet and exceed industry standards in urban forestry. Through it all, UCFS and the experts involved worked to ensure rigor and reliability were hallmarks of the program.

A six-member Accreditation Council, led by UCFS Accreditation Manager David Sivy, will oversee, promote, monitor, and evaluate the Accreditation program. The Council, in cooperation with the UCFS Board of Directors, will set policy and procedures, evaluate and revise the standards, grant or deny accredited status, and more.

The UCFS Accreditation program officially acknowledges municipalities that are dedicated to the growth, maintenance, and expansion of their urban forests at the highest professional levels. UCFS Accreditation standards have been developed to offer two levels of recognition—Steward and Champion—for urban forestry program advancement based on four categories of standards for best practices (see graphic).

UCFS is proud to bring you the revamped Accreditation program. It is designed for you, the industry leaders, who each day implement smart, innovative, practical ideas and solutions to improve your community's trees and forests. We're ready to help you maintain—and show off—that excellence. The UCFS Accreditation Council looks forward to receiving your application! >>

How to apply for UCFS Accreditation

- ✓ Review the UCFS Accreditation Standards
- ✓ Review Accreditation fees
- ✓ Complete the application process
- ✓ Receive go-ahead to complete Community Self-Assessment
- ✓ Meet with your Accreditation Council Liaison to review all steps

UCFS Accreditation Staff

David Sivyer, UCFS Accreditation Manager

Accreditation Council Members

- Anna Heckman, Environmental Program Coordinator, City of Kirkland, Washington
- Barry Edgar, Parks Administrator, Louisville, Kentucky Parks and Recreation: Urban Forestry
- Darren Green, Landscape Architect, City of Alexandria, Louisiana
- Fred Chalfant, Urban Forester, TreeBaltimore, Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks: Forestry Division
- Greg Soltwisch, Village Forester, Village of Downers Grove, Illinois
- Rob Landucci, Urban Forestry Manager, City of Surrey, British Columbia



During my 40-year career leading federal, state, and municipal urban forestry programs I was often asked by city council members, mayors, city managers, budget directors, and other leaders how the urban forest attributes, management strategies, maintenance operations, staffing levels, and funding needs of our organization compared with other cities of like size in the region.

The lack of any national or international standards for measuring the practice of urban forestry at a municipal scale, other than national surveys which provide aggregate data for a broad community of practice, made it nearly impossible to answer these types of questions directly. The launch of the revamped UCFS Accreditation Program will enable a municipal forester to redirect this type of narrative from a complex peer-to-peer comparison to a program evaluation against an international standard of excellence.

I heartily encourage municipalities to self-assess their urban and community forestry programs against the new UCFS Accreditation Standards. For newly developing or stagnant programs, the standards will aspire program improvement towards accreditation. For communities that have been practicing professional urban and community forestry for decades, UCFS Accreditation affords an opportunity to validate and celebrate a high level of achievement and program delivery.

—David Sivyer, UCFS Accreditation Manager

JOIN US! UCFS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

St. Louis, Missouri



BE WITH YOUR TREE PEOPLE

Urban forestry has never faced greater demands. Under this year's conference theme, Practice Under Pressure, we'll hear how urban foresters are adapting to a rapidly changing world while continuing to deliver the essential benefits of tree canopy. From climate change and political realities to planting strategies and nursery stock challenges, attendees will explore the tools, ideas, and resilience needed to meet today's pressures head-on.

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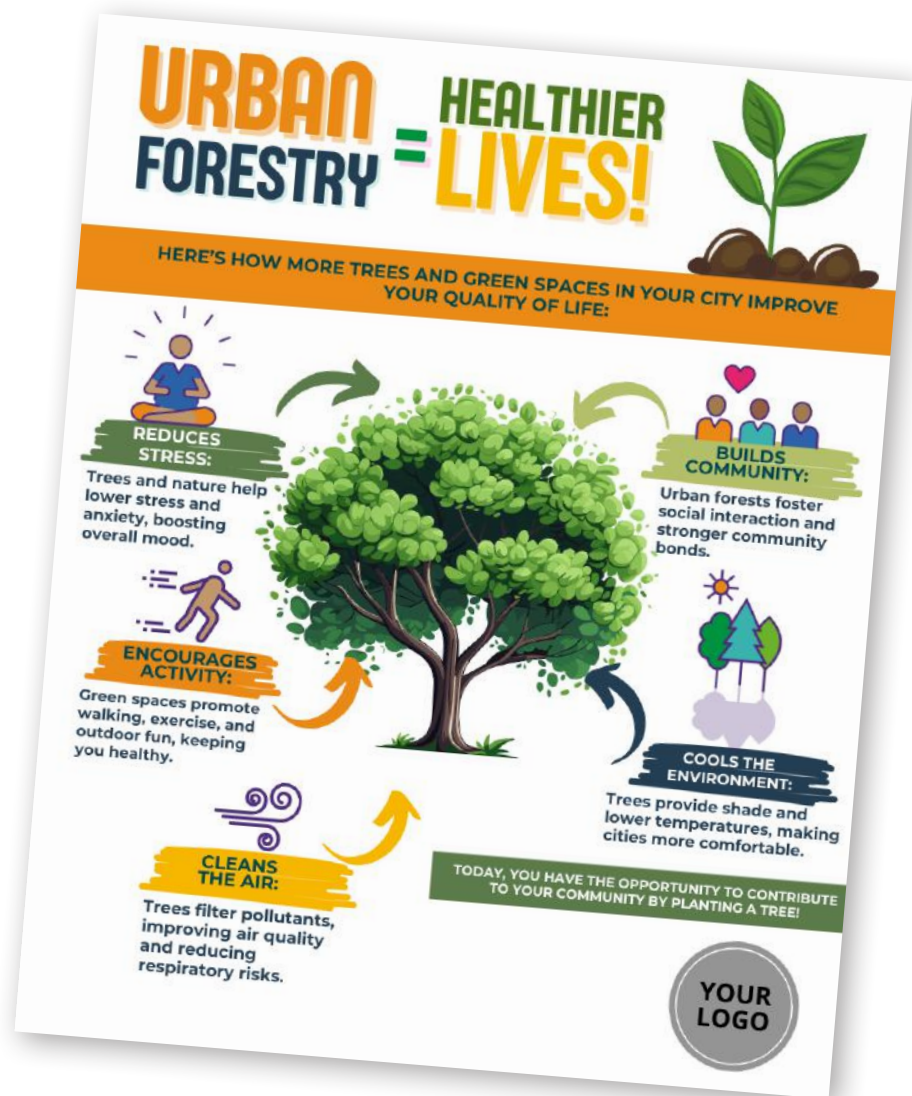
CORAZON LATINO AND THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE PROVIDE FREE-FOR-USE INFOGRAPHICS, TEMPLATES, VIDEOS AND MORE AT STORIES OF TREES

