

City TREES

Jan/Feb 2026

Magazine of the Urban & Community Forestry Society





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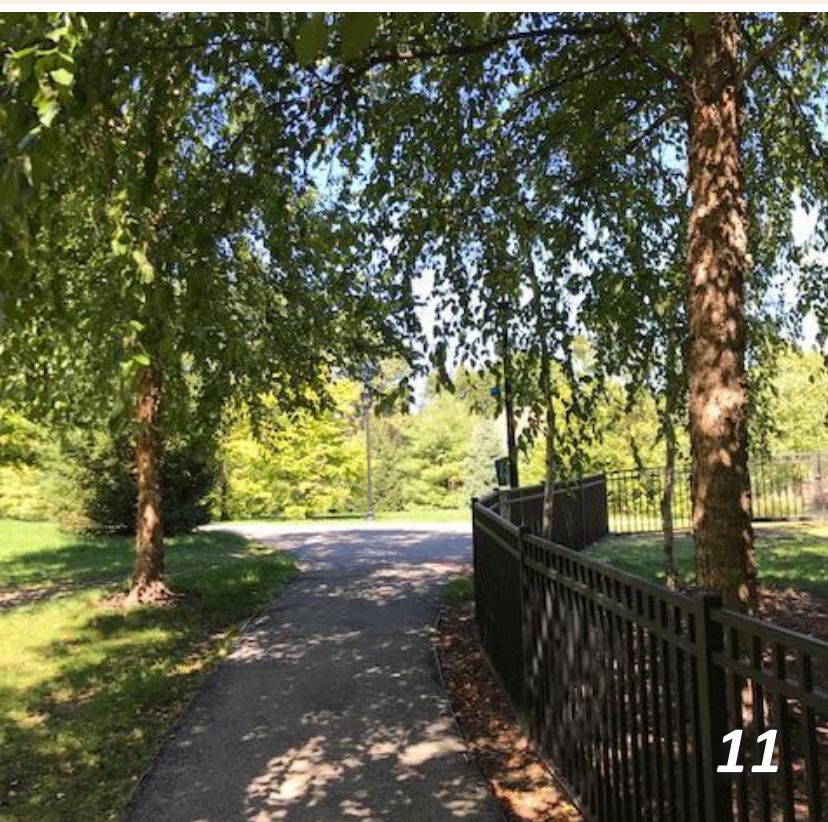
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Cover: Tree planting by Austin, Texas Youth Forest Council members at Roy G. Guerrero Park. Photo Courtesy City of Austin



President's Message

David Lefcourt



As I step into the role of President for the second time, I'm filled with a deep sense of gratitude and renewed excitement. UCFS has been an important part of my professional journey for many years. Our Society and profession continue to evolve in exciting ways, expanding beyond municipal tree care into resilience planning, climate

adaptation, equity-centered greening, and deeper community engagement. Yet at its core, our work remains rooted in the same mission: supporting healthy, thriving urban and community forests and the people who care for them.

I would like to thank Jamie King for his incredible leadership this past year and look forward to working with him as he assumes the role of Immediate Past President. As their tenure on the UCFS Board comes to an end, here's a huge shoutout to Rachel Habig-Myers and Darren Green for their dedication and vast contributions to our Society. I am also very excited to welcome new Board member Jamie Lim and returning Board member Michael Martini.

Our UCFS Annual Conference in Henderson, Nevada was a great success. The conference committee experimented with a new format, and we received a lot of positive feedback about it. It was a pleasure to see old faces and meet many new ones. I hope I get the opportunity to see many of you again at our 2026 annual conference in St. Louis, Missouri in November.

With a new partnership with Tree Fund, UCFS is working hard to strengthen the foundation of our field through the Urban Forest Foundation (UFF), which supports scholarships and training. Our Accreditation Program has been revamped, and just relaunched! The UFF and Accreditation Program go hand in hand: they help grow our profession, uplift practitioners, and create stronger, more sustainable community forestry programs. If you can, I encourage you to support the UFF, and if you're part of a community forestry program, consider applying for UCFS Accreditation. Accreditation helps communities demonstrate professionalism, improve operations, and set themselves apart as leaders in the field.

UCFS is at its strongest when our members are engaged. If you've thought about getting involved, now is the perfect time. Your experience and voice help shape the future of our organization and profession. I hope that, like me, you are excited for the year ahead!

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

Executive Director's Message

Leslie Berckes



Friends, I am so excited to officially share with you the revamped UCFS Accreditation program! Nearly two years in the making, UCFS Accreditation is made by and for urban foresters so that together **we** get to say what the best of the best do when they grow an urban forest.

UCFS has a long history of Accreditation. The organization started accrediting communities in 1990, and nearly 20 communities have achieved the title of UCFS Accreditation. However, truth be told, our organization had not put the necessary resources into growing the program, so it wasn't keeping up with what the profession needed. It's hard to write that, but necessary to accept and recognize when the organization can do better.

I'm so happy to let you know that we've corrected course and have an improved Accreditation that you will be proud of.

Here's what I hope we'll achieve together with UCFS Accreditation:

- Our top tier urban forestry programs will receive the recognition they deserve and can tout their achievements to their citizens and community leaders.
- Urban forestry programs that want to push city leadership to do more for trees can use the standards as a roadmap to achievement.
- We, as your membership society, can promote the standards with affinity groups at the national level to elevate our profession and advocate for the work you do.
- Through the standards, we'll have a process for self-governing to uphold rigorous standards in urban forestry.

The UCFS Accreditation program officially acknowledges communities that are dedicated to the growth, maintenance, and expansion of their urban forests. I sincerely hope it will be a catalyst for your continued work towards urban forestry stewardship, development of resources, and civic pride.

We're launching the program with our legacy communities and will have informational sessions for everyone throughout the year. Be on the lookout for how you can achieve UCFS Accreditation Steward or Champion status!

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

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Jamie Lim | Board Member



Michael Martini | Board Member

WELCOME UCFS OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS!

