

Title: Urban Forestry

Project Leader: Rick Harper

Project Overview

With nearly 1.2 million street trees, Massachusetts currently features a significant proportion of canopy cover in its three largest cities (Boston 29%, Worcester 37%, and Springfield 33%). There are currently plans to increase urban tree populations and existing canopy cover through various greening and urban tree-planting initiatives throughout the state. This is positive news as citizens tend to feel passionately about the presence of urban trees and community green space. Additionally, the many values and benefits associated with trees planted in residential settings has been well-documented. Community trees, however, are frequently presented with very challenging growing conditions and there is little scientific data related to their survival and growth in urban environments.

The Urban and Community Forestry initiative is a collaborative partnership supported by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (MA DCR) Urban & Community Forestry Program, the Center for Agriculture Food and the Environment (CAFE) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (ECo) at UMass Amherst. It is dedicated to understanding the optimal conditions for community trees and disseminating that information to professionals, policy-makers and citizens. The Urban and Community Forestry initiative also seeks to create partnerships among the various groups and associations who have a shared stake in creating programs of applied research and public outreach focused on the sound management of our community trees and urban green spaces.

Activity Summary - 2015

- Articles published by various professional associations and University of Massachusetts Extension (26)
- Convened community-based “greening” group initiatives related to urban forest education (1)
- Collaborated with professional associations on sponsored events related to urban forest education (8)
- Served as UMass liaison to community-based “greening” groups (6)
- Contributed technical and research articles to printed newsletters and journals for dissemination by professional associations and University of Massachusetts Extension with a potential readership of 24,300 individuals and an online University of Massachusetts Extension publication that receives over 30,000 hits throughout the growing season (6)

- Served as UMass liaison to USDA Forest Service Urban Forest Pest Detection System (4)
- Official UMass liaison for the USDA Forest Service Urban Forest Strike Team (1)
- Provide leadership, consultation, lectures and other instrumental support to collaborators (e.g. Massachusetts Tree Wardens & Foresters Association, New England Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture) (12)
- Represented UMass at the Massachusetts Tree Wardens & Foresters Association meeting (1)
- Delivered web-based outreach media to members of professional associations and community groups (10)

Total educational contacts

	Adult Contacts
In Person	2924
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)	52735

Narrative Summary and Impact

The primary focus of the Extension Urban Forestry Project has been continuing to initiate and expand integrated extension and research activities in support of the management of community forests and urban landscapes. Key activities for the past year focused on conducting outreach via web-based (i.e. 'Urban Forestry Today Webcasts') and other multi-media outlets to inform large audiences of the general public and stakeholders about issues of importance to urban & community forests. **In recognition for this effort, the program was presented the 'Award of Achievement' by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).** A foundation for sustained collaboration was with large numbers of urban forest managers and tree care professionals through professional associations such as the Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association and the New England Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. Increasingly targeted efforts were also focused on collaborating directly with key individuals in various communities throughout Massachusetts who serve as Tree Wardens, as 50 of these individuals, representing localities from the Cape to the Berkshires have now been interviewed (and in most cases, visited) throughout the Commonwealth. Through these activities, significant progress was made towards the fundamental goals of the project, which includes working with stakeholders to disseminate and increase public knowledge regarding the importance of urban and community forests and their associated benefits. A program of applied research serves as the foundation for many of these activities, which is conducted in a manner that advances scholarship in the field of urban forestry while also generating knowledge and results that can be immediately utilized by local stakeholders in support of urban tree health. Research activities for the past year focused on measuring the growth responses of trees in the urban environment, on developing pest-resistant tree species suitable for establishment in the urban landscape and on determining the economic costs of planting urban trees. This project remains in an early state, and is beginning to understand and to measure how these educational efforts can translate into decisions made and actions taken by key stakeholders (e.g. Tree Wardens) in their management of urban forest resources, which will inevitably effect the vitality of urban forests in communities throughout Massachusetts.

Collaborating Organizations

- **MA Tree Wardens and Foresters Association (MATWFA)**
- **New England Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (NE ISA)**
- **US Forest Service (USFS)**
- **ReGreen Springfield, Inc.**
- **MA Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR)**
- **City of Springfield**
- **University of Wisconsin**
- **Lakehead University**
- **Worcester Tree Initiative (WTI)**