Tight budget, but you want help getting the word out about your program? Have a look at [Stories of Trees](#), a digital hub created by the national nonprofit Corazón Latino with support from the U.S. Forest Service. There, you'll find an urban and community forestry toolkit that gives you free and copyright-free, editable templates for social media posts, event flyers, and urban forestry awareness posters.



URBAN FORESTRY COMMUNITY

The Stories of Trees podcast inaugural episode features Dr. Kathy Wolf on *Trees, Health, and Belonging*. There are also short films on the site—including an award-winning one featuring famed opera singer Rolando Villazón learning about NYC's city trees—highlighting urban forestry fundamentals and showing dynamic collaborative stewardship.



Smart Tree Management

SMARTER DECISIONS. LOWER RISK.
BETTER RESOURCE ALLOCATION.



A CLEARER VIEW OF YOUR URBAN FOREST.

Urban forestry professionals face increasing pressure to manage risk, stretch budgets, respond to climate impacts and maintain healthy community canopies. Yet many municipalities still rely on legacy tree inventories completed every five to ten years. By the time those inventories are fully implemented, tree conditions may have already changed.

This challenge can create uncertainty around tree management decisions. Communities may struggle to determine which trees require immediate action, which can be preserved, and where resources should be allocated for the greatest impact.

A SMARTER WAY TO MANAGE URBAN FORESTS.

Smart Tree Management (STM) builds on the foundation of legacy tree inventories by creating a continuous, data-driven approach to urban forest stewardship. Instead of relying on information collected every five to ten years, STM combines objective tree data with recurring assessments to help communities prioritize work, reduce risk, and make informed decisions based on current conditions.

A CONTINUOUS APPROACH TO URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT.

Rather than waiting years for updated information, communities gain an ongoing view of how their urban forest is changing, helping them respond proactively instead of reactively.

Smart Tree Management creates a closed-loop approach to urban forest stewardship:

Assess current conditions, **Identify** priorities and potential risks, **Perform** removals, maintenance or plantings, **Reassess** over time to measure change and refine decisions.



ENHANCE DECISION MAKING

Current, objective information helps municipalities prioritize work where it is needed most. Detailed tree data allows arborists and urban forestry professionals to focus their expertise on evaluating solutions instead of spending valuable time collecting basic inventory information.



REDUCE RISK

Recurring assessments help communities identify changing conditions earlier, enabling more targeted mitigation strategies. With better visibility into tree health and performance over time, municipalities can make confident decisions that protect public safety while preserving valuable canopy whenever possible.



OPTIMIZE RESOURCE USE

A proactive management approach can help communities reduce unnecessary removals, optimize maintenance cycles, and allocate resources more strategically. Analysis of Smart Tree Management programs has shown that cities can reduce maintenance spending by **up to 25%** while preserving more healthy trees and supporting healthier urban forests.

PROVEN AND GROWING.

What began as an innovative approach to tree inventories has evolved into a practical management solution being adopted by communities across North America. STM is helping urban forestry programs move beyond static inventories and embrace a more data-driven approach to stewardship.

The result is a healthier, safer and more resilient urban forest supported by timely information and better decision making.



“Smart Tree Management gives communities the objective, up-to-date information they need to make more confident decisions about their urban forests. By pairing recurring assessments with actionable data, cities can move beyond reactive maintenance and take a more proactive approach to creating healthier, safer, and more resilient communities.”

— Josh Behounek, Davey Resource Group

**Ready to see how Smart Tree Management
can help your community?**

Visit davey.com/smart-tree-inventories



FEBRUARY 21-26, 2027

Municipal Forestry Institute

JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA



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- Understand how to lead with your unique strengths.
- Learn how your work context impacts your ability to lead.
- Create a plan to make real and lasting impact.

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\$2,750 USD non-UCFS members

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- All course materials
- Five nights hotel lodging (Sunday – Thursday)
- All meals (Sunday dinner through Friday lunch)

More information and registration at
www.ucfsociety.org



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Healthy urban forests grow through smart planning, data-driven decisions and long-term investment. Our team partners with municipalities, parks and community organizations to create safer, healthier and more resilient tree canopies.