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
Abid Hussain		PAK	Jacob Rybloom	MT	USA	Moa Svanström		SWE
Allen Scogna	FL	USA	Jelle Boer		NLD	Nathan Walborn	CA	USA
Amber Hardin	SC	USA	Jennifer Geib	IN	USA	Nathan Young	TX	USA
Andrew Concepcion	CA	USA	Jeoffrey Dunster	CA	USA	Neil Hudson	CA	USA
Andy Nguyen		CAN	Jonathan Mason		USA	Nigel Dean		AUS
Armando Zertuche Ramírez		MEX	Jordan Foreman	NJ	USA	Parisa Anonby		CAN
Axel Patricio Gómez		MEX	Jorge Ramírez Justo		MEX	Phillip Barnes	NC	USA
Bailey Holmes	AL	USA	Joseph Capuano	OH	USA	Recheal Armah	LA	USA
Beatrice McGeoch	RI	USA	Joseph Chandler	CO	USA	Rene de Winter		NLD
Bryan Carbonell		COL	Joseph Vallone		SWE	Renee Aldama		USA
Carolina Huertas Pérez		MEX	Josh Del Rio		USA	Robert Hering	OH	USA
Charles Rice	SC	USA	Joy Brusselers		NLD	Rowdy van Goethem		NLD
Christina Moon	TX	USA	Juan Carlos Hernández Ruiz		MEX	Scott Roberts	TN	USA
Corbin Laedlein	NY	USA	Julio Jacobo	CA	USA	Sean MacLure		CAN
Damian Concepcion Romero	WI	USA	Katie Norsworthy	LA	USA	Shawn Smith		CAN
Damian Wenting		NLD	Keith Townsend		NZL	Simon Strand		SWE
Daniel Cotto	CT	USA	Kerstin Björkqvist		SWE	Sophie Badger	WA	USA
Daniel Paez Rios		COL	Kevin Kyle	CA	USA	Stephen Weil	NC	USA
Daniela García Madrigal		MEX	Kevin Tillery	CA	USA	Steve Lambert	WA	USA
Darron Johnson	MD	USA	Kevin Vasquez	NY	USA	Steven VanGelder	NY	USA
Eefje Boot		NLD	Laura O'Connor		AUS	Sven Bus		NLD
Ella Brandon	WI	USA	Linnéa Öhman		SWE	Thomas Don Griot		NLD
Ella Clement	WA	USA	Lucio Padilla		ARG	Tom Iannetti		USA
Evan Witzel		CAN	Luis Mauricio Flores Toribio		MEX	Tom Landsmann	PA	USA
Fannor Serna Velasco		COL	Luke Midura	CA	USA	Travis Scheuneman	MI	USA
Forrest Knaus	CO	USA	Magda Torres Tinjaca		COL	Tres Aardal	CA	USA
Glenn Stanton	AZ	USA	Magnus Lundin		SWE	Tyler Prow	NE	USA
Grazia Donnaloia		Italy	Manashi Chand	TX	USA	Valerie Kehoe	IL	USA
Hana Robinson	NC	USA	Maria Pettersson Ader		SWE	Warren Cox	UT	USA
Hannah Gordon	OH	USA	Marisa Prefer	PA	USA	William Bailey	SC	USA
Hector Galvan	CA	USA	Martha Cardona		MEX			
Herold Joseph	NY	USA	Mauricio Aguilar	CA	USA			
Ivan Garibaldo	CA	USA	Mayte Sofía Flores Ocampo		MEX			

**Not a Member? Apply for UCFS
Membership Online Today!**

Municipal Member

City of South Salt Lake

In This Issue: Contributors



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.



Michael Martini is a leader in urban and community forestry, dedicated to building sustainable, inclusive, and resilient green spaces. With a background spanning urban forestry management, leadership development, and community engagement, he focuses on connecting people, policy, and practice to strengthen the relationship between nature and cities. Passionate about mentorship and collaboration, Michael strives to cultivate thriving urban forests that reflect and serve the diverse communities they sustain.



Heather Fraser worked for more than 30 years in urban forestry and natural resource management for the City of Moncton, New Brunswick. She received the 2024 Tree Canada Award of Distinction for excellence in leadership and significant contributions to Canadian Urban Forestry. Environmental education has been an enduring passion of Fraser's for more than 40 years; in 2021, she founded Explore Nature's Bounty to connect people to nature through outdoor, hands-on experiences.



Michelle Sutton is the editor of *City Trees*. She is a writer, horticulturist, and urban forestry subject matter specialist who earned her MS in the Cornell Urban Horticulture Institute.



Alison Fulton is a Regional Urban Ecologist with Texas A&M Forest Service, supporting Central Texas communities in developing sustainable urban forestry programs. She holds a Master of Natural Resources and graduate certificate in urban forestry from Oregon State University and is an ISA Certified Arborist and a Certified Forest Therapy Guide.



Jamie Lim is the Urban Forestry Manager at Seattle Parks and Recreation and an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist. With experience in Singapore, New York City, and Seattle, she focuses on equitable, data-driven urban forest management and has contributed to ISA's Best Management Practices and the *Arborist News* Editorial Board.

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.



Become part of the community! >>



EMPOWERING — DIVERSITY IN URBAN FORESTRY

LGBTTree supports a vibrant community of urban foresters through:

- 🍃 Quarterly virtual social meet-ups
- 🍃 Sharing the mission of LGBTTree
- 🍃 Advocacy and education
- 🍃 And more as the group decides together!

Questions?
Would you like to join the
leadership team?

lgbtqplusufa@gmail.com

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



UCFS News



- Leslie Berckes Named ISA True Professional of Arboriculture
- UCFS Partners with TREE Fund to Host Urban Forest Foundation

Leslie Berckes Named ISA True Professional of Arboriculture

Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS) Executive Director Leslie Berckes has been named a True Professional of Arboriculture by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). The award honors arborists and tree care professionals for their positive impact on the industry and their communities.

"ISA True Professionals of Arboriculture recognizes ISA members who excel in their field and highlight the importance of tree care within their community," says ISA CEO and Executive Director Caitlyn Pollihan. "These individuals enhance their community's urban environment through quality tree work, which provides social, community, environmental, and economic benefits."

Leslie's nomination noted her support of the arboriculture and urban forestry professions for many years. This work includes serving as the director of programs for Trees Forever in Iowa and now leading UCFS.



UCFS Executive Director Leslie Berckes receiving the ISA True Professionals of Arboriculture Award from ISA President Sharon Jean-Philippe and ISA Board Member Randall H. Miller. Photo by Brendan Holt

UCFS Partners with TREE Fund to Host Urban Forest Foundation

In an exciting new development, the Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS) is partnering with Tree Research and Education Endowment Fund (TREE Fund) to guide and invest funds for the UCFS Urban Forest Foundation (UFF). The UFF was founded by visionary leaders of the then-Society of Municipal Arborists (now UCFS) to engage in the development, support, and promotion of urban forest training and the dissemination of technical and operational information. Over the years, the Foundation has raised some money, but never quite met its full potential.

UCFS and TREE Fund worked together over several months to explore how the UFF's funds could grow. TREE Fund will now house the UFF and invest those funds as part of their overall endowment investment strategy. Each year, 5% will be utilized by UCFS to support participation in the Society's educational programs.

"We at UCFS are excited to take a big step forward with the Urban Forest Foundation and partner with a forward-thinking, well-respected organization like TREE Fund," says past UCFS Board President Jamie King. "Our strategic plan sets a goal to ensure that UCFS and the Urban Forest Foundation will grow and serve more people for years to come through critical programs focused on professional development, like the Municipal Forestry Institute and Arborist Exchange. These programs make our profession stronger and help grow public awareness and recognition of the urban forestry profession."

