

City TREES

Sept/Oct 2025

Magazine of the Urban & Community Forestry Society



ONE TRUSTED PARTNER

A worker in a hard hat and safety vest using a chainsaw to cut a tree trunk in a forest setting.

One storm can threaten years of urban forestry stewardship. With our One Asplundh approach, a single point of contact provides municipalities with direct access to a fully integrated team of utility vegetation, infrastructure, engineering and digital solutions professionals ready to respond fast. **One call** connects you to the right people, equipment and expertise to clear trees, restore roadway access and safeguard essential services.

One trusted partner to keep your city and its trees safe and resilient for generations to come.

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Cover: Kansas City Crossroads and Heartland Tree Alliance volunteers at their May 2025 event. Photo by Rick Usher



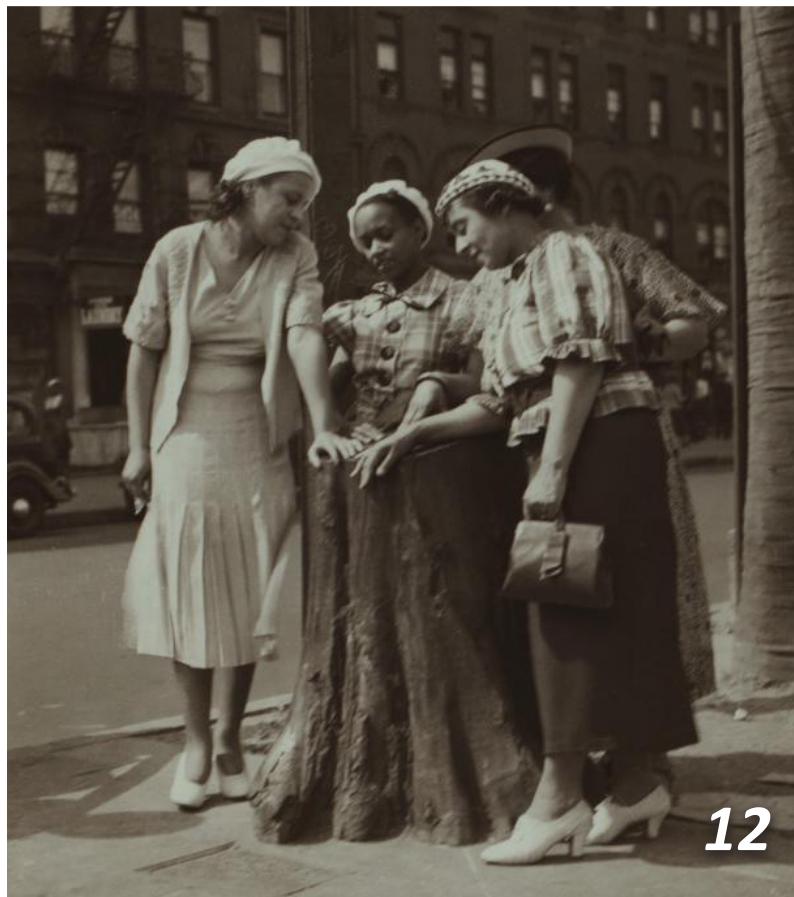
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President's Message

Jamie King



Each of you has a unique reason for being part of the Urban and Community Forestry Society and for staying tuned in to *City Trees*. Those reasons are so compelling that they got me thinking about all our motivations to do this hard work—and I began to imagine what your experiences might look like.

Are some of us witnesses? Have you seen and felt the power of introducing people to trees?

Are we curious? Are you interested in learning how to best restore urban ecologies and the communities connected to them?

How many of us are optimistic? I know I am. For 15 years, I've spent my career standing in awe of the miracle of trees and working to connect people with them. It is extremely gratifying work to build support for comprehensive urban forest management in the communities I've served.

How invested are we? Are you already committed? Have you put in the work? Have you helped a child touch a tree? These are more rhetorical questions, because I see this in our community all the time. I know for certain that we are all putting in the work.

Are you a leader? Are you helping your teams advance your community's mission, hand in hand? Do you serve on committees and councils to contribute your unique skills to the advancement of our practice?

Maybe you can relate to many of these examples.

Those reasons—your reasons—matter. Because *you* matter. And wherever you are on your unique journey—whether building capacity, forging coalitions, or actively managing the trees in your community—your efforts are stronger and more effective when we come together. As professionals. As witnesses. As leaders. Together, we can better sustain the land, the people, and the earth.

This is a powerful process, and we are a powerful community. Maybe that's why we all gather through the Urban and Community Forestry Society—so we can do this hard and essential work together.

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

Executive Director's Message

Leslie Berkes



Last month, I attended the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Annual Conference—a chance to learn, grow, and stretch myself professionally. I was jazzed to be there! Leading up to the event, I realized that it had been a long time since I'd attended a conference with information that was wholly new to me and with no friends or colleagues present. Of course, each and every day at UCFS there are new professional challenges and things to learn, but my background in urban forestry non-profit work has provided a great starting point to work with the UCFS Board, Committees, and Members.

The association space, however—that's new to me. I want to learn so much about how to be a better association leader! How do we ensure UCFS members are getting the most value for their annual dues? What is the best way to speak on behalf of members? How can we replicate successes and avoid the pitfalls other associations have already experienced? So much to learn ... I want to soak it all in.

Attending the ASAE conference reminded me of the early days of attending the combined UCFS (then, SMA), Alliance for Community Trees, and Partners in Community Forestry (PCF) conferences. I lived to attend that conference each year and tried to play it cool while my former non-profit decided who they would send (*please let it be me, please let it be me...*). At these conferences, I would be exposed to new ideas and immediately start planning each and every step to implement them when I got home. But, the VERY best thing was getting to the UCFS/PCF conference and realizing I wasn't the only "crazy" tree person. There were a lot of us—and there was so much to learn from each other!

Are you finding enough professional learning and networking opportunities to challenge yourself? I hope you're finding those here at UCFS—be that from our [annual conference](#), the [Municipal Forestry Institute](#), the monthly [Learning Series](#), or [committee](#) engagement. UCFS is here for your professional success; let's keep learning new things together!

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

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or SteadySpring® if you dislike diaper!

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Cost Comparison TreeDiaper® vs Watering Bag in Richmond Va 2013-2014

	TreeDiaper® Made In The USA	Watering Bag 99+% Imported
Material	\$25/tree	\$20/tree
Install Labor	\$10	\$5
Maintenance		
Winterize/Filter Reinstall	\$0	\$20
Labor, Watering	\$0	\$400
Water Cost	\$0	\$40
Total	\$35	\$487 ←
Survival Rate	100%	0%



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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.