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HOME RUNS for TREES

*How Asplundh and the
Philadelphia Phillies are
Growing Community Impact
through Urban Forestry*



By Bob Bell, Director of
Industry Engagement, Asplundh

Photos courtesy of the
Philadelphia Phillies





PHS Trees Field Operations Manager Dana McNally (MFI 2016) (right) and elementary school kids planting trees with The Philadelphia Phanatic.

By blending America's pastime with environmental stewardship and community philanthropy, Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC and the professional baseball team the Philadelphia Phillies have created one of the most visible and meaningful partnerships in urban forestry today. Their "Home Runs for Trees" collaboration demonstrates how private industry, professional sports, and nonprofit organizations can work together to foster greener, healthier, and more connected communities.

Announced formally in 2024, the multi-year partnership positioned Asplundh as an Official Community and Sustainability Partner of the Phillies, with charitable efforts centered on urban tree plantings through Home Runs for Trees and the Phillies annual ALS Awareness Game.

Through Home Runs for Trees, Asplundh directly supports the Tree Tenders Program of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), which has planted between 1,700 and 2,000 trees in greater Philadelphia every year since 1993. For urban foresters and municipal tree advocates, this three-way partnership offers a compelling example of how broad public visibility can be leveraged to promote tree planting, sustainability education, and civic participation on a regional scale.

A Natural Partnership

Founded in 1928 and headquartered near Philadelphia, Asplundh is a recognized leader in vegetation management, utility arboriculture, and professional tree care throughout North America and beyond.

The Phillies, meanwhile, have increasingly incorporated sustainability initiatives into their organizational identity through programs such as "Red Goes Green," which promotes recycling, energy efficiency, and urban greening throughout the Philadelphia region.

Through the Home Runs for Trees initiative, a community forestry program originally launched in 2012 by the Phillies in partnership with PHS, a tree is planted for every Phillies home run hit during the regular season. In 15 seasons, the program has provided and planted more than 2,400 trees.

With Asplundh joining as presenting sponsor, the initiative gained additional visibility, momentum, and operational support. In the first two years of the partnership, Asplundh has provided for the planting

The amazing community of volunteer Tree Tenders, supported through the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, is instrumental to the implementation of the Philly Tree Plan and the City's effort to grow and care for a healthy, equitable tree canopy. As the stewards of our City's street trees, we are so grateful for this sustained, successful partnership.

—Kate Illes (MFI 2024)

Community Forestry Manager, TreePhilly,
Philadelphia Parks and Recreation



of more than 400 trees across the Greater Philadelphia area. Schools, parks, community organizations, and neighborhoods have all benefited from new canopy additions. With coverage of the program at the Phillies' ballpark, social media, and TV coverage and well-attended events that often include the popular mascot, The Philadelphia Phanatic, Home Runs for Trees has made Phillies fans more aware of urban forestry as a participatory community experience.

A Successful Urban Tree Planting Program

An essential partner in the initiative is the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, widely recognized for its longstanding leadership in urban greening and community horticulture. Its Tree Tenders program has been a model for urban tree programs nationally since it was first launched in 1993. Tree Tenders green communities across the Greater Philadelphia Region, from schools, religious institutions, and streets in some of the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods to parks and residential yards in its suburbs, with plantings taking place twice every year in April and November.

Tree Tenders is more than just a semiannual tree planting program. It offers an eight-hour training and certification program that can be taken in person or virtually. Thanks to that program—which graduates 200 official Tree Tenders every year—and because of continuous outreach and advanced training, there are currently more than 6,500 volunteers who support the planting and maintenance of trees across the region.

Selecting the Hardest Trees

Tree selection falls to PHS Trees Field Operations Manager Dana (Dentice) McNally (MFI 2016), who has overseen Tree Tenders plantings for the past 12 years. In that role, McNally considers changes in climate, available tree stock, tree health and mortality data, and appropriate planting methods.



"The goal for tree selection is diversity," she says. "I don't choose the same exact trees season after season. I'm always looking for what trees are available and what selections are going to have more drought and heat tolerance as we continue to get hotter here in our region. In hot and dry microclimates, particularly where we plant in low canopy, denser, residential city neighborhoods in South and North Philadelphia, I need the toughest of the tough trees."

McNally's list of tough urban trees includes ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), Kentucky coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*), hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), elms (*Ulmus* spp.), and London plane tree (*Platanus × acerifolia*). When appropriately matched to site, these are species that can handle high heat, drought, and pollution.

Climate change is particularly top of mind for McNally. Considering the warming of Philadelphia (currently in USDA Hardiness Zone 7b) to a predicted climate of Oil City, Louisiana (currently Zone 8b), she looks to tree species that do well in climates further south. >>



Three-hundred students at Emlen Elementary School in Philadelphia helped plant eight trees through the Asplundh-Phillies-PHS partnership.

Planting and Sourcing

Tree Tenders follows the bare root planting method established by Cornell University's Urban Horticulture Institute. "Bare root trees are way easier for volunteers to handle and way less labor intensive because with bare root, we can get a lightweight 1.5-inch (3.8-cm) caliper tree, which can be anywhere from 6 feet (1.8 m) tall up to 15 (4.6 m) feet tall, depending on the species," McNally says.

PHS sources most of its trees from Schichtel's Nursery in Springville, New York, a village outside of Buffalo. PHS supplements that main supply with local trees from Tree Authority in Perkasie, Pennsylvania; McNally says that Tree Authority is a main provider of container and evergreen trees. The company's founder, Hasan Malik, graduated from the Tree Tenders program as a high school student and founded Tree Northeast, a nonprofit organization that plants trees throughout Northeast Philadelphia. McNally says she is particularly appreciative of Tree Authority's use of air pruning pots, which encourage more densely branching feeder roots while simultaneously avoiding the circling roots of conventional plastic pots.

