

What is Urban Community Forestry?¹

NOPI Cornell Neighborhood Ecology Team Primer #5

A forestry program can become a partnership between public, private and volunteer organizations. Forestry can be included in community planning to create healthy urban and community forests that enhance quality of life for urban residents.

Forestry does not have to mean large tracts of land, but can include street trees, yards, parks, cemeteries, school grounds, and undeveloped green spaces. Urban and Community Forestry is the management of community forests to establish and maintain healthy trees for air and water quality benefits, energy savings, environmental health and quality of life for urban residents. Trees provide numerous environmental, social and economic benefits for people. Studies show that trees improve air and water quality, reduce flooding, reduce cooling and heating energy needs, increase property values and improve the quality of life for people around them.

People are more likely to exercise if parks are nearby. When people utilize parks and shady street trees, they are more likely to meet and establish bonds with their neighbors, and create a sense of community. When people enjoy spending time in their neighborhoods, they develop pride and a sense of ownership in their communities. Forestry is traditionally associated with management of large tracts of timberland and smaller woodlots. Often these forests are quite distant from the daily lives of most

¹ Slawson, Carol, & K.G. Tidball, Cornell University, Dept. of City and Regional Planning New Orleans Planning Initiative Workshop CRP 679; A Product of "Mobilizing the Community to Integrate Ecology, Open Space Resources, and Disaster Resistance in a Post-Katrina 9th Ward."

people. All of the trees within a village, town, or city make up the community forest and can include street trees, yards, parks, cemeteries, school grounds, and undeveloped green spaces. Urban and Community Forestry is the management of community forests to establish and maintain healthy trees for air and water quality benefits, energy savings, environmental health and quality of life for urban residents. The urban and community forest also contains wildlife, waterways, built roads and structures, and people (New York State Urban and Community Forestry Program).

Some Benefits of Urban Trees:

- Provide sound buffers for large urban areas.
- Reduce utility bills (air conditioning in summer, heating in winter) when planted properly.
- Reduces flooding by intercepting rainfall.*
- Produce a sense of "rooted-ness" and community.
- Help to cool cities by reducing heat sinks. Heat sinks are 6-19 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than their surroundings (Global Releaf-Georgia). A tree can be a natural air conditioner. The evaporation from a single large tree can produce the cooling effect of 10 room size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day. (USDA pamphlet # FS-363)
- Cleans the air. Removes dust, particulates, absorbs ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and other pollutants. (ISA Pamphlet, 1991)
- Increase commercial and residential property values. Homes on lots with many trees have 6% - 12% higher appraised values. * Trees can help increase the value of your property, sometimes by 10% - 20%. (USDA pamphlet # FS-363)
- Reduce urban blight by adding beauty.
- Trees act as a carbon-sink by removing the carbon from CO₂ and storing it as a cellulose in the trunk while releasing oxygen back into the air. * Trees can absorb carbon dioxide at the rate of 26 pounds per year - especially young trees that are still growing. (Global Releaf-Georgia). One tree that shades your home will also save fossil fuel, cutting CO₂ buildup as much as 15 forest trees. (The National Arbor Day Foundation pamphlet # 90980005)
- Prevent soil erosion
- Provide Privacy.

Important Ingredients of a Well-managed Community Forest

- A tree ordinance to provide authority for conducting forestry programs; establishing a Tree Board; defining municipal responsibility for public and private trees; passing regulations and setting minimum standards for management.
- A group that is responsible for the oversight of the community forest - a tree board. Responsibilities may include policy formulation, advising, administration, management, representation and/or advocacy.
- Identification of what trees and areas will be managed. Street trees, parks, cemeteries, schools, etc.
- Development of a tree inventory, including locations, species, condition, and management needs. A survey is necessary in order to develop a management plan.
- Creation of a management plan. Create a vision for the long-term community forest; develop strategies, budgets and plans to meet that vision.
- Use of professional staff or consultants. Whether creating a staff position for a certified arborist or urban forester, or contracting with them on an as needed basis, professional assistance will have some of the greatest and most immediate impacts on your community forestry program. Professionals are trained in tree inventory, management planning, planting techniques, pruning and tree care, risk tree assessment, tree removal, tree pest and health issues and can train volunteers in appropriate management practices.

(NY Dept. of Agriculture)

Urban and Community Forestry Organizations:

Other organizations have web sites that provide general information about urban and community forestry.

American Forests:

<http://www.americanforests.org/>

National Arbor Day Foundation

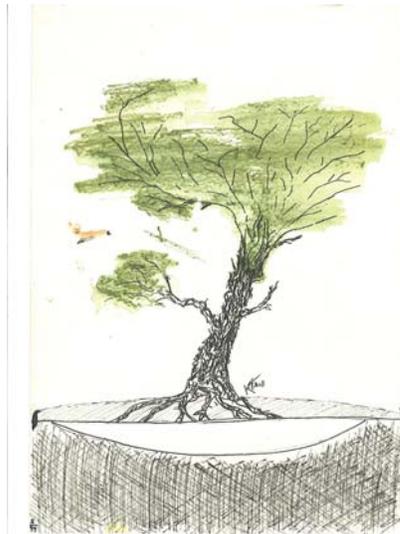
<http://www.arborday.org/index.html>

National Alliance for Community Trees:

<http://www.actrees.org/>

Cornell Urban Horticulture Institute

<http://www.hort.cornell.edu/departments/faculty/bassuk/uhi/index.html>



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