President

Jamie King, Blacksburg, VA
jking@americanforests.org

Vice President

David Lefcourt, Cambridge, MA
dlefcourt@cambridgema.gov

Past President

Rachel Habig-Myers, Fairfax, VA
rachel.habig-myers@fairfaxcounty.gov

Executive Director

Leslie Berckes, Des Moines, IA
lberckes@ucfsociety.org

Executive Board

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Tami Sadonoja, Hamilton, ON
Jeff Shimonski, Miami, FL

City Trees Graphic Designer

Sarah Gugercin

Story Ideas/Editorial Inquiries

City Trees Editor Michelle Sutton
msutton@ucfsociety.org

Advertising Rates & Calendar

City Trees Editor Michelle Sutton
msutton@ucfsociety.org

UCFS Website

ucfsociety.org

Contact UCFS

Urban & Community Forestry Society
PO Box 13242
Des Moines, IA 50310
lberckes@ucfsociety.org

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Welcome New Members

Name	State/Province/Region	Country
Alberto Vargas Miranda	PC	COL
Alexander Eaton	OH	USA
Alexandra Cortés Pinzón	Cundinamarca	COL
Alta Warren	FL	USA
Amanda Rupke	ON	CAN
Anders Laby		SWE
Bas Out		NLD
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Dora Hernandez	TX	USA
Ellie Barrett	OR	USA
Eric Steven León León	Antioquia	COL
Erick Rodriguez	TX	USA
Erin Ablaseau	VA	USA
Esteban Ayala Hidalgo	AZ	COL
Fabian Perez	IL	USA
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Franklin Oña Parra	PC	COL
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Johnancir Roldan	MA	USA
Jose Montes Orozco	Antioquia	COL
Juan Castillo Carrasco	D.F.	MEX
Julia Huzvar	OH	USA

Name	State/Province/Region	Country
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Kristopher Stone	KY	USA
Leigh Pavlichko	PA	USA
Leonor Cuenca Jiménez		ECU
Liam Ellis	PA	USA
Loren Fuell	WA	USA
Luis Chacha	Pichincha	ECU
Maricela Lou	CA	USA
Marina Takahashi	CA	USA
Max Elderhorst		NLD
Milan Anderson	MI	USA
Niels Holtrop		NLD
Oliver McDermott	BC	CAN
Rachel O'Leary	CA	USA
Rafael Ponce Carrasco	Lima	PER
Rasmus Persson		SWE
Sandor Roest		NLD
Sandra Albro	OH	USA
Santiago Fennema		NLD
Sebastián Luna Acevedo	Bogota	COL
Sergio Alejandro Rozo Sierra	Cundinamarca	COL
Sophia Rodbell	CT	USA
Tatsuya Suenaka	BC	CAN
Timothy Okoliko	NE	USA
Turner Frankosky	MA	USA
Valerie Peabody	CA	USA
Veronica Rogers	WA	USA
Vincent Flores	HI	USA
Vincent Alvarez	CA	USA

Municipal Member

City of North Augusta, South Carolina

In This Issue: Contributors



Leslie Berkes is the Executive Director of UCFS. She has over 12 years of urban forestry experience. Leslie holds an MS in Public Policy from the University of Northern Iowa and a BS in Marketing.



Magali Duzant is an artist and writer based in New York City and Zürich. Using photography, writing, time-based installations, and artist books, her work explores the ways in which we describe, inhabit, and share experiences on intimate scales both large and small.



Sreetheran Maruthaveeran is an Associate Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Design and Architecture at the Universiti Putra Malaysia. He teaches Tropical Arboriculture, Landscape Ecology, and Plant Science. He has been a Certified Arborist (MY-0300A) since 2007 and is involved in research and consulting related to urban forestry and arboriculture.



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.



Rick Usher is the co-chair of the Crossroads Community Association Street Tree Initiative and executive director of the newly formed Crossroads Community Improvement District.



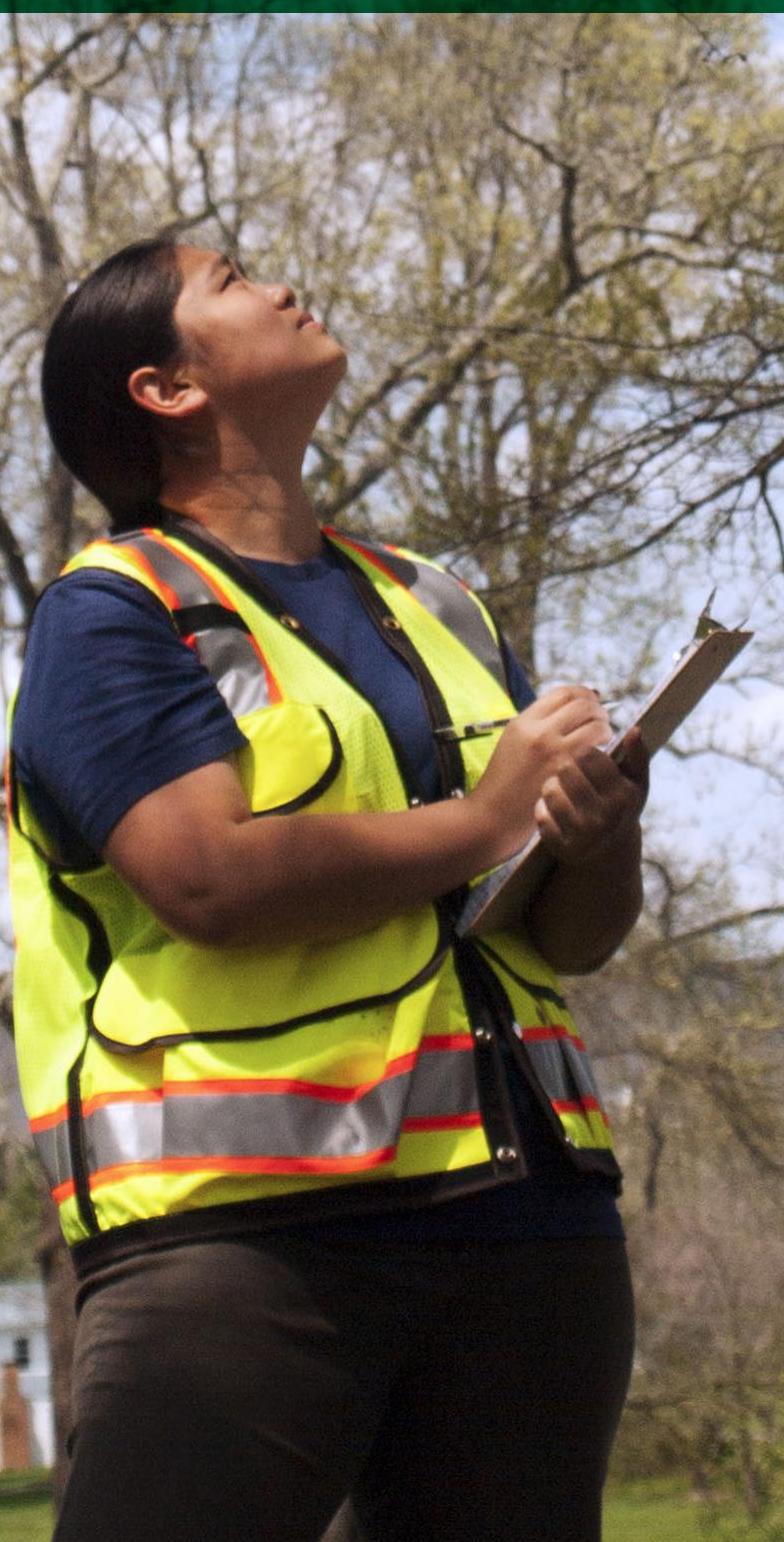
Joe Wheelock is the Program Manager for Heartland Tree Alliance, a program of Bridging The Gap, the leading local environmental organization in Kansas City. Joe is an ISA Certified Arborist and 2024 Municipal Forestry Institute graduate.



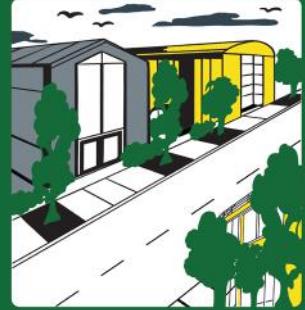
Visit our website ucfsociety.org to learn about all things UCFS, including the Municipal Forestry Institute, Municipal Accreditation, our Arborist Exchange program, Annual Conference, and more.