It Takes a Village

A key to the success of Tree Tenders is cultivating real relationships between the communities that receive trees and the trees themselves. Through intentional planning, from each planting site to the support of community groups to see each tree through to maturity, Tree Tenders helps create an environment in which neighborhoods feel a sense of pride and ownership of the trees along their streets and in their shared spaces.

It's no secret that trees help make communities successful. A [2020 study by USDA Forest Service researchers](#) showed that a 30% increase in tree canopy in Philadelphia could prevent as many as 403 premature deaths every year. When PHS, the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation, and many other stakeholders developed the Philly Tree Plan, one of their goals was to address this health hazard

posed by lack of shade with strategic, equity-driven canopy increases by 2035.

“There’s more and more research coming out on the health benefits of tree canopy, from alleviating mental fatigue, stress, anxiety, and depression to improving cardiovascular health to better birth outcomes to broader public health, lower crime, and lower incidences of violent crime and gun violence and theft,” McNally says.

The work of Tree Tenders doesn’t end after a tree is planted. In order for trees to grow and thrive and contribute to the city’s canopy, they must successfully be maintained and nurtured, especially through their first few years. PHS staff and contractors step in to support the most disadvantaged Philadelphia neighborhoods with supplemental watering, weeding, soil decompaction, and mulching of new plantings.

“We want to make sure we set these trees up for success to thrive in their site and empower the tree recipients to feel ownership to take care of these trees,” McNally says. “We’re so fortunate for the partnership with Asplundh and the Phillies through Home Runs for Trees. That sponsorship helps support Tree Tenders, which touches around 100 communities in our region every year. Home Runs for Trees helps us buy trees and train new Tree Tenders to plant those trees and then advocate for tree care within their community.”

In an era when sustainability initiatives increasingly compete for public attention, Home Runs for Trees demonstrates the power of collaboration, storytelling, and civic engagement. By combining environmental stewardship with community pride and charitable impact, Asplundh and the Phillies have created a partnership that resonates far beyond the ballpark—and one that offers meaningful inspiration for the future of urban and community forestry. 🌱

Supporting ALS Awareness and Research

In addition to urban forestry and sustainability initiatives, Asplundh’s partnership with the Philadelphia Phillies has also expanded support for ALS awareness and fundraising efforts.

The Phillies have maintained a longstanding commitment to ALS advocacy and fundraising through their relationship with ALS United Mid-Atlantic. Through the new partnership, Asplundh joined those efforts as a major sponsor and supporter. Since 1984, the Phillies have contributed to charities dedicated to helping those struggling with ALS.

The collaboration includes sponsorship of Phillies ALS Awareness activities and fundraising initiatives benefiting patient services, family support programs, and medical research. In the three years Asplundh has sponsored the Phillies ALS Awareness game, the company has raised more than \$1.1 million to support ALS United Mid-Atlantic, which provides support for families living with ALS.

The cause carries personal significance for the Asplundh organization. Former company chairman and CEO Scott Asplundh publicly battled ALS before succumbing to the disease in January of 2026, giving the company’s involvement a deeply human dimension that extends beyond corporate philanthropy.



Asplundh Chairman Stephen Asplundh (second from left) and his wife Lisa (left) present a check for \$415,000 to ALS United Mid-Atlantic, represented by Executive Director Tony Heyl (second from right) and Chairperson Emeritus Elyn Phillips. Photo courtesy of the Philadelphia Phillies

Bartlett Tree Experts

Providing scientifically-based tree & shrub care programs with roots going back to 1907

Backed by the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories, the largest shade tree lab in the world, Bartlett Tree Experts' arborists specialize in delivering the proven, trusted results of annual Plant Health Care (PHC) programs for species-specific care of all trees and woody plants in the landscape.

Bartlett Tree Experts, founded by F.A. Bartlett in 1907 and the global leader in scientific tree care, has provided annual PHC programs for residential, municipal, and commercial property owners throughout its long history, with local offices located throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland.

About Bartlett Tree Experts

Bartlett's PHC programs are a proactive, customized approach to maintaining the health of trees and shrubs rather than reacting to problems after damage occurs.

Bartlett's species-specific programs feature regular inspections and monitoring of trees

and shrubs for insects, diseases, mites, and cultural or environmental issues that could affect plant health. Treatments are applied only when needed, based on observed conditions and established action thresholds.

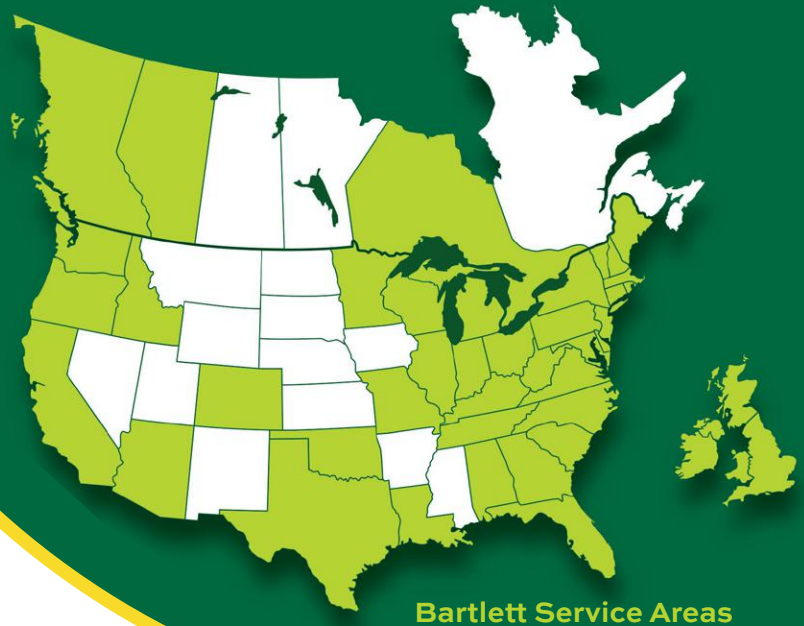
The programs are tailored to the client's property, priorities, and tolerance levels, recognizing that different property owners have different expectations for their landscapes. Communication and education are key components, helping property owners understand plant conditions and recommended care practices.