The UFF's focus on training adds another grant model to TREE Fund's portfolio of education grant, research grant, and scholarship programs. Look for updates and opportunities to donate to the Urban Forest Foundation! 🌳



BIG UNVEIL



UCFS Accreditation Redesigned by Your Urban Forestry Peers for Global Participation and Greater Impact

by Michelle Sutton, Editor, *City Trees*

The Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS) officially unveils its new and improved Accreditation program, which sets the bar for how urban forests are planned for and managed.



UCFS
ACCREDITED
CHAMPION

The Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS) Accreditation Program is a peer-reviewed framework of standards that formally recognizes urban and community forestry programs that are actively implementing best practices in urban forestry management. Accreditation has been a feature of UCFS (formerly SMA) since 1990. In 2025, having envisioned where UCFS Accreditation could go if fundamentally revamped, UCFS Executive Director Leslie Berckes and the UCFS Industry Trends Committee worked diligently to create the new iteration of UCFS Accreditation—the gold standard for urban forestry program leadership.



UCFS
ACCREDITED
STEWARD

"We've taken a big step forward in revamping the UCFS Accreditation program!" Berckes says. "Made by and for urban foresters, the new standards provide clear parameters for what the strongest urban forestry programs should look like. UCFS Accreditation will work to strengthen the field's reputation by elevating its practices, promoting self-governance, and providing further pathways to advocate for our members." >>



How does Accreditation help you, the UCFS Member, and your community? We asked two program managers from legacy Accredited communities who are eager to secure the new, elevated iteration of UCFS Accreditation. Santa Monica, California Urban Forest Supervisor Madeleine Rauhe says,

We serve an engaged and passionate community, making it imperative that our Urban Forestry team is not only experienced but also pursues relevant certifications, qualifications, and accreditations. The City, its residents, and its trees expect and deserve the best that we can offer. We are a very positive team and enjoy community outreach opportunities, which are made easier with professional backing. UCFS Accreditation sets an example and a level of trust with the City. It encourages growth and establishes accountability. It gives us validation for where our program stands, while offering ideas and goals to work towards in hopes of improvement.

Des Moines, Iowa City Forester Shane McQuillan says,

UCFS Accreditation is invaluable to show to leadership so they have concrete metrics of our value and success. Our City managers care about credentials across departments, like APWA Accreditation for Public Works; UCFS Accreditation is our Urban Forestry equivalent. I like that the updated UCFS Accreditation will have tiers that can motivate progress, and I think the reaccreditation process is important, helping you dive back into things you need to improve. Having physical materials to show the public that we are UCFS Accredited is also key.

Let's get into how UCFS Accreditation now works. Members apply and if approved by the UCFS Accreditation Council—made up of UCFS peers—will work directly with a Council liaison. Applicants will do a full self-assessment with

self-scoring and document provision, which the Council will then give careful review. The next stage is a virtual site visit where the Council asks clarifying questions and engages the applicant in a peer-to-peer conversation.

The Accreditation Council will then confer and will either deny Accreditation or issue it at the Steward or Champion level. If the application is denied—or Champion level was sought but not granted, the Council will issue a defensible report showing a transparent process and offering the applicant detailed explanations—and encouragement and recommendations for future success.

In the development phase of the updated UCFS Accreditation, the Industry Trends Committee asked Village of Downers Grove, Illinois Forester Greg Soltwisch to play a unique role. He says:

I was very excited to be asked to be a tester/pilot applicant for this program, especially after seeing the new standards. What makes these standards so appealing is the fact that the scoring system can be applied to any community regardless of population size or budget capacity. I also like the new tiered system of Steward level vs. Champion level. Who doesn't want to strive to be at the highest level?

Seeking to make things better for future generations is why we do what we do as urban foresters. The Village of Downers Grove was first accredited through the then Society of Municipal Arborists (SMA) in 2006. My predecessor, Kerstin von Der Heide, was instrumental in growing our successful program. As the fourth Village Forester for Downers Grove, I'm eager to meet these new and revamped UCFS Accreditation standards for the benefit of the trees and residents in our community. >>



Accreditation for Urban Forestry Programs

BECOME A **STEWARD** OR
CHAMPION LEVEL COMMUNITY!



About Accreditation

The UCFS Accreditation Program celebrates and recognizes urban forestry programs that demonstrate leadership, innovation, and a commitment to the highest standards in the field.

UCFS Accreditation strengthens the field's reputation by elevating its practices, and the public benefits from having an objective, independent source of information about the quality of urban forestry programs in their communities.

Why Accreditation

- ✓ Be recognized for continuous urban forestry operations improvement
- ✓ Celebrate the dedication of team members and foster a sense of pride
- ✓ Show your program's commitment to your community and the environment by delivering measurable results
- ✓ Provide a valuable asset to administrators and elected officials that offers public relations opportunities

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

The Process

Apply

Complete Self-
Assessment

Virtual Site Visit
and Review

Accreditation
Council Evaluation

Accreditation
Decision

Maintenance

UCFS Accreditation also supports the newly relaunched ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional (CUFP)—formerly Municipal Specialist—credential. “The new CUFP has four domains that you get tested against,” Berckes says. “We built the core competencies CUFP tests for into the Accreditation standards; they are like gears that interlock.”

Additionally, UCFS’s Accreditation will work along a continuum among other urban forestry recognition programs. “We recognize the enduring role of Tree City USA—including the Growth Award—and Tree Cities of the World through our friends at Arbor Day Foundation, and the newer role of Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard through our friends at the Sustainable Forestry Initiative,” Berckes says. “Rigorous and attainable, we see UCFS Accreditation as both a critical bridge between these programs—and a unique offering for our members and the profession as a whole.”

Accreditation Workgroup Chair Anna Heckman says, “Our workgroup and others we consulted have experience with communities of different sizes, governance styles, and funding sources and are located in different ecological regions. In every iteration of review, we found new opportunities for all communities to visualize success. We hope that the exercise of working through UCFS Accreditation will build confidence for programs to clarify their achievements and build their own path for urban forestry growth.”

Leslie Berckes acknowledges the Association of Experiential Education for providing templates and guidance. She also thanks the subgroup of the Industry Trends Committee who helped build the Accreditation Workgroup team: Anna Heckman, Rich Hauer, Barry Edgar, Fred Chalfant, Dwayne Sperber, Jamie King, and Karla Nagy. Additional thanks go to Rachel Barker and Scott Altenhoff for providing guidance and historical data at the beginning of this process. 🍓

Party popper and confetti ball emojis used in this story from Google (Apache License 2.0), via Wikimedia Commons



What can UCFS Accreditation do for your urban and community forestry program?