Stand out with

ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional credential



URBAN FOREST
PROFESSIONAL



ISA

You're a leader in urban forestry, so stand out with the newly rebranded ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional credential.

Holding an ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional credential is a sign to the public, employers, and peers that you have the urban forestry experience and fundamental knowledge and skills needed to manage community trees.

Earning this title shows your professional commitment to a code of ethics and fulfillment of best management practices and industry-accepted standards in the field.

Now's the time!

Click here to find out how you can stand out from the crowd!

UCFS News



- 20 years of MFI
- Revamped Accreditation

By Leslie Berkes, UCFS Executive Director

Celebrating 20 Years of MFI!

In 2026, we'll celebrate 20 years of the Municipal Forestry Institute (MFI)—the premier urban forestry leadership program. In 2026, we'll also reach the milestone of 1,000 people who have graduated from the Institute. These graduates are making big tree decisions to grow healthy urban forests in the places we need them the most! Ready to count yourself among this group of awesome urban forestry leaders?

[Applications are being accepted for MFI 2026](#) (through September 19), and we're excited to welcome attendees to the sandy shores of Jekyll Island, Georgia! This barrier island along the Atlantic Ocean is the perfect location to step away from your daily work, learn new ways of tackling leadership challenges, and gain a network of peer support that will last a lifetime.



UCFS's Revamped Accreditation Program

In late 2025, UCFS will unveil its new and improved [Accreditation program](#), designed to recognize outstanding urban forestry programs and push community tree work to new heights. A dedicated committee of UCFS members and friends have analyzed each and every detail of the four standards and their associated criteria. Because UCFS represents you, the professionals who ensure community trees grow and thrive, you deserve to have an Accreditation program that recognizes your efforts.

In the infographic, you'll find an overview of what to expect from the UCFS Accreditation program standards. At our website, you can find out what to expect from the program. Each community that pursues Accreditation can expect to follow these high-level steps:

- Community undergoes a **Self-Evaluation** and scoring process, while providing documentation to prove each step.
- A jury of urban forestry peers will complete a **Peer Review** where documentation will be reviewed.
- Communities will participate in an **Interview** process with the peer reviewers to share nuances of their urban forestry programs and help clarify questions.
- Peer reviewers and UCFS will **Award** one of two Accreditation levels depending on the results of each step above.
- Communities will eventually undergo a **Recertification** process, demonstrating that they still meet or exceed standards.

Details are updated on the Accreditation webpage now. Get ready now to showcase your urban forestry excellence!

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

In response to evolving challenges and opportunities, UCFS is enhancing its Accreditation Program to reflect the latest industry standards essential for building sustainable, resilient urban and community forests.

Get ready—the next generation of UCFS Accreditation is coming in late 2025!

ACCREDITATION

SHOWCASE URBAN FORESTRY EXCELLENCE!

START

PRE-QUALIFICATION

To meet pre-qualifications for Accreditation, all urban forestry programs must:

- Have an urban forest management or tree care plan
- Have a full or partial tree inventory
- Demonstrate adherence to ANSI A300 and Z133 standards

STANDARD TWO

URBAN FOREST GOVERNANCE

Standard Two demonstrates that policies, plans, and funding for sustainable and equitable management and protection of trees are in place, as well as regulations for planting, maintenance, preservation, and recycling of removed trees.

STANDARD THREE

URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT

Standard Three demonstrates that tree stewardship decisions are based in sound arboriculture practice; accurate, up-to-date data is maintained; and ongoing monitoring of the urban forest is in place.

ACHIEVEMENT

The UCFS Accreditation Program is structured upon a tier system to provide communities motivation to advance urban forestry stewardship. A scoring system – backed by peer review – ensures each tier is earned by demonstrated practices—not just size or tree budget. Earn points to achieve the status of:



Steward



Champion

1

2

3

4

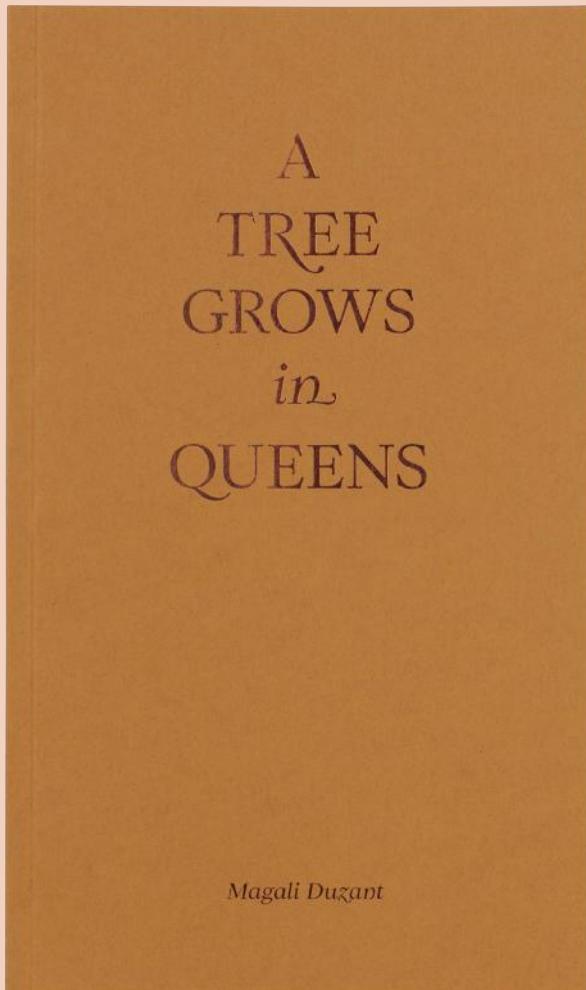


UCFS
URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY SOCIETY

BOOK SPOTLIGHT:

A TREE GROWS in QUEENS

Book by Magali Duzant • Story Compiled by Michelle Sutton, Editor, *City Trees*



Magali Duzant

I came across *City Trees* magazine when Julie Capito-Hernández shared her co-authored piece in the March/April 2025 issue by the U.S. Forest Service and partners, “Bridging Art, Science, and Community Forestry.” I was part of a 2019 art exhibition, *Who Takes Care of New York?*, referenced in the *Bridging* story.

I’ve since pursued new projects, including my book, *A Tree Grows in Queens*, published in 2024 by Conveyer Editions. The book is a meditation on the many ways in which trees manifest into other forms—from myths and memorials to meeting points and harbingers of luck. It is structured as a collection of essays and images; the photographs, in exhibition format, are presented as overlaid installations.

In creating *A Tree Grows in Queens*, I took inspiration from trees found in old-growth forests and the urban streetscapes of New York City. My book cultivates an intimate connection between the City’s ecology and heritage by examining individual trees and their interdependence with broader concerns, such as climate change, capitalism, and urban revitalization.



Magali Duzant is an artist and writer based in NY and Zürich. Using photography, writing, time-based installations, and artist books, her work explores the ways in which we describe, inhabit, and share experiences on intimate scales both large and small. Publishing is a large part of her output, with projects ranging from newsprint zines to image-text publications that often revolve around themes related to the metaphysical, the natural world, and counterculture, viewed through a lens of humor, poetics, and romanticism.

Michelle Sutton

I previewed Magali Duzant's *A Tree Grows in Queens* online—but I'm so grateful she offered to send me a print copy. I spent a May Saturday morning on my porch in rapt attention to the book, marveling over the sublime essays and visuals. Rather than try to summarize something that is so unique and personal to Duzant, I asked permission to share one of her stunning essays, "The Harlem Wishing Tree."

