



# Teamwork Strengthens Community Forestry

TREE CITY USA®  
BULLETIN

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*In today's complex world, successful collaboration is essential for the management of healthy community forests. Whether in a large city or small community, the planting and care of trees will be at their best when volunteers, city officials, and businesses work together with clearly identified roles and responsibilities.*

“Synergy” is probably an overworked term, but nothing better describes the importance of partnerships in urban and community forestry. Synergy, according to the American Heritage Dictionary, is “the interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effort is greater than the sum of their individual efforts.”

The agents or forces in community forestry have long been local tree boards and dedicated city foresters. But today, more is needed. Nonprofit organizations, benevolent businesses, and utilities are adding their strength to the common cause. Partnerships are bringing new skills, greater funding, and more human

Few communities can offer the full potential of trees without the help of volunteers. This team is part of a planting project sponsored by Boise Paper and the Arbor Day Foundation's Alliance for Community Trees in Chicago.

resources to the effort. They are also contributing to broader public support — an essential foundation for systematic, continuous tree care programs.

“The Arbor Day Foundation was created through partnerships and owes much of its success to partners at the local, state and federal levels,” says Foundation Chief Executive Matt Harris. “We encourage communities everywhere to take the same approach. In this issue we highlight a few of the many efforts that are resulting in greener, healthier communities nationwide. I offer heartfelt thanks to the dedicated leadership and membership of colleagues in other nonprofits, and to the generosity of corporate and utility partners. Together we can build a better America for tomorrow.”



**Arbor Day Foundation**  
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# The Partners and Their Roles

*Partnerships in community forestry vary considerably. They may include a bicycle club or emergency responders helping to stage a local event, or your legislators when seeking funding for the community forestry coordinator in the state forester's office. No potential partner should be overlooked, but in the pages that follow are some good examples of organizational approaches that work over the long term.*

## UTILITIES

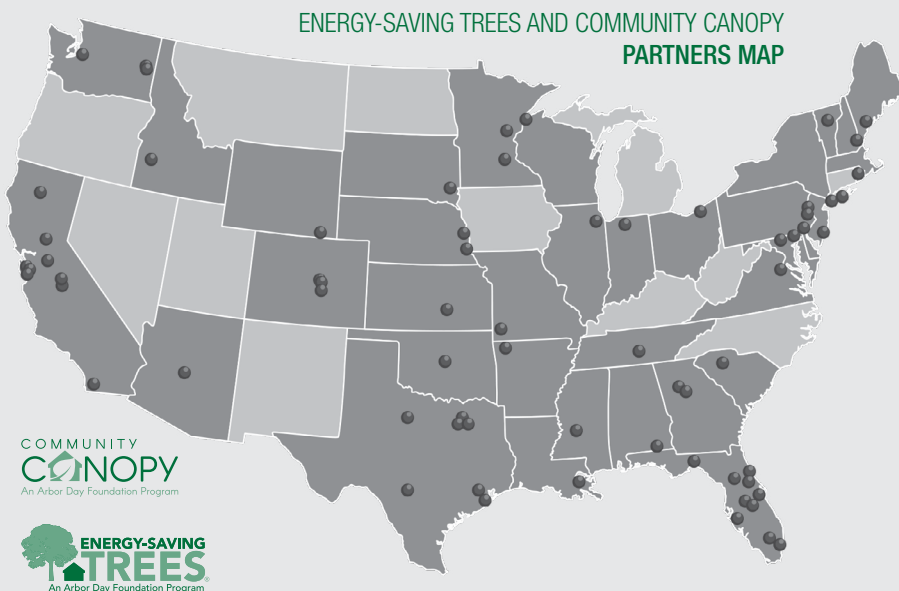
Private and public utilities both have a basic interest in trees. Utilities face the challenge of delivering uninterrupted service to customers and keeping residents safely away from energized lines. Trees can interfere with both these important goals. In fact, utilities spend nearly \$2 billion a year keeping their lines clear of tree limbs. For these reasons many utilities are partnering with other organizations to:

- Create local tree guides that show the best species to plant in order to prevent interference with overhead lines.
- Fund the replacement of inappropriate trees with trees that better fit the space and circumstances.
- Sponsor Arbor Day celebrations and other events that promote planting the right tree in the right place.