- Signify an urban forest management program’s commitment to its local community and the environment, delivering measurable results that can inspire pride among residents and the larger public.



- Recognize a community’s efforts to continuously improve operations and excellence in managing and caring for community trees.



- Serve as a valuable asset for administrators and elected officials, offering public relations opportunities to promote achievements.



- Celebrate the dedication of team members who manage and care for urban trees, fostering a sense of pride in their vital role.



- Highlight the high standards of a program and showcase recognition by professional peers and industry leaders through display of the UCFS Accreditation logo and promotional materials.



Guide authors Dr. Adrina C. Bardekjian (left) and Dr. Danijela Puric-Mladenovic.

My hope is that the guide serves as a foundational resource for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of urban forestry—whether they're seasoned professionals or new to the field. — Dr. Adrina C. Bardekjian

It became evident just how much Canadian urban forestry has advanced and matured over the years. This process also highlighted the value of collaboration and what can be achieved through collective effort. — Dr. Danijela Puric-Mladenovic

Growing Green Cities: A Practical Guide to Urban Forestry in Canada is the third, fully updated edition of Tree Canada's urban forestry resource.

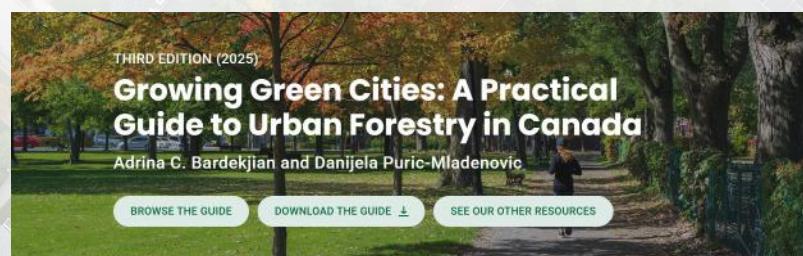
Publication Spotlight

Growing Green Cities: A Practical Guide to Urban Forestry in Canada

Growing Green Cities: A Practical Guide to Urban Forestry in Canada by Drs. Adrina C. Bardekjian and Danijela Puric-Mladenovic serves as an essential resource for understanding the complexities of urban forestry and the vital role it plays in managing green spaces and maintaining healthy trees in Canadian cities. It's designed to support municipalities, arborists, educators, and community leaders in growing greener, healthier, and more equitable urban spaces. This comprehensive guide builds upon the foundation of the former online resource, *Compendium of Best Urban Forest Management Practices in Canada*, expanding on key topics and introducing new, emerging issues that require focused attention.

Each chapter dives into various facets of urban forest planning, offering practical advice, technical standards, and real-world examples. It also provides a wealth of online resources, links, and citations, ensuring that readers can access the most up-to-date tools and initiatives in the field. Whether you're an urban forestry professional, a municipal planner, a local resident, or an elected official, this guide is designed to deepen your understanding of urban forestry strategies, planning processes, and the critical considerations for creating and sustaining green cities.

This book is not just a resource—it's an invitation to join a growing movement toward healthier, greener, and more sustainable urban environments across Canada. To learn more about the Guide's creation, see [Behind the Guide: A Conversation with the Authors of Tree Canada's Urban Forestry Guide](#).

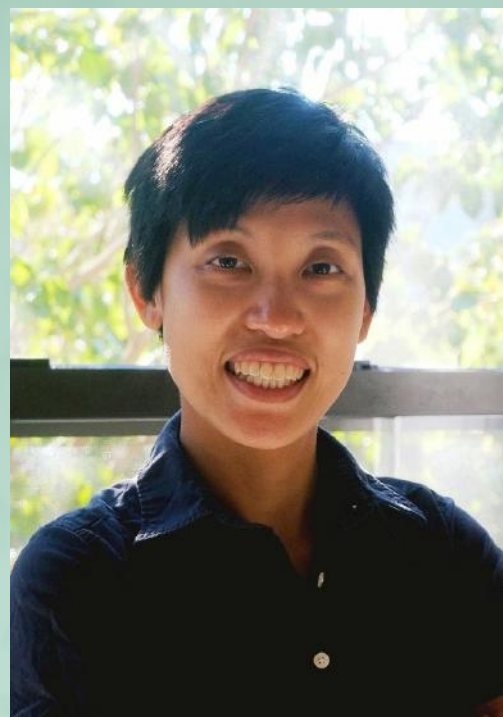


Getting to Know New UCFS Board Member

Jamie Lim

Jamie Lim is the Urban Forestry Manager at Seattle Parks and Recreation. She is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist with 14 years of international experience in municipal and non-profit urban forestry. Jamie holds an M.S. in Environmental Conservation from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where her novel research on arboriculture safety standards was published in *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*.

Jamie has led urban forestry programs in the U.S. (Seattle Parks and Recreation and Central Park Conservancy) and in Singapore's National Parks Board, specializing in tree risk assessment, inventory management, pest preparedness, and policy development with an equity lens. She has contributed to ISA Best Management Practices, presented at major conferences worldwide, and serves on the ISA Editorial Board for *Arborist News*.



What got you interested in the field of urban forestry?

I was first drawn to urban forestry through my passion for the outdoors and nature. Trees have always fascinated me, not only because of their incredible biomechanics and ability to adapt to their environment, but also because of the many benefits they provide to both communities and the environment. I see trees as central to addressing climate challenges while also advancing social and environmental justice. The technical side of arboriculture—whether it's climbing, risk assessment, or understanding how trees grow and respond—has always captivated me.

Beyond the science, I am motivated by the opportunity to do meaningful work in public service. Coming from Singapore, a city internationally recognized for integrating green, blue, and grey infrastructure into a livable and sustainable urban landscape, I feel strongly about contributing my technical expertise and international experience to ensure that cities remain inclusive, resilient, and enriched by healthy urban forests.

How do you want to contribute to the mission and strategic direction of UCFS?

I want to contribute to UCFS by bringing my professional and international experience in urban forestry to strengthen the development of policies, standards, and practical guides that support professionals in the field. When I first stepped into a leadership role in municipal forestry, I struggled to find resources that addressed the real-world challenges of managing programs, a staff of three, and equity-focused initiatives. By advancing frameworks and best practices, I hope to help others lead with confidence, competence, and clarity.

I am especially interested in governance, policy, and outreach. Governance and policy are natural next steps in my career, allowing me to translate my technical expertise and management experience into impactful guidance that raises the quality of tree care and urban forestry management across diverse communities. Outreach is equally important to me—I believe education, mentoring, and public engagement are key to empowering the next generation of professionals and fostering partnerships that sustain strong urban forestry programs.