Many *City Trees* readers may be familiar with the Harlem American elm (*Ulmus americana*) tree of legend in the essay—perhaps having learned about it from storyteller, horticulturist, and author [Abra Lee's episode](#) of the *This Old Tree* podcast and radio show. Duzant has a *This Old Tree* connection, too, having recently read a [Tree Story Short](#) about [The Queens Giant](#), an old growth tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) on NYC Parks land that is the focus of one of the essays in *A Tree Grows in Queens*.

The Harlem Wishing Tree is the starting point of Duzant's essay by the same name, but the places she takes us from there reveal under-acknowledged historical events that profoundly complicate a trope of more recent popular environmental movements. Those earlier histories will take many urban and community foresters by surprise, as they did me.



Front and back cover (this spread) and sample pages (following pages) from Magali Duzant's *A Tree Grows in Queens*



THE RIGHT FIT

When my mother was young, she and her sisters decided to surprise their mother with a gift for her garden. My grandmother Joan is well known for her obliviousness. She once wore her shoes on the wrong feet for an entire day, not realizing it until she returned from work, complaining that her feet were killing her after the walk from the subway. In my family, when someone does something silly, something without thinking, we say, in a bemused tone filled with love, "Oojoosaaannn." This is how her daughters managed to sneak a small tree into their family station wagon on a trip to a nursery and get it home without her noticing.

On Mother's Day, they led her into the garden, where a small flowering dogwood had been planted in the night.

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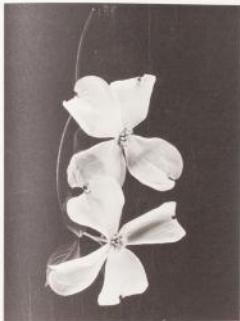


A TREE GROWS IN QUEENS



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A TREE...A GARDEN



53



THE FOSSIL TREE

On Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, there is a plaque dedicated to Dorothy Shaver, the former president of Lord & Taylor, one of the city's oldest department stores. In 1945, she was the first female head of a multimillion-dollar firm and a proponent of *Salute to Seasons*, a beautification program in New York City. In Shaver's memory, the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation planted twenty ginkgo trees along Fifth Avenue. When I first noticed the plaque, Lord & Taylor had announced its closing. Their flagship store—a 1915 Italian Renaissance Revival structure—had been sold to WeWork, the now-defunct coworking company overshadowed by the exploits of its founder, who then sold it to Amazon. The tree that stood in front of the plaque has since died and been removed; not even a stump remains. Lest this be an overly sad

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A TREE GROWS IN QUEENS

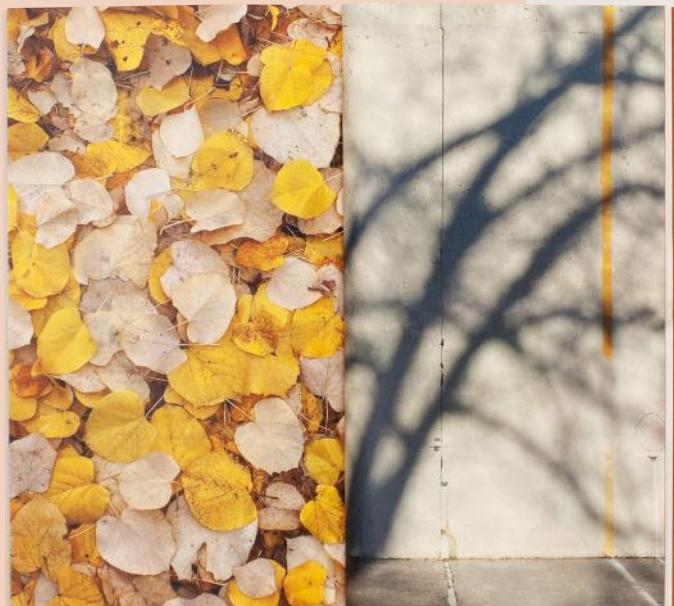


Flowering Dogwood
CORNUS FLORIDA

9-14

Ginkgo
GINKGO BILOBA

15-20



Oak
QUERCUS

Linden
TILIA

Cypress
CUPRESSUS

21-26

Tulip Poplar
LIRIODENDRON TULIPIFERA

27-32



Palm Tree
ARECACEAE



Sweet Orange
CITRUS SINENSIS

33-38

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THE HARLEM WISHING TREE

Excerpt from *A Tree Grows in Queens*

Magali Duzant, 2024

Published by Conveyer Editions

These days, the notion of seeking something out in public to rub or touch seems somewhat horrifying. When the COVID-19 pandemic engulfed the world, a form of ritualistic hygiene emerged. Prior to understanding the aerosol aspect of the virus, experts told us to wash our hands often, wear gloves, and avoid touching surfaces. This led people to hoard hand sanitizer and antiseptic wipes, wash every item they purchased at the bodega, and leave packages in the mail room for days before handling them.

But before the pandemic, people purposefully sought out communal surfaces to rub, touch, or, in the unsurprising case of female statues, grope. Tourists worldwide kissed the Blarney Stone; rubbed the arm of Everard t'Serclaes in Brussels or the

snout of Il Porcellino in Florence; and, because even statues of women can't escape indignities, caressed the breasts of the Juliet statue in Verona or the Molly Malone statue in Dublin (the statue is also called "The Tart with the Cart"). In the 1930s in New York, if one was looking for luck, they might find some in Harlem at the Tree of Hope, also known as the Wishing Tree.

§

The original tree, an American elm, stood on the corner of 132nd Street and Seventh Avenue. Musicians would rub the tree's bark and branches for luck before playing gigs at nearby venues, such as the Lafayette Theater. In 1934, the Parks Department cut the tree down to make way for construction projects. In response, Bill Robinson, the celebrated tap dancer and actor known to many as Bojangles, had the tree's stump — as well as a new young elm — replanted on the traffic island of 131st Street. The replanting ceremony had everything from a marching band and dancers to the city's beloved mayor, Fiorello La Guardia. The tree stump was commemorated with a plaque and stood there until 1972. When the original Wishing Tree was cut down, its trunk was divided up and auctioned off; a section of it ended up at the Apollo Theater. To this day, performers rub it before stepping out onto the stage, hoping to pick up some luck.



Wishing Tree, 1936, U.S. Works Progress Administration.

If a tree can bring luck to the hand of the person touching it, can that hand bring something to the tree? It's nice to think that we can have reciprocal relationships

with nature. In the 1970s, hands saved a forest of trees and gave birth to the modern concept of tree hugging. The Chipko movement (also called Chipko Andolan) was a response to the rapid development experienced by the states of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. Chipko in Hindi means “to cling to or embrace.” In 1973, in the village of Mandal, villagers were denied access to a stand of trees; they were planning to use them to build tools, but the stand had been sold to a corporation for logging. In an act of protest, the villagers embraced the trees to prevent them from being felled. The Indian environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna helped spread the movement’s tactics throughout the state and coined the slogan “Ecology is permanent economy.”

In 1974, the Chipko movement emerged in the village of Reni, when the male inhabitants were invited to a nearby town, most likely to get them out of the area as the forest was cleared. This left the women of the village, led by Gaura Devi, to confront the loggers. The pictures taken that day show women hugging the trees, holding each other’s hands to wrap themselves around the trunks, as an unbreakable chain. The ripple effects of the protest actions swept across the Indian state, giving birth to a decentralized movement for forest rights. The villagers understood the reciprocal relationships at stake: yes, the forest was a resource, but one to be treated with care, not exploitation.