Another challenge is to supply adequate quantities of power. Most utilities are interested in ways to reduce usage at peak times of the year and hold off the day when an expensive new generating facility must be built. Trees to the rescue! Trees have been found to be a low-tech solution to this high-tech problem.

As such, the Arbor Day Foundation launched the Energy-Saving Trees program to conserve energy, reduce peak demand, and lower household electricity bills through strategic tree planting. Working with utility partners across the country, the Foundation is delivering thousands of trees to utility customers at no cost to them. People use an online tool to personally plot their yard as seen from satellite imagery, select the right tree — funded by their utility provider — and place it in the right spot for planting that will yield the greatest energy and cost savings. In the first five years of the program, the Foundation and its partners have engaged 131,680 homeowners, distributed 208,000 trees, and saved more than 398 billion projected kilowatt-hours.

In the same vein, the Arbor Day Foundation's Community Canopy program was launched in 2017 to go beyond utilities and offer other companies, cities, states, and nonprofit organizations a turnkey approach to providing trees to customers, employees, or their community. It is a unique opportunity to create happy participants and healthier communities while growing the urban tree canopy. Trees are reserved through the same online mapping tool to identify the ideal planting location that will help maximize the air, water, energy, and carbon benefits of their tree.



## CORPORATIONS

Companies large and small are always concerned about their public image. Successful ones also are frequently interested in giving back to the people who have made them successful. This combination of self-interest and altruism has had a significant impact on urban forestry. For example, partnerships between the nonprofit Greening of Detroit and the corporate community have resulted in contributions of nearly \$250,000 a year. Donors include Ford Motor Company, LaSalle Bank, and Denso International America, to name a few.

Sometimes a company will establish its own 501(c)(3) charitable organization to disperse funds to worthy causes. The Home Depot Foundation is an example, and is yet another partner that has helped Greening of Detroit. This corporate Foundation has also teamed up with the Arbor Day Foundation in the past to help plant trees in cities throughout the nation. Home Depot's policy commits its Foundation to "improving the overall health of our communities, which not only includes healthy affordable housing but also the planting and restoration of trees along streets, in parks and in schoolyards; the building and refurbishment of community play spaces; and the revitalization of school facilities." In the case of the Arbor Day Foundation partnership, it resulted in springtime plantings of 100 large-caliper trees around schools in 10 cities. The cities were selected through an application process and schoolchildren helped do the planting as part of an accompanying educational campaign.



**GREENING OF DETROIT** Dick Wade, President of the Michigan Market for CHASE Bank, a corporate partner of Greening of Detroit, poses with a young friend at the Burton International School. The event announced CHASE Bank's support for planting trees at the school and in Detroit's Patton Park.



## CITY-VOLUNTEER SPONSORSHIPS

Some successful partnerships are direct arrangements between the city and volunteers. An example is Boise, Idaho's Tree Stewards. In this case, the city recruits volunteers and provides a substantial notebook full of how-to information and two-hour night courses for five weeks on basic tree identification, planting, maintenance, CPR and first aid. After training, small crews work on weekday mornings and some weekends pruning young trees in the city rights-of-way and parks. Hand saws, pole pruners, and personal safety gear are provided and a city forestry employee always accompanies the crew. The volunteers also assist with Arbor Day plantings, provide staff for information booths at various events, and generally serve as advocates for good tree care throughout the city.

Brian Jorgenson, Community Forestry Manager for the city of Boise, says, "The Tree Stewards are an amazing asset to Boise Community Forestry. Without their assistance, several hundred trees would go without pruning every year in Boise. The people are friendly, dedicated, and their pruning work is top-notch. In short, I can't imagine our team without them. I highly recommend educating volunteers to help care for trees in any city."

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Boise, Idaho's Tree Stewards are trained to prune young trees to improve form and tree health. The volunteers, in turn, get healthy exercise and the sense of pride that comes from teamwork for a good cause. Is an organization like Tree Stewards something from which your community would benefit?



