

The Forest on Main Street



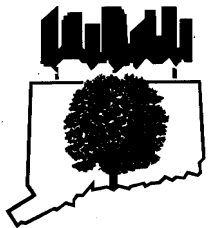
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and

The Annual CT Urban Forest Council Conference



CONNECTICUT
URBAN
FOREST
COUNCIL

The Forest on Main Street is the official newsletter of the Connecticut Urban Forest Council.



The urban forest performs a variety of functions, including the protection of urban waterways, as seen in this picture. The CUFC Annual Conference on October 27th will focus on the importance of diversity in the urban forest and its relationship to strength and stability.

Volunteers and Non-Profits in Urban Forestry

by Chris Donnelly - CT Urban Forest Council

One of the longer-running debates in urban forestry circles has to do with the role that the non-professionals should play in this field. After all, so the argument goes, traditional forestry does not base itself on non-professionals managing our forests and woodlands – why should urban forestry?

This is an interesting discussion, well worth pursuing all of the way through. To start with, it should be noted that there are many professionals who fit under the umbrella of urban forestry, each with credentials that deserve full respect. Included in this are municipal and commercial arborists, consulting urban foresters, certified tree wardens, landscape architects and, depending on the practice, related fields such as municipal planners. These individuals bring a degree of expertise in their fields that cannot be matched by the typical volunteer. In the final end, where the rubber meets the road (or, better, the chainsaw meets the bark), urban forestry management decisions need to be guided by the professionals.

Furthermore, field work in the urban forest is often specialized and dangerous. As such, much of it should be performed by individuals who are skilled and knowledgeable in this work – in other words, professional tree workers. Simply put, there are roles in urban forestry which the volunteer and the non-professional should not fill.

But, at the same time, there are definitely critical roles in urban forestry for the volunteer, particularly in its public aspects. Here in New England, local government is largely based on volunteers. For example, many of the most significant land-use decisions are made through local boards – Planning and Zoning Commissions, Inland Wetland Commissions and so on. These are boards that are all composed of volunteers. Simply put, volunteers make many of the critical decisions in our towns. Their vote, up or down, is key in determining whether a project goes forward or not. In most of these cases, the volunteer is in it for not other reason than that they are contributing to their community. In many ways, this is the essence of a volunteer.

With respect to urban forestry, however, there is an important point to underscore. Direct decision-making over individual trees is one of those areas that require specialized knowledge, and so is not an area appropriate for the average volunteer. In Connecticut, we have a state statute that requires each municipality to designate a tree warden. It is the intent of this law that each municipality establishes an individual, the tree warden, as the decision-maker regarding public trees. While there is nothing that prevents the person who is the tree warden from being a volunteer, the nature of the position is such that it is best filled by someone who is an expert in individual tree management.

That said, there are still plenty of opportunities for non-professional volunteers to play a key role in urban forestry, particularly as relates to public trees. There

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Storms are on everyone's minds. Recent hurricanes along the Gulf coast have reminded everyone, not just of the damage that storms can do to trees, but to the entire fabric of society. The above photo is from a 1989 tornado that struck Hamden, CT.



In restoring the urban forest after a storm, it is important to keep the social fabric in mind along with the trees. In most systems, there is strength in diversity, including in the urban forest. Here, three children displaced by Hurricane Katrina look to the future.

The Forest on Main Street

The Forest on Main Street is a publication of the Connecticut Urban Forest Council.

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 Articles submitted by . . . Chris Donnelly

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Or reach us at our website:

www.CTUrbanForestCouncil.org



It always comes back to the basics. Plant well, care for what you have planted and think often of the future - and the planet we hand to our children will be the better for it. The choices we make, with regards to what to plant and where to plant it, will shape our cities and towns for our children's children

The Role of Volunteers and Non-Profits in Urban Forestry

(continued from page one)

are three areas in which volunteer input is especially important – policy-making, advocacy and direct assistance to local tree programs.

With regards to municipal forestry, since the trees involved belong to the public, it only makes sense for the guidelines underlying municipal tree policy to be debated and recommended by a group of citizens. Issues such as the priority of concerns, qualifications of the tree warden and the amount of money to be expended on trees might all be considered by such a group of volunteers.

Similarly, volunteers can be very effective in advocating for trees before local public bodies. Common Councils, the Office of the Mayor, the Board of Selectman – such entities are constantly being asked to consider requests for support and funding. Having individuals or a group that promotes the importance of trees, both to these governmental entities and before the general public, can be essential to maintaining a viable urban forestry program.