In the years that followed the first Chipko action, tree hugging and tree sitting spread beyond India’s borders to the forests of New Zealand, Germany, and Northern California, and on to my university campus in Pittsburgh, where a beloved sculpture professor scaled a tree in the nude to protest the slated destruction of it and others for the building of a robotics center. The term tree hugger has become a most derogatory remark in wider Western culture, one that is often associated with a white-hippie caricature obscuring the actual history of the movement. In 1730, the first recorded tree-hugging action was carried out by members of a Bishnoi Hindu village; roughly 350 inhabitants sacrificed themselves, murdered for protecting their trees. A royal decree of protection on all other Bishnoi land was introduced — the villagers had given their bodies for their trees.

§

Touch can be a form of activism. It can be a form of compassion, shared between two organisms, a moment of understanding something larger than oneself. Touch can spark many things, from worldwide movements to small moments of luck. 



Tree of Hope, 1941-1945. Irma and Paul Milstein, Division of U.S. History, Local History and Genealogy, New York Public Library.

Smart Tree Management:

From Smart Tree Inventories to Better Operations

TURN YOUR TREE INVENTORY INTO A STRATEGIC ASSET

Across the country, communities are realizing that traditional tree inventory and maintenance practices can't keep up with today's demands—climate volatility, aging infrastructure, rising costs, and growing expectations for equity and resilience. That's where **Smart Tree Management (STM)** comes in.

Built on the success of **Smart Tree Inventories**, STM is the natural next step. Cities that have embraced high-resolution, AI-driven data are now asking: *How do we use this to make better decisions, reduce risks, and stretch our budgets further?*

"We're building on the strong foundation we've created with [Smart Tree Inventories](#)," says Josh Behounek of Davey Resource Group. "With STM, we move from simply collecting data to actually transforming operations—assessing, prioritizing, and acting by Making the **Right Decision**, on the **Right Tree**, at the **Right Time**."

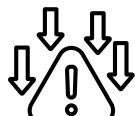
To make this shift possible, Davey Resource Group has partnered with greehill, whose AI and LiDAR technologies power next-generation urban forest modeling. Together, we're helping communities transition from reactive maintenance to proactive, performance-driven urban forestry.

WHY IT MATTERS



SAVE MONEY

STM helps communities optimize pruning cycles, reduce unnecessary removals, and align spending with your Key Performance Indicators.



REDUCE RISK

AI-powered tools flag high-risk trees early, lowering emergency costs and liability exposure.



INCREASE BENEFITS

Cities improve tree health, species diversity, canopy equity, and climate resilience—while using fewer resources.

And the best part? STM isn't just for large cities. With a smart tree inventory, every client gets our industry-leading cloud-based software [TreeKeeper®](#). Now communities of all sizes can put smart management into action—no AI skills needed or in-house GIS or IT team required.

From Inventory to Impact: Las Vegas Case Study

In Las Vegas, Davey Resource Group implemented STM to evaluate long-term savings. The results were clear: a projected \$4.5 million in savings over 10 years. By improving risk detection, reducing unnecessary removals, and optimizing pruning plans, the city is creating a safer, healthier, and more cost-effective urban canopy.

“Arborists don’t have to worry about technology replacing them, but Arborists who use technology will replace those who don’t. Smart Tree Management isn’t just a future concept—it’s an operational reality.”

—Josh Behounek



Want to see how Smart Tree Management could transform your community?



Watch our webinar on Smart Tree Management



Connect with Davey Resource Group
to schedule a strategy session

WWW.DAVEYRESOURCEGROUP.COM

DAVEY
Resource Group

Getting to Know Dr. Sreetheran Maruthaveeran

An Associate Professor at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in Serdang, Selangor (south of Kuala Lumpur), Dr. Sreetheran (Sree) Maruthaveeran teaches courses in Tropical Arboriculture, Landscape Ecology, Plant Science, and Research Methods. He also advises graduate students, conducts research, fosters links between industry and community, and performs tree risk assessments. An ISA Certified Arborist since 2007, Maruthaveeran publishes research widely, edits multiple publications, and has written several books, including Trees of our Malaysian Cities (2024, UPM Press).



Dr. Sreetheran (Sree) Maruthaveeran on a return visit to the University of Copenhagen, where he earned his PhD in 2015.

What formative childhood experiences with nature did you have?

I grew up in the small town of Sitiawan in the state of Perak, Malaysia. From a very young age, I developed an interest in gardening, especially with my parents, who planted ornamentals, vegetables, and fruit trees in our garden. My mom and I are also plant collectors. Whenever we travel in Malaysia, we collect some cuttings or seeds to be planted in our family's garden.

What led you to study Conservation Biology for your BSc and Urban Forestry for your MSc?

In 1997, my interest in plants, nature, and the environment led me to pursue Conservation Biology at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) on the island of Borneo, which is rich in plant and animal biodiversity. Sabah is a state with abundant nature-based attractions such as Kinabalu National Park (a World Heritage Site), Maliau Basin Conservation Area, Tabin Wildlife Reserve, Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre, Danum Valley Conservation Area, and Kinabatangan River.

In 2000, I moved to Kuala Lumpur to do my Master's at the Forestry Faculty in Universiti Putra Malaysia. Living there, I realized the importance of urban greening and urban forestry in a big metropolitan city like Kuala Lumpur. This prompted me to look into something related to urban forestry and arboriculture. My thesis was on "Developing Criteria and Indicators to Evaluate Hazardous Street Trees in Kuala Lumpur." During this period, I was also involved in extensive tree risk assessment work, as hazardous trees was a hot topic in Kuala Lumpur City Hall ([DBKL](#)) and in many municipalities in Malaysia. In the early 2000s, technical knowledge around the care of city trees was limited in Malaysia, but now there is more awareness of the importance of professional arboriculture practices, particularly in urban tree management.



Sree with postgraduate students from the Tropical Arboriculture Course that he developed for Universiti Putra Malaysia.

You did your PhD in Landscape Architecture and Planning through the University of Copenhagen with Cecil Konijnendijk. What were some peak experiences from your PhD experience?

After completing my master's degree, I was offered a job as a Research Officer at the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM). I collaborated on a project with researchers from Denmark under a [DANIDA](#)-funded project between 2003 and 2006, and had the opportunity to meet my PhD supervisor, Dr. Cecil Konijnendijk, one of the Danish counterparts on this project. In 2010, I received a scholarship from the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MOSTI), Malaysia, to pursue my PhD at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

My research focused on environmental behaviour in urban green spaces, specifically examining fear of crime in these areas. My research sites were in Malaysia, so during the second year of my PhD program, I had the opportunity to fly back to my home country for

data collection. Through my PhD studies, I was able to visit various European and Asian countries for conferences. I also served as the Deputy Coordinator under the Urban Forestry Section of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO). Through these activities, I established connections with other researchers, primarily from Europe, in the fields of urban forestry and urban greening.

What do you enjoy most about advising graduate students?

Advising graduate students is rewarding because it involves guiding them toward achieving their academic and professional goals, witnessing their growth and development, and contributing to their future success. It's fulfilling to play a role in shaping the next generation of professionals and experts in the field of urban forestry and urban greening. I primarily emphasize to grad students the importance of conducting research systematically, including publishing their findings in peer-reviewed journals. I have >>



Dr. Maruthaveeran teaching a Landscape Ecology Course for Environmental Design undergraduates from Zhoukou Normal University, Zhoukou, Henan Province, China.

graduated four PhD students, two from Malaysia and two from China. Most of these students are lecturing at their respective universities upon graduation.