My strengths align with UCFS's values. With a global perspective, I bring experience from Singapore and the Asia-Pacific region, as well as from New York City and Seattle, and maintain international connections through ISA and global conferences. I am dedicated to service through public and nonprofit work, embrace innovation through modern arboriculture technologies, and uphold integrity by leading with honesty, dedication, and accountability. I also prioritize equity and inclusivity, drawing on my experience advancing race and social justice initiatives in municipal forestry to ensure that urban forestry benefits are shared fairly across all communities.

What makes you happy about being a UCFS member?

What I value most about UCFS membership is the ability to connect with a wide network of urban forestry professionals across the country and world. It is inspiring to see the variety of work happening in different cities and to learn from others' successes and challenges to strengthen policies and programs. I also appreciate that UCFS places equity and inclusivity at the center of its mission, both in supporting diverse members and in advancing our profession. The organization provides valuable resources, publications, and educational opportunities that continue to raise professional standards. Above all, UCFS fosters a supportive and collaborative community—one that I am proud to be part of and eager to give back to through my service.

Favorite tree and why?

Larches (*Larix* spp.) are my favorite trees because they represent both my love for the outdoors and a deeper personal meaning. As unique deciduous conifers that thrive at higher elevations, they are remarkable in how they transform into a brilliant golden forest each fall, especially radiant at sunrise and sunset. I first encountered them during my first solo backpacking trip—a journey I was initially hesitant to take. Experiencing the larches then became symbolic for me: they remind me to have the courage to take on new challenges, to venture into the unknown, and to discover new places where I can grow and thrive. Larches that stand together and shine in gold inspire me to embrace change and find strength in new beginnings.

Jamie Lim and her dog, Wooju, backpacking to Yellow Aster Butte, in the Mount Baker Wilderness in Washington State, for the fall colors.



Getting to Know Returning UCFS Board Member

Michael Martini

Michael Martini is a dynamic leader in urban and community forestry with a robust educational background and extensive experience working at both state and local government levels. He earned his Master's degree in Natural Resources from Oregon State University in 2024 alongside a Graduate Certificate in Urban Forestry in 2023. Michael holds a Bachelor's degree from Rutgers University in both Ecology, Evolution, and Natural Resources and Environmental Planning and Design: Urban Forestry.

Throughout his career, Michael has demonstrated a deep commitment to enhancing urban forests and supporting community initiatives. Currently, as the Director of Urban and Community Forestry at Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), Michael focuses on expanding the organization's urban forestry capacity in the U.S., with an emphasis on outreach to underserved communities and fostering partnerships. He is instrumental in promoting the SFI Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard and supports the SFI Career Pathways Program. In his current role, Michael continues to advocate for the growth and sustainability of urban forests, leveraging his expertise to make a significant impact on communities and the environment.

Michael is a Municipal Forestry Institute (MFI) facilitator and a past UCFS Board Member. He serves on the New Jersey Community Forestry Council and as a trustee for the New Jersey ISA Chapter Board. Additionally, he co-founded LGBTree, an affiliate group of UCFS, and participates in mentorship programs to guide the next generation of urban foresters.



What got you interested in the field of urban forestry?

My interest in urban forestry began with the intersection of people and the environment. During my undergraduate years, I changed my major several times, searching for a career that would allow me to stay connected to the outdoors while also making a meaningful impact on people's lives. It wasn't until I met Dr. Jason Grabosky at Rutgers and had a conversation about urban forestry that I discovered how deeply this field is tied to health, the environment, and human well-being. That conversation sparked my passion and made me realize urban forestry was a career I had to pursue.

The mentorship and support I received from individuals in the sector early on further solidified my commitment to the field. They showed me the passion behind urban forestry and the incredible impact it can have, not just on communities but at state and even broader levels. It's this potential to shape environments and improve lives that continues to drive my work in urban forestry today.



Michael Martini and his partner, Christopher Watkins, in Greece off the island of Santorini.

How do you want to contribute to the mission and strategic direction of UCFS?

One of my key interests lies in partnership, outreach, and inclusion. Through the UCFS affinity group LGBTree, promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion within the urban forestry sector, I have seen firsthand the importance of building a supportive and inclusive environment. I would love to continue to add to this perspective with UCFS by helping to broaden its outreach and ensure that all members feel valued and represented.

I believe that strengthening member connections and fostering an environment where members feel their contributions are recognized is key to the ongoing success of UCFS. I aim to help amplify the value that each member brings and create more opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. Ultimately, my goal is to use my passion for urban forestry and community engagement to help UCFS continue to make a meaningful impact by elevating the people behind the mission.

What makes you happy about being a UCFS member?

What makes me happiest about being a UCFS member is the passion and the people. Every time I attend a UCFS event, I'm left feeling welcomed, inspired, and re-energized by the incredible individuals I meet. The unique skills, experiences, and ideas that each member brings to the table show how UCFS is making an impact every day through its members. Whether it's through a webinar, conference, or other events, coming together as a community makes us all stronger, and I always leave feeling renewed and ready to contribute even more.

Favorite tree and why?

Dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), because it reminds me of urban foresters and arborists. Its resilience and adaptability, thriving in both urban and natural settings, reflect the qualities that are essential in our profession. Its beautiful, feathery leaves, which turn a vibrant copper in the fall, make it stand out in any landscape. Just like the dawn redwood, urban foresters and arborists must be adaptive and resilient to endure the long-term commitment of managing sustainable urban and community forests. We stand out with our passion and with our dedication, not only to the trees but to the people whose lives we impact through our work. 🌲



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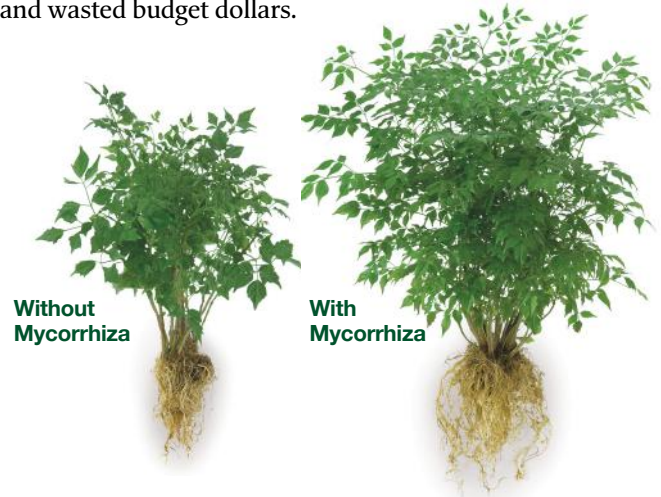
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A low-angle photograph looking up at a massive tree with a thick, textured trunk and a dense canopy of bright green leaves against a clear blue sky. A person is seen climbing the tree, positioned about halfway up the visible trunk. They are wearing a bright yellow-green safety vest over a blue long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. They are holding onto a thick yellow rope that extends from the top of the frame down towards them. Another thinner rope is visible nearby. The person's legs are spread apart as they ascend. The tree's branches are complex and spread out in all directions, filling most of the frame.