Finally, volunteers can be enormously helpful to a community tree program simply by lending a hand – to an inventory or a planting project and similar ‘get out and help the trees’ programs. These hands-on work projects are important in two ways – first, they help get the work done. In every town in Connecticut there is plenty of work with trees to be done – one just needs to look for it. Second, through working with trees, a group is created that knows a lot more about trees than it did previously. People in this group better understand the problems that the trees have and that the municipality faces with respect to its tree program. Often, people in this group become even

more motivated to do something that benefits trees and the urban forest, and become willing to assist with advocacy or policy-making.

The efforts of volunteers may take different structural forms, depending upon the goals and commitment of the individuals involved as well as the authority local government seeks to place in a volunteer group concerned with trees. Volunteer effort may be in the form of individual activity, a loose network of similarly concerned individuals, a formally organized volunteer tree group or, even, an officially formed municipal board or commission. In some communities, this list of various structural forms is also a description of the progression that occurred as that community established a citizen based tree program. Individuals expressed their concerns about a tree program, then joined together to work on projects of common interest and began to advocate on behalf of trees. Next, having gained the attention of the existing decision-makers in the municipality, individuals in this group are asked by the town or city decides to be a part of a formal governmental entity – a board, committee or commission – that represents the public at large in developing a local tree program.

This now leads the discussion to the role of the formalized, non-profit urban forestry organization. A distinction should be drawn between this sort of group and the organized volunteer tree groups just described. While a volunteer tree group may develop to the point where they incorporate themselves as a non-profit, there is something fundamentally different between a group that is, at its core, an organization of volunteers, and one that is more formalized, with a paid staff and a specific set of objectives

and programs. The more evolved organizational structure of these groups, their larger budgets and their more extensive day-to-day activities set these more formalized non-profit urban forestry organizations apart.

As does the size of the communities in which these organizations are more often found. Experience in Connecticut strongly suggests that the form of volunteerism and the role of non-profits varies depending upon community size. In Connecticut, there are 169 cities and towns. The majority (75) have a population of 10,000 or less. Only three (Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven) have populations over 100,000. In the communities that are left, most (64) have a population of between 10,000 and 30,000.

Each of the three largest cities has a very active, independent non-profit urban forestry organization operating within it. Meanwhile, with some very good and notable exceptions, the more successful volunteer tree organizations tend to be associated with the smaller cities and the larger towns. In the smaller towns, successful volunteer efforts often rest on an individual stepping to the fore to be the champion of trees, or an individual elected official or appointed board taking on trees and the tree program as a specific challenge and responsibility.

Regardless, success in any of these communities, in the end, always comes down to individual effort and commitment. It appears that, always, in the best cases, a synergy develops between the volunteer component and professional component. It is in this combination of common effort and common commitment that a local urban forestry program rises to a level where it succeeds in a truly remarkable fashion, for the good of all who live in our communities.

CULTIVATING DIVERSITY

Thursday, October 27, 2005 at the Mountainside Inn in Wallingford, CT

The theme for the 17th Annual Conference on Urban and Community Forestry is "Cultivating Diversity". Cost for registration is \$40 per person (\$45 at the door) and includes lunch.

The schedule for the day is as follows:

8:00	<i>Exhibit Area Opens</i>
8:30 - 9:00	<i>Registration and Visit with Exhibitors</i>
9:00 - 9:15	<i>Welcome</i> <i>Colleen Murphy-Dunning, President, CUFC</i>
9:15 - 10:00	<i>The Connecticut Urban Forest: Composition and Structure</i> <i>Dr. Jeffrey S. Ward, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station</i>
10:00 - 10:45	<i>Ramorum Blight - a Potential Threat to Connecticut Forests</i> <i>Dr. Victoria Smith, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station</i>
10:45 - 11:00	<i>Break with Exhibitors</i>
11:00 - 11:45	<i>Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness</i> <i>Katie Armstrong, Emerald Ash Borer Liaison, USDA Forest Service</i>
11:45 - 1:15	<i>Awards Ceremony and Lunch (provided)</i>
1:15 - 1:45	<i>Urban Forestry at the Community Scale: Designing Responsive Programs</i> <i>Colleen Murphy-Dunning, Director of the Urban Resources Initiative</i>
2:45 - 2:00	<i>Trees for Hartford's Neighborhoods - Reforesting One Block at a Time</i> <i>Jack N. Hale, Executive Director, Knox Parks Foundation</i>
2:00 - 2:45	<i>Reaching Out to a Diverse Constituency in Connecticut's Largest City</i> <i>Richard J. Tiani, Executive Director, Groundwork Bridgeport</i>

Arborist and Certified Tree Warden credit hours and CEU's towards the renewal of the Landscape Architect's license will be available. For further details, visit the CUFC web site: www.CTUrbanForest.org. See you there!

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