Please tell us about your teaching and curriculum development.

At the Department of Landscape Architecture, I teach the Tropical Arboriculture course to Master's students in the Sustainable Landscape Management Program. I began teaching this course in 2019, and it takes 1.5 years for students to complete. I developed the curriculum for it based on the topics taught in the Arborist Certification Course under the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), with a focus on the tropical context. I teach almost all the topics under this course, except for specific topics such as Soil Science, Pest and Disease, and Tree Support Systems, where I bring in industry experts to teach the students.

What is one of the big takeaways from the paper you co-authored about the trajectory of urban forestry in Malaysia?

The concept of urban forestry and arboriculture was applied in the Malaysian context starting in the early 2000s. Before that, the term “landscaping” was the umbrella term for urban forestry, arboriculture, and horticulture. In Malaysian cities, particularly in the 1970s, tree planting and beautification programs were emphasized in most cities, where aesthetic and environmental importance were more valued. Only in the 2000s did municipal councils in Malaysia begin to focus on the social and health significance of urban forestry for urban residents. Slowly, the number of ISA Certified Arborists in Malaysia is also increasing and with that, the knowledge of industry practitioners has gone up. One of our strengths as a country is that the species diversity of our urban forests is considered quite high.

Can you speak on the iconic rain trees (Samanea saman), which are huge, stunning, and provide excellent shade in Malaysia—but can be prone to failure in certain circumstances?

The issue with rain tree giants in urban areas in Malaysia—and indeed, for most urban shade trees—is available below-ground space. Most rain trees are planted in narrow spaces, such as road verges, along pavements, etc. In addition, most urban trees also face massive root pruning for development, such as pavement or building construction. This makes these giants easily fall whenever they are exposed to extreme weather conditions, such as strong winds and heavy rain. Rain trees given adequate above- and below-ground space can flourish and are much less prone to fail; they are better served being planted in golf courses, parks, major greenways, and the like.

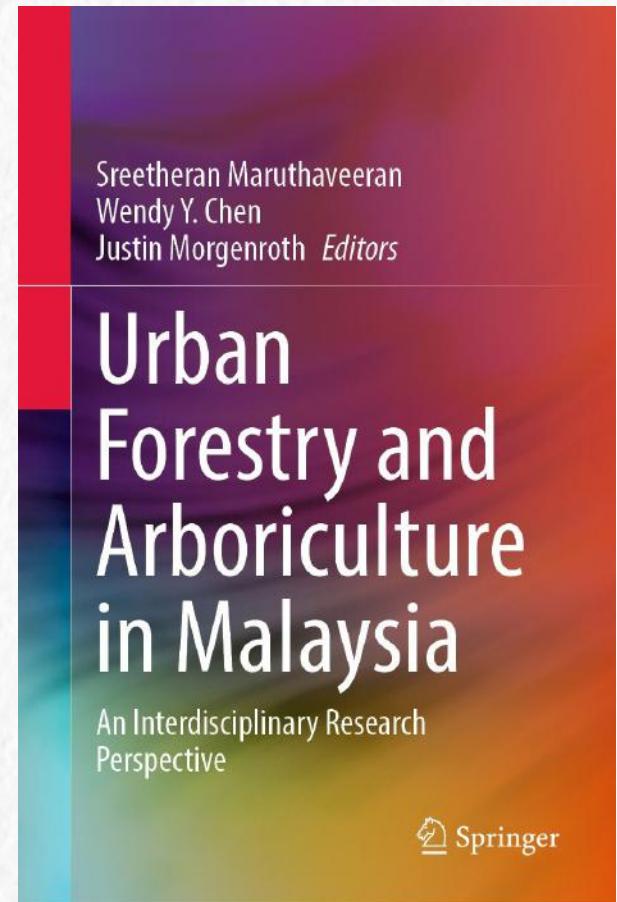
Like rain trees, most of Malaysia's non-native trees were widely planted during the British occupation in Malaysia beginning in the early 1900s. Most of these introduced species are from South Africa or South America; they were widely planted here because of their hardiness in the urban environment. They have successfully co-existed with the local species, which began to be introduced into the urban forests of Malaysian cities beginning in the 1970s.

What is the biggest misconception the Malaysian public has about hazardous trees?

The public often wants hazardous trees to be felled immediately to avoid any injury, fatality, or property damage incidents. We need ongoing education of the public about the options we have to preserve the trees or mitigate the risks they pose.

What advice would you give to young professionals or students entering the field of urban forestry in the Global South/anywhere in the world?

It is vital to have a basic understanding of tree biology before undertaking urban forestry studies. It is also important to examine any issues regarding urban forestry or arboriculture in Malaysia from a tropical perspective. Although the principles and concepts are similar elsewhere, due to different weather patterns, seasons, and species, any mitigation actions taken should also consider the local context. 



Sreetheran Maruthaveeran was both co-editor for, and contributor to, this 2022 book. His chapter is "[Defining Urban Forestry and Arboriculture in Malaysia](#)."



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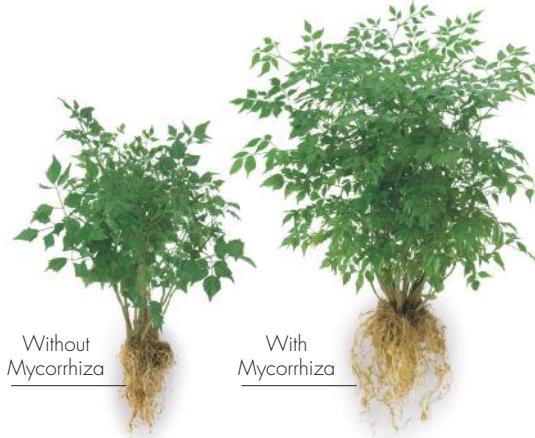
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Planting event volunteers mulch a 'Street Keeper' honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), a narrow and more densely branched cultivar that grows up to 45 feet (13 m) tall and 20 feet (6 m) wide. Photo by Jillian Youngbird

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, Editor, *City Trees*

Thank you to [Rick Usher](#) and [Joe Wheelock](#) for reaching out and for extensive contributions to this feature.

One of the most culturally vibrant neighborhoods in the Midwest U.S. faced a major challenge: radiating noise due to a severe lack of trees and the leafy buffer they provide. So noted Kansas City (KC) restaurateur and Crossroads Community Association (CCA) President Nicholas Grünauer in a video interview about the initial impetus for founding the [KC Crossroads Street Tree Initiative](#) (STI).

A 2018 Urban Forest Master Plan from the KC Department of Parks and Recreation, Forestry Division noted that only 1.2% of the Crossroads neighborhood consisted of tree canopy. Some of the few extant species when STI formed were the phenomenally durable swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*) as well as the Musashino cultivar of *Zelkova serrata*, Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) (not recommended due to invasiveness), and a few ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*).

Motivated by the many economic and ecosystem benefits of trees, in 2021 Grünauer and Crossroads-based entrepreneur Rick Usher became co-chairs of STI. They secured instrumental City of Kansas City support both as the funding coordinator and direct provider of support through the ReBuildKC Neighborhood Grant program. This happened >>



A newly planted 'Ivory Silk' Japanese tree lilac (*Syringa reticulata*) with the historic former TWA Corporate Headquarters building (now occupied by an advertising agency) in the background, complete with a smaller replica of the original, conceptual TWA Moonliner. Photo by Rick Usher



Rick Usher (facing camera) and volunteers touch base before the May 2025 planting day event kicks off. Photo by Jillian Youngbird

with the help of the Public Improvements Advisory Committee (PIAC), championed by 4th District City Councilmembers Eric Bunch and Crispin Rea.