Bartlett's PHC programs also promote long-term care planning, knowing that proactive management is a cost-effective and practical approach that helps prioritize immediate and future tree and shrub health needs.

In creating programs, experienced Bartlett arborists balance the desires and goals of people and the needs of plants within the landscape setting they both share. Bartlett's PHC programs are ongoing, science-based monitoring and management systems designed to preserve tree and shrub health through early detection, targeted treatments, and long-term planning.



Inspecting trees and shrubs regularly is a practical, cost-effective approach to property management.



A Bartlett Tree Cornerstone Since 1907

“Make an accurate, scientific diagnosis of plant problems and assess current and future plant requirements.”

– F. A. Bartlett , Founder, Bartlett Tree Experts

A Testimony on Partnering with Bartlett for Tree Care

Art Goodhind, Supervisor of Land Facilities and Natural Resources and Tree Warden for the Town of Natick, Massachusetts-Department of Public Works (DPW), says that from his perspective, Bartlett Tree Experts has become a trusted partner in caring for the town’s trees, not only for its industry-leading scientific tree and shrub care expertise, but because they share the same philosophy of stewardship.

Bartlett has partnered with Goodhind to create an inventory of 3,500 archived and current shade trees in Natick’s parks, streets, schools, and other municipal properties.

Most importantly, Bartlett provides annual, species-specific Plant Health Care (PHC) programs to keep the town’s trees healthy. Goodhind says, “Soil care is a big part of that.”

Among species-specific concerns, Bartlett inspects town trees and shrubs regularly and proactively provides scientific solutions to manage emerald ash borer, beech leaf disease, hemlock woolly adelgid, hemlock scale, magnolia scale, and oystershell scale. Bartlett arborists also ensure

that newly planted trees on Natick’s Town Common receive the aftercare they need to thrive.

From his experience as a municipal official, Goodhind said he appreciates Bartlett because of their commitment to the environmental health of the region and the benefits of healthy trees in landscapes and urban forests. Goodhind says, “Bartlett has a true understanding of the value of trees and makes sure the work they recommend is done correctly, on time, and done well. They take care of all aspects of Plant Health Care, from tree structure to soil care. What I really appreciate is the genuine alignment with what we do -- a true appreciation of the outdoors and the role trees play in people’s enjoyment.”

Bartlett’s large presence, both nationally and locally, is another benefit.

“Bartlett has the pulse of the region in terms of tree insect pest and disease pressures, as well as the latest updates in best management practices. They stay on top of the latest research and understand what the region is experiencing with insect pests and diseases, which is invaluable.”

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UCFS Recommended Reading

Jackhammers, the Right Trees, and Partnerships in Every Direction

*An Urban Forest Ecosystem is Taking Shape
in the Formerly Treeless and Industrial
Kansas City Crossroads Arts District*

By Michelle Sutton



Become part of the community! >>



EMPOWERING — DIVERSITY IN URBAN FORESTRY

LGBTTree supports a vibrant community of urban foresters through:

- 🍃 Virtual and in-person meet-ups
- 🍃 Advocacy and education
- 🍃 Career support and professional development
- 🍃 And more as the group decides together!

Questions?
Would you like to join the
leadership team?

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LGBTTree is an affinity group of
the Urban and Community
Forestry Society