UCFS Member Photos:

Arbor Day Celebration tree climbing event
at Logan Park, Minneapolis Courtesy City
of Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

The UCFS Career Compass Series



Coordinated by and for Young and Emerging Professionals

By Alison Fulton, Regional Urban Ecologist with Texas A&M Forest Service and Vice Chair, UCFS Young and Emerging Professionals Committee



Last year, the UCFS Young and Emerging Professionals Committee launched the [Career Compass webinars](#) to support recent graduates and early-career professionals as they begin new roles in urban forestry. Special thanks to Davey Resource Group for their generous support of Career Compass! Last year's series of three webinars was designed to follow a job seeker's journey, starting with the application and interview process, continuing through the first few weeks on the job, and then addressing next steps after one year in the field. With those three webinars completed, we are excited to share some of the valuable advice our presenters have offered so far.

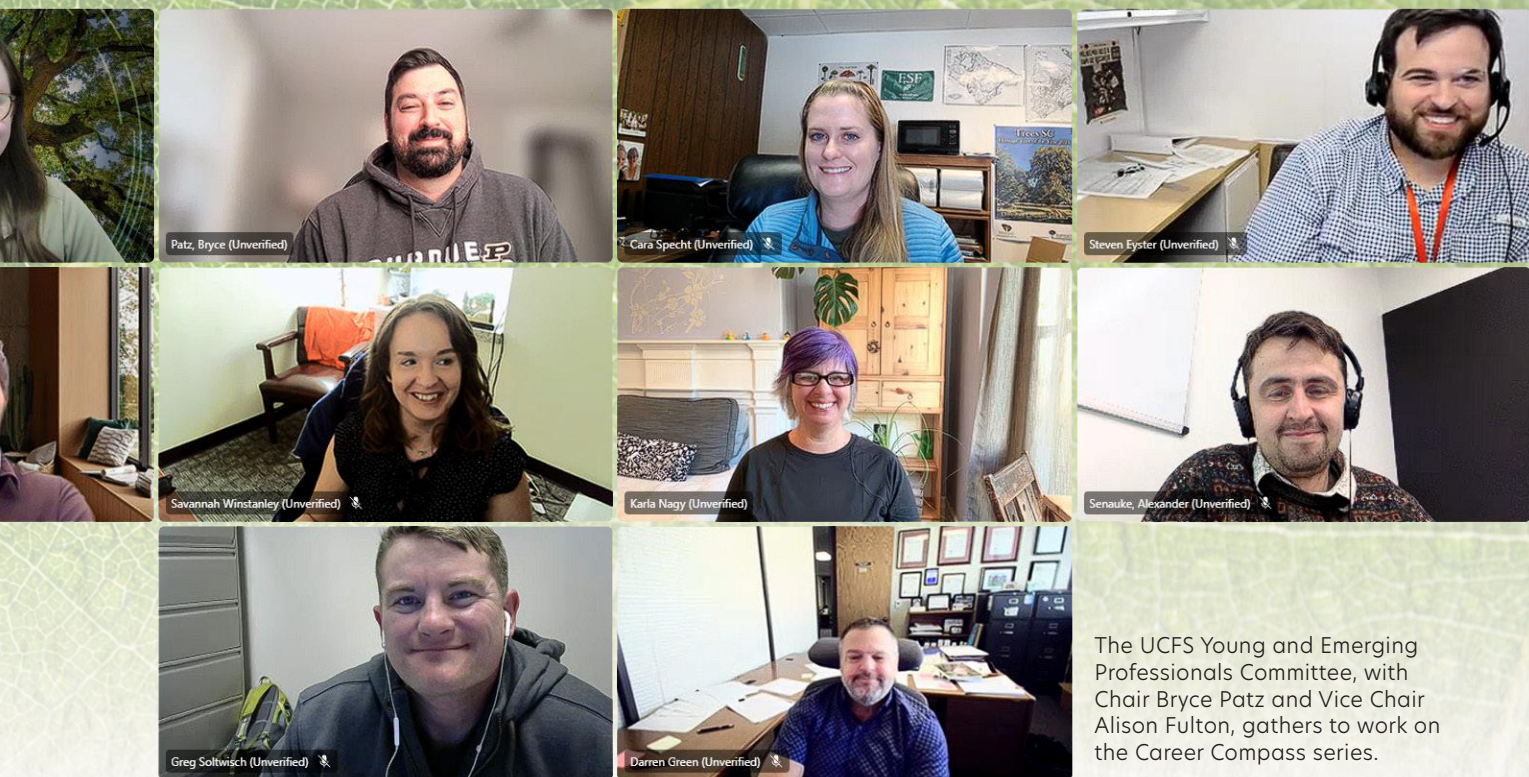
Crafting a strong resume is often the first hurdle for job seekers, and our presenters offered clear strategies to help candidates stand out. In our first webinar, [Landing the Job](#), we learned from [Sarah Mincey](#), [Brigitte Orrick](#), and [Casey Jogerst](#) to keep the formatting simple. Table structures and side sections often do not work well with applicant tracking systems, so it is best to avoid these formatting options. Be sure to customize your resume to the role you are applying for and use keywords specific to the position. Using AI can be helpful here; it can assist in customizing your cover letter and resume to the specific position. However, our presenters also issued a warning that relying on AI to write everything is a red flag to employers—so use it wisely.

Brigitte shared that you have about 90 seconds to make a first impression with your resume, so it is worth spending time to get it right. You will also want to carefully review

the job posting. Examine it closely to identify the required elements you need to demonstrate in your resume and application. Even if you do not meet all the preferred qualifications, you can still apply for the role.

Once your application gets noticed, the next challenge is the interview. Sarah, Brigitte, and Casey shared practical advice for making a confident and authentic impression. First, Casey and Sarah emphasized that candidates should research the position and organization, since some interview questions are designed to test this knowledge. It is also okay to be nervous. A little bit of nerves can show that the interview is important to you. Casey shared that finding a moment to laugh with the interviewers can help relieve some of the pressure. Brigitte also suggested asking for the interview questions ahead of time. This practice is gaining in popularity and could help ease some of those nerves.

Now that you have landed the job, the first few weeks in a new position can feel overwhelming. In our second webinar, [New Job? Now What?!](#), we heard from presenters who have been in your shoes and share insights on how to show up with confidence, communicate effectively, and embrace learning without the pressure of having everything figured out. Presenters [Nathan Davila](#), [Carolina Arango](#), and [Mads Gullion](#) offered practical advice drawn from their own experience in the field. On the topic of imposter syndrome, Nathan highlighted the importance of giving yourself grace to grow into your new position. You were hired for a reason, so allow yourself time to settle into the role, and show up ready to learn. >>



The UCFS Young and Emerging Professionals Committee, with Chair Bryce Patz and Vice Chair Alison Fulton, gathers to work on the Career Compass series.