Grünauer and Usher created or formalized partnerships with local businesses, community groups, and with the [Heartland Tree Alliance](#) (HTA), a program of Bridging The Gap (BTG), Kansas City's leading local environmental nonprofit. Sarah Crowder is the Director of Forestry and Natural Systems for BTG.

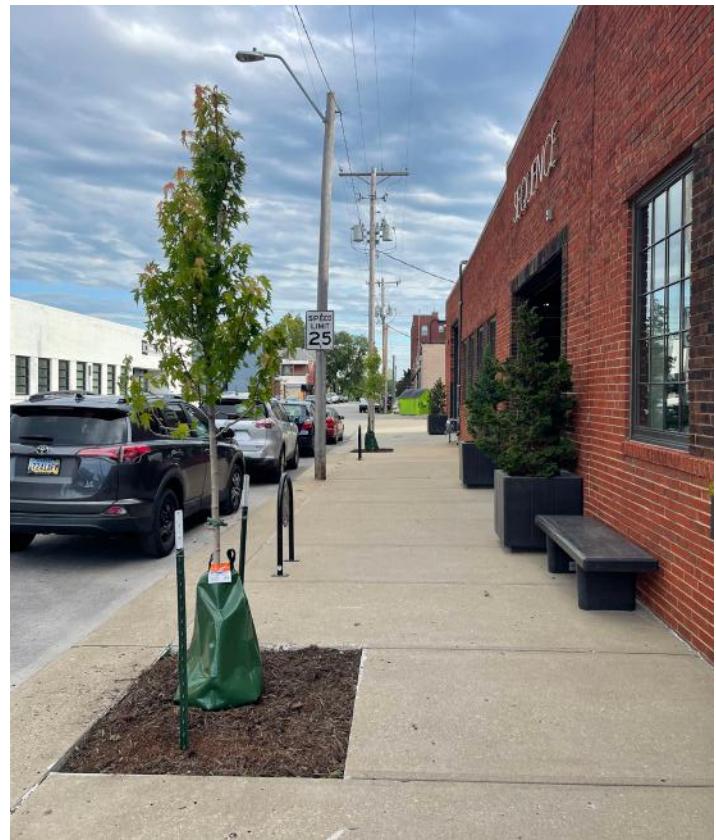
"The partnership between Heartland Tree Association and Kansas City Crossroads Community Association has been built over years," Crowder says. "What I believe makes it unique and successful is the combination of skill sets. It helps of course that we have a common goal: more trees! KC CCA has strength in communication. They know funding mechanisms within KC, the conversations to have, and then how to leverage all of it to push forward. HTA knows trees and people—how to plant trees, how to support them after planting, and how to engage with the community and volunteers to materialize their vision. Spending time building

relationships with lofty or uncommon partners to blend skills for a common goal is always worth it."

Sarah Crowder, Rick Usher, and then-Crossroads Board President Robert Harris collaborated on the first STI planting in May of 2022, when the CCA planted eleven 2-inch/51-mm-caliper American hornbeams (*Carpinus caroliniana*). This first phase focused on replanting existing tree wells where trees had died or were removed due to construction of the free [KC Streetcar](#) lines. October of 2022 saw the planting of 22 additional trees.

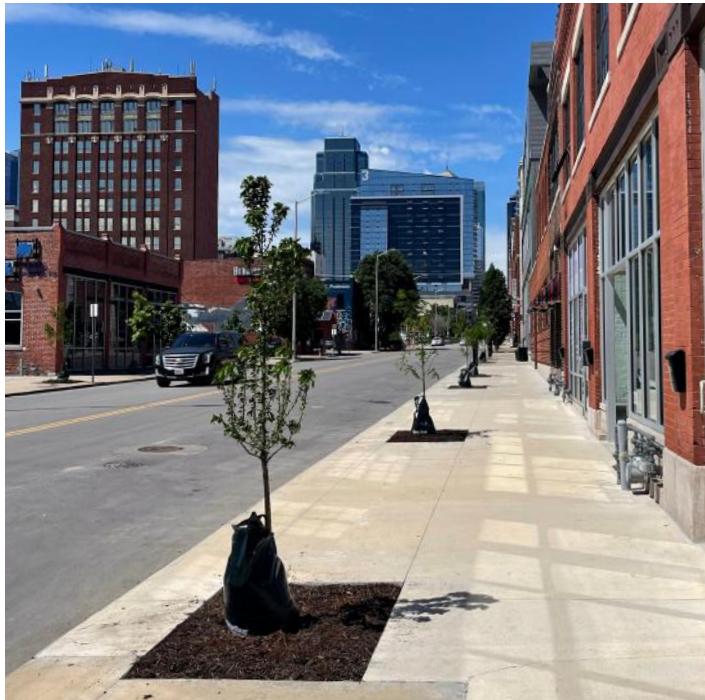
Heartland Tree Alliance came into the picture starting with the spring, 2023 planting. HTA provides tree selection and planting expertise and organizes staff, supplies, and 25-30 volunteers for the STI spring and fall tree planting events in the KC Crossroads, which contains 87 city blocks. Each year, 100 trees are added to the nascent and vital urban forest; thus far, 295 trees—most container-grown, some balled-and-burlapped—have been planted over the course of 7 tree planting events. (See table of trees curated by HTA.) >>

Scientific Name	Common Name	# Planted	%
<i>Acer buergerianum</i>	Trident Maple	7	3.11%
<i>Acer miyabei 'Morton'</i>	State Street Maple	6	2.67%
<i>Acer saccharinum 'JFS H1'</i>	Symatree Maple	6	2.67%
<i>Acer saccharum 'JFS-Caddo2'</i>	Flashfire Maple	1	0.44%
<i>Acer truncatum</i>	Shantung Maple	2	0.89%
<i>Acer truncatum</i> × <i>A. platanoides</i> 'Warrenred'	Pacific Sunset Maple	9	4.00%
<i>Amelanchier × grandiflora</i> 'Autumn Brilliance'	Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry	11	4.89%
<i>Carpinus betulus</i> 'Frans Fontaine'	Frans Fontaine Hornbeam	2	0.89%
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	American Hornbeam	14	6.22%
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i> 'JFS-KW6'	Native Flame American Hornbeam	7	3.11%
<i>Celtis</i> 'JFS-KSU1'	Prairie Sentinel Hackberry	2	0.89%
<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Eastern Redbud	9	4.00%
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> 'PNI 2720'	Princeton Sentry Ginkgo	2	0.89%
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> 'Draves'	Street Keeper Locust	14	6.22%
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> 'JFS GMorgenson1'	Northern Sentinel Locust	4	1.78%
<i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i> 'Espresso'	Espresso Coffeetree	24	10.67%
<i>Malus</i> 'JFS-KW5'	Royal Raindrops Crabapple	2	0.89%
<i>Malus</i> 'JFS KW213MX'	Raspberry Spear Crabapple	11	4.89%
<i>Malus</i> 'JFS KW214MX'	Ivory Spear Crabapple	3	1.33%
<i>Malus</i> 'Spring Snow'	Spring Snow Crabapple	3	1.33%
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> 'BBN-01'	Nitro Blackgum	3	1.33%
<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	American Hophornbeam	5	2.22%
<i>Platanus × acerifolia</i> 'Morton Circle'	Exclamation London Planetree	8	3.56%
<i>Syringa reticulata</i> 'Ivory Silk'	Ivory Silk Lilac	11	4.89%
<i>Tilia americana</i> 'McKSentry'	American Sentry Linden	11	4.89%
<i>Tilia tomentosa</i> 'Sterling'	Sterling Silver Linden	2	0.89%
<i>Ulmus chenmoui</i> 'JAB Morton'	Summer Elixir Elm	4	1.78%
<i>Ulmus</i> 'Frontier'	Frontier Elm	3	1.33%
<i>Ulmus parvifolia</i> 'Emer ll'	Allee Lacebark Elm	6	2.67%
<i>Ulmus propinqua</i> 'JFS-Bieberich'	Emerald Sunshine Elm	11	4.89%
<i>Zelkova serrata</i> 'Green Vase'	Green Vase Zelkova	4	1.78%
<i>Zelkova serrata</i> 'JFS KW4ZS'	Zileration Zelkova	6	2.67%
<i>Zelkova serrata</i> 'JFS-KW1'	City Sprite Zelkova	2	0.89%
<i>Zelkova serrata</i> 'Musashino'	Musashino Zelkova	10	4.44%
		225	100.00%