Thermal Calendars Maps and Tool

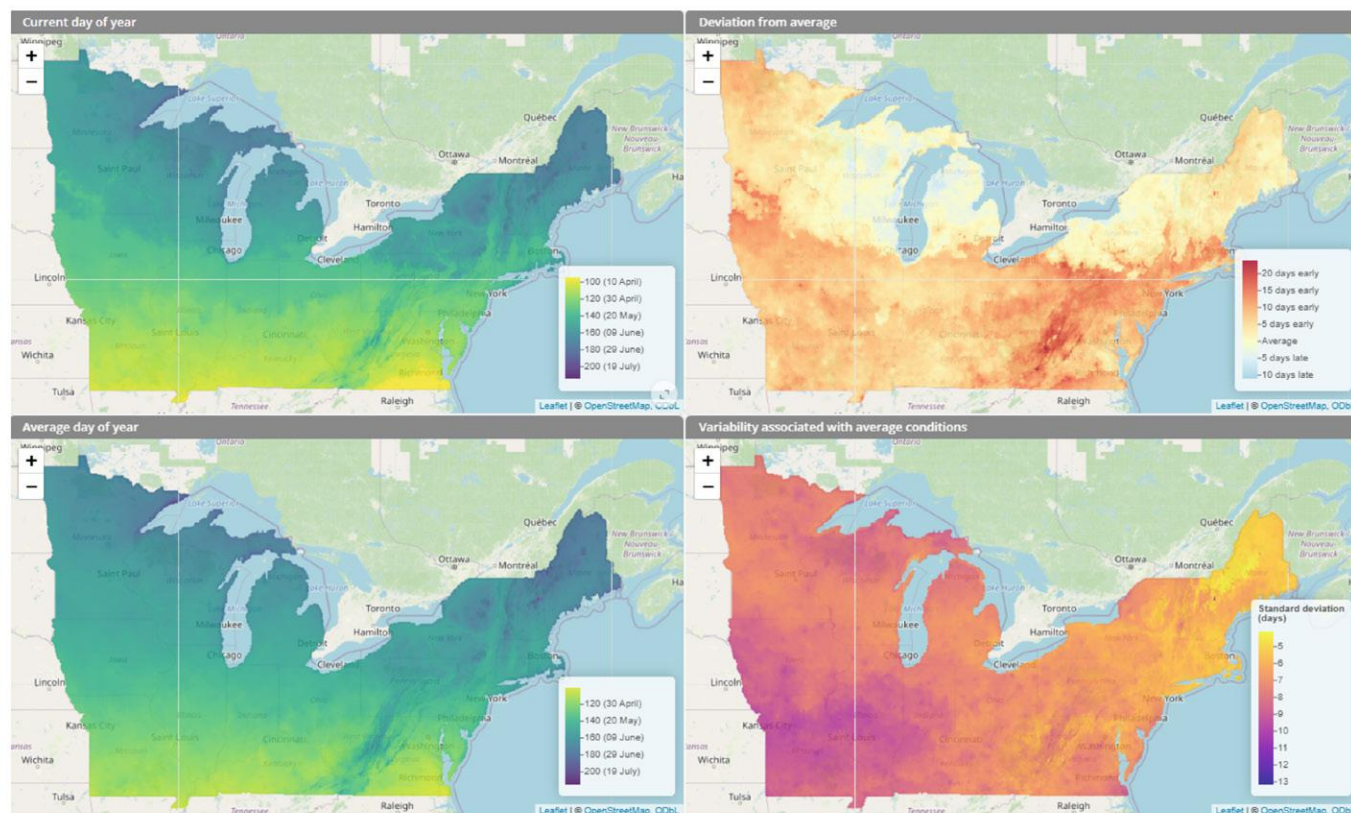
Many seasonal events in plants and insects are cued to occur after sufficient warmth has accumulated. This information can support planning, early detection and monitoring surveys, and response activities.

To support planning, survey, and management efforts, the USA National Phenology Network (USA-NPN) hosts an interactive tool providing high-resolution, real-time maps of thermal accumulation in the northeastern U.S.

The **Thermal Calendars Tool** offers maps indicating the date 50 distinct thresholds of accumulated warmth are reached in the northeastern U.S. Users can:

- View maps displaying information about the date a threshold has been reached in the current year or when it is typically reached.
- Zoom, pan, and extract values for specific locations.

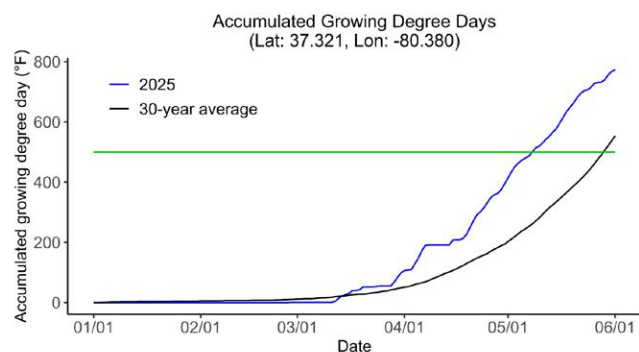
www.usanpn.org/data/maps/thermal_calendars



Maps displayed in the Thermal Calendars Tool for an accumulated growing degree day threshold of 400 °F in 2025. The map at the top left shows the dates on which the threshold was reached in 2025, and the map at the top right displays how many days earlier or later the 2025 date is relative to the average date between 1991 and 2020. The map at the bottom left displays the average date the threshold was reached between 1991 and 2020, and the map at the bottom right displays the variability, in days, around the long-term average date.

Accumulated Warmth: A Driver of Phenology

Accumulated warmth is typically measured in growing degree days (GDDs) and is commonly used to predict the timing of phenological transitions in plants and animals. For many species, seasonal life cycle transitions are triggered when a specific amount of heat has been accumulated after the start of the year. These are referred to as GDD thresholds. Thresholds can be especially useful in predicting when problematic insect pests will reach life stages during which they may cause the most damage or are most readily controlled.



Growing degree day accumulation for a location near Blacksburg, VA in 2025 (in blue) and a 30-year average accumulation curve (in black). In 2025, this location reached an accumulated growing degree day threshold of 500 (°F, in green) on May 9, twenty days earlier than the 30-year average.

Pest Insect Use Case: the Spongey Moth

Spongey moth (*Lymantria dispar*) caterpillars feed primarily on oak, birch, and poplar trees, causing defoliation which can lead to tree mortality. Control measures often target feeding caterpillars that are present after egg hatch (approx. 150 GDD) and before pupation (approx. 900 GDD).

Managers interested in determining when spongey moth caterpillars are expected to emerge from egg masses, for instance, can select a threshold value of 150 GDD in the Thermal Calendars tool and see whether their location has reached the threshold yet this year. If the location has not yet reached 150 GDD, users can view the date their location has reached the threshold historically and anticipate whether they are likely to reach the threshold earlier or later than normal based on anomalies for locations at lower latitudes or elevations.