UCFS thanks Davey Resource Group for their generous support of the Career Compass Series.

Screenshot from the third Career Compass webinar of 2025, "Level up Your Leadership."



Our speakers

Greg and Molly:
Building Relationships & Collaborations

Josh and Jen:
Embedding Urban Forestry in Policy & Plans

Mads and Ned:
Leadership & Growth



(from left) Mads Gullion, Ned Brockmeyer, and Molly Scallon were among the Career Compass presenters in 2025.

We also discussed how to ask for feedback on your performance. Carolina emphasized that you should not be afraid to ask for feedback, even early in your role. You can try asking for input on your interview. She also suggested using the two-to-one strategy: ask for two things that went well and one area for improvement. Finally, Mads shared insights on what to do if you find yourself working with a manager who lacks strong leadership or management skills. Unfortunately, bad management happens, but there are ways to navigate the situation. It can be helpful to try [managing up](#) and learn how to clearly communicate your needs. [Finding a mentor](#) can also make a big difference.

After a year in your new role, professionals often find themselves reflecting on how far they have come and where they want to go next. In our third webinar, [Level Up Your Leadership](#), we focused on supporting emerging leaders to lead with clarity, confidence, and purpose. Presenters [Jenn Cairo](#), [Molly Scallon](#), and [Ned Brockmeyer](#) shared their strategies for communicating the value of the urban forest, building partnerships, and measuring program success. Jenn offered key insights on making the case for consistent, long-term funding for urban forestry programs. She recommended reframing the urban forest as essential infrastructure rather than something that is simply nice to have. You can use published research to highlight the critical services trees provide and support your case with metrics on the value of the urban forest. The many freely available i-Tree tools are helpful here.

Molly spoke about building partnerships both internally and externally, emphasizing that collaboration is often key to getting things done. She encouraged giving external partners opportunities to get involved in projects and to be part of the decision-making process. She also recommended seeking out training opportunities in soft skills, which can

support effective collaboration. Ned highlighted how simply showing up to meetings can help build relationships. On the topic of measuring program success, he noted that while traditional metrics like the number of trees planted are important, other indicators matter too. These include how happy and engaged your team is, the quality of work being done, and the trust you build with partners. Storytelling can also go a long way in communicating your success to others.

Looking ahead, the Career Compass series will continue to support recent graduates and early-career professionals with timely and practical guidance. The UCFS Young and Emerging Professionals Committee is busy brainstorming and planning next year's webinars, guided by feedback from participants and trends in the field. We're looking forward to diving deeper into some of the popular themes from this past year. Topics such as fighting burnout, developing new programs, and finding mentorship in the workplace are all under consideration.

We're also excited to explore new topics. Survey responses from past attendees highlighted career growth, project management, and program development as top priorities for future webinars. Topics on the horizon also include ways to level up your skillset, such as pursuing professional credentials. Once again, each webinar will feature experienced professionals and peers sharing real-world advice, tools, and strategies to help attendees grow in their urban forestry careers.

Is there a specific topic you would like to see covered in a future webinar? Or are you interested in being a presenter yourself? Please reach out to the Young and Emerging Professionals Committee with your ideas and suggestions. We want to hear from you! 🌱

Career Compass Participants on What Stays with Them

The Career Compass webinar series has been a game-changer for me, reigniting my passion for a career in urban forestry. The insights and strategies shared have been invaluable, and I've gained a renewed sense of confidence in my job search journey (amid the challenges). Key takeaways—the importance of networking, defining my career goals, embracing lifelong learning, and cultivating meaningful relationships with mentors and peers—have been particularly impactful. I'm excited to apply these lessons and continue pursuing opportunities in this field with renewed purpose and determination.

—Judith Ntow Oppong Ph.D., *Precision Agriculture and Remote Sensing Researcher, College of Agriculture, Tennessee State University*



The Career Compass series helped reinforce two of my goals: to continue growing community engagement and taking charge of my role in establishing and nurturing the continued growth of trees throughout the City. The Level Up Your Leadership session gave me new ways of thinking about how to engage the community I serve, especially around communication among the residents, forestry department, and the other government agencies we work with. The conversation about resumes was also impactful; having not updated my resume in a long time, I took advice from the speakers on how to organize my resume in ways proven to appeal to hiring managers. Now I have a resume that I would be proud to use in the future.

—Brandon Wynn, *Parks & Forestry Specialist, City of Birmingham, Michigan*

I loved the Career Compass series last year. With many of us working on the municipal side, it spoke to me, but it also included others with affiliated forestry careers as well. I enjoyed the range of subjects, speakers, and geographic representation. It made me think deeper about the situations we all go through, or will go through. I saw parallels between what our forests—and we as urban forestry professionals—are navigating during this time of climate change. It is personal as well as professional.

For instance, for both forests and people, I thought about how we can maximize the resources we have, both external and internal. Will the forest—and will we—continue to grow and expand? The Career Compass series gave me all sorts of new perspective on how we can, like trees, gain resilience with time and experience.

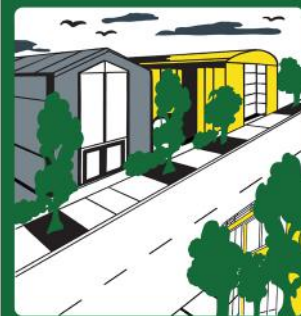
—Leslie Gover, *City Arborist, Happy Valley, Oregon*



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In 2024, the Canadian Wildlife Federation conferred upon Heather Fraser the Outdoorsperson of the Year Award, recognizing an outstanding individual in conservation.



Canadian Treasure

Award-Winning New Brunswick-Based Urban Forester and Environmental Educator Heather Fraser

by Michelle Sutton, *City Trees*

Among other major distinctions, [Heather Fraser](#) was the recipient of the 2024 [Tree Canada Award of Distinction](#) for excellence in leadership and significant contributions to Canadian Urban Forestry. Fraser worked for 30-plus years in urban forestry and natural resource management for the City of Moncton, New Brunswick before retiring in 2022. During that time, she served a decade as Atlantic Representative for the Canadian Urban Forest Network (CUFN) created by Tree Canada.

“Volunteering with Tree Canada and CUFN was an easy one,” Fraser says. “I’d done a survey across New Brunswick to find that only the larger municipalities had staff and plans for urban forests, trees, and parks. I began having conversations with mayors and councilors across the Province, highlighting the value of trees to communities of all sizes.” Fraser says that [Nairn Hay](#)—longtime former general manager of the [Fundy Model Forest](#)—and his staff were instrumental in helping her organize biannual urban forest workshops across the Maritimes. “It took time to gather just the right ambassadors to keep the momentum going from one year to the next,” she says. “We had strong support from

Tree Canada and many community partners, including city staff, tree nurseries, and utility companies.”