In front of Sequence Rock Climbing Gym, workers put the finishing touches on tree wells that had been jackhammered and excavated. The trees in the newly created wells are Symatree silver maples (*Acer saccharinum*). Photos by Rick Usher

Preference was given to varieties that are the most tolerant of road salt, have more upright and compact form to match the site restrictions, and those that have been performing well in existing tree pits.



In the KC Crossroads, the 1700 block of Walnut Street got outfitted with new tree wells and trees last spring. In the foreground is Ivory Spear crabapple (*Malus*). Photo by Rick Usher



Volunteers are all smiles after planting 50 trees in the Crossroads. Photo by Jillian Youngbird

"There are some streets with tree lawns or other open green space that we utilized, so the tree table includes species planted there as well as those planted in tree wells," says HTA Program Manager Joe Wheelock. He adds that so far, Emerald Sunshine elm (*Ulmus propinqua* 'JFS-Bieberich'), Summer Elixir elm (*Ulmus chenmoui* 'JAB Morton'), 'Espresso' Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioicus*), Zileration zelkova (Zelkova serrata 'JFS KW4ZS'), State Street Maple (*Acer miyabei* 'Morton'), and trident maple (*Acer buergerianum*) are all performing very well. "It's still early in the life of the project, but I've been surprised by how quickly they calipered up and put on height," Wheelock says. "We'll be able to tell more about performance in a couple of years once we are through the three-year establishment period with all of these trees."

Planting street trees in the Crossroads meant evaluating an existing infrastructure that wasn't designed with trees in mind, locating spots free of underground utilities, and finding funding to create tree wells of

a meaningful size—the majority are between 4 x 8 feet (1.2 x 2.4 m) and 4 x 10 feet (1.2 x 3 m). DRAW Architecture donated tree well planting renderings and Spire Energy and Mears Group donated excavating services for simple sawcut tree wells and backfilling with rich topsoil to about 3 feet (1 m) in depth. (In-kind services have also come from Vector Services and Evergy.)

"We tried as best we could to balance sidewalk clearance, tree well size and depth, and other site limitations when planning these new tree wells," says Wheelock. "In general we aimed to make the largest size we could. It's certainly not a perfect system and ideally we'd have even longer/larger tree pits, but soil volume helped guide our species selection. Preference was given to varieties that are the most tolerant of road salt, have more upright and compact form to match the site restrictions, and those that have been performing well in existing tree pits."

Wheelock received an approved tree list from the City that HTA used to do tree selection. He says, "The >>





(left) May 2025 volunteers from KC Crossroads-based firm AM CPA joined Heartland Tree Alliance staff to plant trees like this Nitro blackgum (*Nyssa sylvatica*).

(opposite page) Nitro was also planted by volunteers from Milhaus, a mixed-use developer and property management company based in Kansas City. Photos by Jillian Youngbird

City tree list is broken down by maximum DBH and grouped into classes by minimum planting area, so we matched the square footage of the tree pit to the nearest class.” For each planting event, HTA aimed to follow the 10-20-30 rule—i.e., no more than 10% of a single species, 20% of a single genus, and 30% of a single family represented.

What is the maintenance plan for the trees, and how will the work be funded? As part of HTA’s contract with the Crossroads Community Association, HTA will water the trees for the first two years after planting, according to Wheelock. For year three forward: CCA has established a Community Improvement District (CCID) by approval of the KC City Council, according to Rick Usher who was named as Executive Director in August. The CCID will be funded by an annual property tax assessment and a $\frac{1}{2}$ cent sales tax that will be utilized in a “Clean-Safe-Green” program.

The “Green” component will include ongoing street tree planting, street tree watering, and street tree

maintenance, including tree replacement and structural pruning. It will also be used for stewardship training for residents. “The CCID will now be responsible for the STI to include monitoring tree health and to continue our productive relationship with HTA as well as the Kansas City Parks & Recreation Department,” Usher says. He adds, “We’ve had a very low loss rate because of the rigorous watering program HTA provides. We’ve also mulched the trees every summer.”

Wheelock explains that as part of HTA’s city-wide contract with the City of Kansas City, HTA can get paid to do young tree structural pruning in year three. “Given that these trees are in a business district and there is the potential for a lot of pedestrian and vehicle conflicts, we know lifting the canopy as quickly as possible will be important to help make sure these assets are better received,” he says. “We can get a good couple of pruning cycles in on these—make sure they have good structure—before they get too big for us to handle.” Wheelock says that ultimately, because these trees fall within the City right-of-way, the Kansas >>



"Hornbeam Hub: Roots, Nodes, and Rhizospheres," a sculpture by KC Crossroads artist Jean Schmitt celebrating community collaboration. Photo by Rick Usher

City Department of Parks and Recreation, Forestry Division will be responsible for them in the long term.

If a tree dies within the first few years, who is responsible for removal and replanting? "HTA is responsible for trees they planted for us for a period of two years; they replace any trees that die in that time frame," Usher says. "HTA also waters these trees to ensure their health for this two year period. The CCID will assume this responsibility after the warranty period expires."

The Crossroads Arts District is renowned for its vibrant community of artists, and the Street Tree Initiative leadership began tapping into this creative energy in May of 2022 by commissioning a sculpture called "Hornbeam Hub: Roots, Nodes, and Rhizospheres" by KC Crossroads artist Jean Schmitt. The unveiling of the piece took place in conjunction with the planting of an American hornbeam in front of the Goethe Pop-Up Kansas City on Main Street, coinciding

with the 40th anniversary of German artist Joseph Beuys's 7,000 Oaks project in Kassel, Germany.

According to the sculpture's interpretive materials, Jean Schmitt drew inspiration from the hornbeam's interconnected node and nodule growth patterns and the public-private partnership model of the STI, interpreting these ideas into her sculptural work. The event highlighted the synergy between art, activism, and environmental awareness while demonstrating how artists can contribute to organizational frameworks and community engagement.

With continued support from its diverse network of partners and stakeholders that include Crossroads artists like Jean Schmitt, the nonprofit Heartland Tree Alliance, and private companies, the Crossroads is well on its way to becoming a more leafy and resilient—and ever more community-oriented—neighborhood. 



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