Maps in the Thermal Calendars Tool

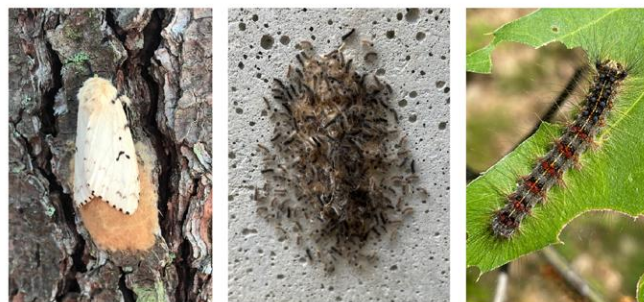
The tool provides maps that are updated daily, displaying the date on which GDD thresholds have been reached in the northeastern U.S. Maps indicate when thresholds were met in the current year as well as when thresholds are usually met. Maps are constructed for 50 distinct GDD thresholds, from 50 to 2500 GDD in 50-degree increments. Temperature data originate from PRISM¹ gridded temperature products at 4-km spatial resolution. GDD values are calculated using the Baskerville-Emin method² with a base temperature of 50 °F and a start date of January 1.

For a given threshold, the tool displays four maps:

- Date the threshold was reached in the current year.
- Average date the threshold was reached between 1991 and 2020.
- Variation among dates the threshold was reached, 1991-2020 (standard deviation).
- Number of days earlier or later the threshold was reached in the current year relative to the 30-year average.

Navigating in the Thermal Calendars Tool

When first accessing the tool, users have the option to select one of 50 GDD thresholds from a drop-down menu. After clicking the "Plot" button to display the maps, the user can zoom into a particular region. If the user clicks on a location in any of the four maps, values associated with that location will appear at the bottom left corner of each map. In addition to the full suite of GDD thresholds, two common insect pest examples are included to illustrate the utility of the tool and a link to a more extensive table of pest GDDs is provided.



Adult spongey moth with egg mass (left), first instar caterpillars (middle), and late instar caterpillar (right).

REFERENCES

¹PRISM Climate group. www.prism.oregonstate.edu

²Baskerville, G. L. & Emin, P. (1969). Rapid estimation of heat accumulation from maximum and minimum temperatures. *Ecology*, 50, 514-517. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1933912>

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Photos: Nathan Siegert

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Making the Pieces Fit

An Urban Forestry Policy Review in King County, Washington



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Aerial view of a Seattle neighborhood along Lake Washington, with tree canopy woven through residential density, and downtown visible in the distance. Image: King County Climate Action Toolkit



Emerging from research, reflective practice, and increased professionalism, urban forestry has matured into a nature-based solution ever more acknowledged by local governments. Urban forestry has become an essential tool to address local challenges, spanning from households to entire regions. Tree-based solutions can be implemented to address stormwater management, reduce extreme heat, improve air quality, and improve human health in multiple ways. An important overlay in urban forestry policy and planning is equity, as canopy distribution in many cities reflects decades of unequal land use decisions, with benefits not being evenly shared. Both historic legacies and future urban forest programs must acknowledge that all people need nearby, quality landscapes to thrive.

Assessment has become an essential activity. Urban forest assessments include tree inventories that help monitor and address multiple management conditions, such as tree size spread, species distribution, and tree health. Canopy assessments help communities to visualize tree locations and densities across a specified area, suggesting tree stocking needs and equity response. Other valuable assessments focus on code and policy, informing budgeting and administrative directions.

King County, Washington includes the Seattle metropolitan region, including highly urbanized landscapes, forest, and agriculture working landscapes, as well as the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. Multiple county agencies have jurisdiction over tree and forest >>

administration. A recent policy assessment helped managers understand what policies are in place, how well they interlace and function, and potential room for improvement. While this article focused on one place, it builds out a process, with conclusions, that can inform other assessments. It also sets up the question, is policy for urban trees working as well as it could?

A Policy Assessment

A structured policy review was conducted in collaboration with the City of Seattle, King County and the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks. Major planning and policy documents across the policy hierarchy were examined. Primary goals were to assess how consistently tree canopy, extreme heat, and health equity are integrated across the planning frameworks.

Analysis focused on policy language, cross-sector integration, and implementation mechanisms.

Not unlike other locales, King County planning efforts are layered and hierarchical. State-level growth management planning informs multicounty and regional planning. Comprehensive planning at the county level is further interpreted by climate and heat functional plans to address specific issue areas in greater operational detail. Implementation and regulations, including development standards, subarea plans, and capital planning, sit at the base of the hierarchy, where policy direction ultimately translates into on-the-ground outcomes. In King County these directives include strong commitments to climate resilience, environmental stewardship, and racial and social justice.



Aerial view of the City of Bellevue, Washington, ten miles (16 km) east of Seattle. Bellevue is bordered by I-405 and forested hillsides, illustrating the transition between dense development and tree-covered land in King County. Image: King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Sector	Tree Canopy	Cooling Value	Health Equity
Climate & Environment	Strong	Strong	Strong
Land Use & Development	Moderate	Weak	Indirect
Housing	Weak	Weak	Strong
Transportation	Weak	Weak	Moderate
Infrastructure/Public Facilities	Moderate	Weak	Moderate

Strong = explicit, directive language with implementation tools. **Moderate** = present but aspirational or inconsistent. **Weak** = largely absent or addressed only indirectly. **Indirect** = framing present without operational application.

What Was Learned?

Overall, tree canopy, cooling, and equity are each addressed across the policy environment, but their integration across sectors remains uneven. Canopy and heat mitigation are most clearly articulated in climate and environmental documents, and less consistently embedded in development-facing, housing, transportation, and capital planning frameworks.