Environmental education has been an enduring passion of Fraser’s for more than 40 years; in 2021, she founded [Explore Nature’s Bounty](#) to connect people to nature and the outdoors through seasonal hands-on experiences. Among her many interests, Fraser is a wild edibles forager, hiker, biker, a registered apiarist, and past maple syrup producer of 25 years, and she has planted more than 250,000 trees!

Fraser was born and raised in Rothesay, New Brunswick and is a fifth-generation Arnold owning property in the Province behind Poley Mountain in Hidden Valley, Sussex. “My grandfather, Bill Arnold, told me that trees are knowledge keepers and he shared his love for the outdoors and nature with me,” she says. “Since I was two years old, he had me up and down the mountains identifying trees, flowers, berries, wild mushrooms—and foraging edibles. He recalled how as a child, his father tapped maple trees with pails and how the sweet syrup was a special treat >>

Heather Frasier's early career was in traditional forestry; in addition to her municipal career, she has worked as a professional land management consultant for Canada's [Atlantic Region](#) for 33 years.



they looked forward to each spring. These experiences with my grandfather led me to study forestry.”

Bill Arnold would have loved that one of Fraser's proudest achievements in her time with the City of Moncton was related to maple syrup production. Fraser says,

Managing forests for long-term forest health led me to lay out a forest road in the municipal watershed where I discovered an abandoned sugar (maple syrup) camp that was operational in the 1940s and 50s. I remember standing in front of the old camp built out of and fueled by wood, seeing the evaporator and cans inside the sugar shack, and wondering if the maple tree stand there could be revitalized and used for a sugar operation again.

And so, as part of a forest management program, Moncton became the first Canadian municipality to own and operate a maple syrup operation and provide value-added experiences to the public. Each spring I welcomed thousands to take part in my signature “Pails to Pipeline Tour,” tasting raw sap at the tree and warm syrup right off the evaporator. Today the camp continues as Fundy Maple—operated by the [Fundy Biosphere](#).

Another project I'm especially proud of is the creation of Moncton's [Irishtown Nature Park](#) (INP). As part of my work with the Municipality, I helped develop the natural area into what it has become today: at over 2200 acres (890 ha) in size, INP is

Moncton's biggest park and one of the largest urban nature parks in Canada. It has accessible surfaced trails (4.7 km/2.9 mile) cleared in winter, and natural footpaths trails (6.9 km/4.3 mile). At INP, we've run outdoor education classes with schools for more than 40 years. INP is a testament to good management for long-term forest health.

What are some changes you have seen in Canada with regard to urban forestry and natural resource management?

Over time and increasingly, communities of every size recognize the value of neighbourhood parks and street trees and are planting to increase tree cover. This is in part because urban foresters and affiliated educators have gotten better at communicating the value of the resource to the public.

Here in the Atlantic Region and across Canada, growing development pressures have forged a desire among the public to conserve trees and related natural resources, with watershed protection being the number one priority, especially when managing drinking water supplies. Education is the key while working together with developers, land owners, utilities, planners, public interest groups, and others—keeping trees front of mind and protected.

A major component of my work with the City of Moncton under the Engineering and Environmental Services >>



Heather Frasier was instrumental in developing Moncton's Irishtown Nature Park, one of Canada's largest urban parks. Photo by Lindslove, CC BY-SA 4.0



Fraser at the maple syrup camp formerly owned by the City of Moncton, teaching kids how to make "candy on the snow" in the Canadian tradition.

Department was managing the watershed designation for the protection of our drinking water for the tri-city area (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe). It became a model watershed for the Province as we partnered with community champions, private woodlot owners, government departments related to health and environment, and the company J.D. Irving to protect this precious resource.

Another change and big opportunity for engagement is newcomers joining our communities. Immigrants loved the land from which they came from and are eager to learn about Canada and form attachment to this new land. Newcomers turn out in high numbers for my outdoor educational programs and guided forest nature walks. They can be great advocates for urban forests and future land conservation.

There are also many more women in urban forestry, forestry, engineering, and natural resource management now than when I started my career back in the 80s. My grandfather used to say, “Girls can do anything.” In turn, I encourage women to follow their dreams!

Can you talk about your work with developers?

About 30% of the urban forestry consulting I do is with developers, contractors, and builders, showing them how tree preservation increases the value of their properties. Most home buyers in Canada, if given the choice of living in a treeless neighborhood vs. one that has mature trees and recreational trails through the woods—they want the latter. I follow and use the principle of Sustainable Community Design (SCD) for a new development opportunity, seeing what trees can be saved during development and mapping out priority green assets before work begins.

Over the last fifteen years, I’ve spent many hours in conversation with developers. It can be hard work convincing others that trees matter, but I advocate for trees and natural green spaces because it is the right thing to do—and because I am an educator to my core.

What are some of your passion projects through Explore Nature’s Bounty?

I particularly enjoy ongoing outdoor science-based education in the local

school districts, teaching teachers and students all about nature and the great outdoors. They’re the next generation of people that will use the land, and hopefully I can spark interest in them at an early age.

I always dreamed of working with Indigenous communities. Over the last three years I’ve been working with the [Tobique First Nation](#), one of six Wolastoqiyik or Maliseet First Nation communities in New Brunswick. I am creating curriculum outcomes for school ages K-12 that highlight trees and other plants, birds, mammals, etc., through both outdoor and indoor science education. I designate signage and sit spots along the trails so students can visit the same areas by season and begin to appreciate and become aware of their surroundings. Some of the materials are being translated into the community’s own language, which is very exciting.

This work has expanded into two other First Nation communities as forest schools and teaching trails become more popular. Elders come with me on my walks and we each share our stories. Trust is built over time as I convey respect and demonstrate my knowledge; I can’t help myself, if I’m discovering a new forest, I want to know everything about it! There’s a true and lovely exchange of information between myself and the elders, and meaningful relationships are being built over our shared love of Mother Earth.

Last summer, Fraser was asked to speak at the Ontario Maple Association about how New Brunswick was able to secure additional Crown (publicly held) land for maple syrup operations. She shared her experiences to help fuel the conversation in the largest Canadian Province with the highest number of maple trees for potential syrup production.

“A man at the conference shared that he was able to get the province of Ontario to lease Crown land to him, adding more maple taps to his existing operation; this is very good news,” she says. “I am hopeful we will see more maple projects and leases on private and Crown woodlots in the future, because maple syrup brings in more revenue than clearcutting. Importantly, it preserves the forest while showcasing a value-added product that can come from skillful, long-term hardwood forest management.” 🌿