After collecting, collating and reviewing the policies, in particular functional and implementation language, a summary table was prepared as a discussion tool to share back results with department leaders and urban forest professionals. Three dimensions, as they are in comprehensive planning focus, were used to report out. Note that the weak-to-strong interpretations were not quantitative assessments of trees but indicated how well policy addressed county-stated priorities.

Several structural patterns became clear:

Canopy and heat language is strongest in environmental chapters and weakest in development, housing, and transportation. Environmental documents set the goals; development, housing, and transportation chapters regulate construction and investment. The gap between where goals are articulated and where land use decisions are made is a major structural challenge.

Heat and health framing is concentrated in climate documents and not consistently distributed across other sectors. When heat is treated primarily as a climate issue, implementation stays siloed in climate programs rather than embedded in routine planning, permitting, and facility design.

Equity intent is strong, but spatial targeting mechanisms are inconsistent. King County's commitment to prioritizing frontline communities is clearly stated across multiple documents. What is missing is its translation into neighborhood-level canopy metrics, spatial thresholds, and measurable performance targets.

Most tree canopy in King County is on private land, but most policy tools focus on public land. As development accelerates in urban growth areas, canopy loss on private parcels is an increasingly significant gap. Public land programs alone cannot offset incremental private-land losses.

Fragmentation across document types—Countywide Planning Policies, Comprehensive Plan, and Functional Plans—creates reliance on interpretation versus structural alignment. Because documents were developed incrementally across time and departments, strong language in one document often goes unacknowledged and unreinforced in others. >>



Recognition of these patterns led to another round of policy review focused on administrative sectors. Climate and Environment policies used directive language and promoted measurable canopy goals. Canopy retention and replacement are not systematically embedded in growth management or development frameworks. Health equity framing is emphasized in housing policy, but a bridge between housing production and environmental performance standards is missing. Tree canopy and cooling potential are largely absent from housing development standards. Greening and housing stabilization are treated in separate policy tracks rather than as complementary strategies. Cooling as a public health function of street and facility design is highlighted in transportation, but is not consistently addressed. The importance of street-level tree placement to provide cooling benefits receives little mention in transportation standards.

Policy Opportunities

Most counties conduct periodic major planning updates, usually to include targeted policy strengthening. A King County update is in the early stages of a multi-layer refresh. This may be the opportunity to embed stronger canopy, cooling, and equity language into planning frameworks. Subarea planning in high-heat, low-canopy communities represents a particularly timely opportunity for targeted intervention.

Five areas of “running room” were identified by the multi-phase policy assessment concerning trees and urban forestry:

Align and integrate private land policy. Canopy loss on private parcels during development is not consistently addressed by development standards across the county. Tree canopy is treated as an environmental chapter concern rather than a cross-sector development



Boardwalk trail through mature forest at Grand Ridge Park, King County.
Image: King County 30-Year Forest Plan, Eli Brownell

standard. Public land programs alone cannot offset incremental and cumulative private-land losses. Embedding enforceable tree retention and replacement standards—tied to canopy volume rather than solely tree count—into development review frameworks is necessary. Also, aligning development standards with canopy retention and replacement requirements in heat-vulnerable neighborhoods undergoing development would address the structural asymmetry between climate plan goals and land use regulatory practice.

Develop measurable equity targeting. The county’s equity commitments are genuine and directive, but neighborhood-level canopy metrics and spatial performance thresholds are not yet consistent across all relevant planning documents. Canopy coverage percentage is a useful first-order indicator, but it does not capture whether trees are located where they shade pedestrians, cool residential blocks, or serve

communities at the neighborhood scale. Establishing distributional benchmarks at the neighborhood or subarea level that address not only canopy coverage but also the placement, connectivity, and functional configuration of trees is needed, and could be guided by planning rules such as the [3–30–300 Principle](#).

Distribute heat-health framing and implementation across sectors. Heat and health framing is currently concentrated in climate-specific plans but needs to be distributed into housing, transportation, and infrastructure policy domains. If heat is treated solely as a climate issue, implementation responsibility remains siloed in climate programs rather than embedded in planning and permitting that shape on-the-ground places. Targeting one key sector, adding canopy coverage targets and shade requirements to transportation corridor design standards, prioritizing pedestrian routes and transit nodes— including rail >>



Dense multifamily residential development in an urban King County neighborhood, with a small rooftop garden among the few vegetated surfaces visible. Image: City of Seattle Tree Canopy Assessment 2021

stations and bus stops—in high-heat, low-canopy neighborhoods will improve thermal comfort.

Coordinate across sectors. Fragmentation across the layers of strategic and functional plans allows directive and strong language in one document to go unrecognized and unreinforced in others. Clearer cross-referencing across document types and a shared spatial framework would assure that community values are met without requiring new goals.

Embed community engagement. While some program managers have developed canopy equity programs, tree canopy goals are largely set through technical planning processes. Often, there are limited mechanisms for communities to shape where trees are planted, how green spaces are designed, or what outcomes matter most to them. Meanwhile, greening investments in underserved neighborhoods can inadvertently increase displacement pressure if not

paired with housing stabilization strategies. King County has strong anti-displacement commitments; the opportunity is to explicitly link them to canopy expansion strategies and housing goals. Community engagement can be structured to address both the benefits and concerns residents associate with greening, ensuring that canopy investment reflects community priorities and not just planning targets.

The results of this assessment were recently shared with King County officials for feedback and consideration. They expressed surprise at some of the conclusions and appreciated the opportunity to share with leadership across departments. Case studies are frequently used as learning tools across disciplines, including law and business. This case study, while addressing a specific context and place, offers insights for exploration of other places and situations. Other locales are encouraged to implement a similar policy assessment process and help the pieces fit together better. 🌱