# Successful Nonprofits – Some Lessons for Everyone

*Nonprofit organizations provide the nucleus for volunteer action in many communities nationwide. There is no single model that fits the circumstances of every community. Rather, the organization must be adapted to local needs and capacities. Regardless of community size, there are great examples of nonprofits that provide inspiration and lessons for others that may not yet have a successful organization to aid urban forestry.*

## SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZE COMMUNITIES

**BETTENDORF, IOWA** Smaller communities often struggle with funding issues because of the small number of potential donors, lack of local corporations, and a small pool of volunteers. But if there is the will for action and a small cadre of residents that recognize the importance of trees, great things can happen. Bettendorf, Iowa, provides a good example. This community of 35,000 supports a very active organization called Bettendorf Trees Are Us. It was started in 1991 when the local utility offered matching funds to stimulate tree planting. Today, a core group of 12 members spearheads the work, with projects receiving help from Master Gardeners, scout groups, high school classes, and even low-security prisoners at the county jail.

Over the years, 500 volunteers have helped plant and maintain more than 2,000 trees. Grant support from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Mid-American Energy Company, and others has been a big help. However, a key to success has been the cooperative attitude of city government. For over 15 years, Parks & Recreation Director Steve Grimes has been part of the committee. Moreover, the city includes a regular budget item to provide a consistent base of financial support.

### BETTENDORF DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

One of the many projects undertaken by Trees Are Us was the renovation of Crow Creek Park. This former quarry was once an ugly, eroding, unsafe area abused by recreation vehicles. With financial support from the Bettendorf Parks and Recreation Department's Capital Improvement Program and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the quarry was drained, cleaned, and graded. Trees Are Us provided trees and volunteer labor. Today the park is a beautiful area with a fishing dock, observation decks, trails, and landscaping.



The result of this teamwork has meant not only more trees and the ecoservices they provide, but community spirit and a high degree of appreciation for trees and the knowledge to plant and care for them properly. Projects conducted by Bettendorf Trees Are Us have included:

- Annual tree planting events at schools, in parks, along a recreation trail, and on street rights-of-way
- Mulching
- Information sheets inserted with sewer billings
- Videos on tree care for the local TV access channel
- Tree care pamphlets
- School programs
- A “Tree Walk” self-guided tour pamphlet

Students from an afterschool program participate in planting a tree in their schoolyard.



## STATEWIDE SUPPORT

Some organizations exist to provide a statewide network for other tree organizations. In this way, rural or small communities can be served with technical advice, conferences or workshop opportunities, and a stronger voice for trees in local and state politics.

## TREEUTAH

TreeUtah works with schools, government agencies, local businesses, church groups, and community volunteers to plant trees at a number of free events throughout Utah. During these events, volunteers of all ages participate in greening their community. They also learn how to select the right tree for the right place so they can take home the confidence to successfully plant more trees in their own yards.

The Community Tree Planting Program helps make Utah's public schools and parks inviting by planting and maintaining park trees. With newly planted trees, these areas help improve the air, lower temperatures in cities, and even reduce crime.

To ensure the health of the ecosystems and watershed of Utah's Wasatch Front, TreeUtah's Restoration Planting Program establishes thousands of native trees along the Jordan River corridor and the peaks and canyons of the Wasatch Mountains. Additionally, with the Tree Rescue Program, TreeUtah saves hundreds of trees growing on ski slopes by relocating them to restoration areas.

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Volunteers plant coyote willows along the Jordan River.



The tradition of Arbor Day is kept alive in Greene, Iowa, and throughout the state with help from Trees Forever, Alliant Energy, and many other partners and donors.

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TreeUtah also aims to engage and educate children and adults on the importance of trees and how they can contribute to improving their local environment. It hosts educational events at libraries, at the EcoGarden permaculture space, and in schools. Learn more about how to get involved at [TreeUtah.org](http://TreeUtah.org).

## TREES FOREVER

This Iowa nonprofit has an amazing record of success. It all began in 1989 as the idea of two people – Shannon Ramsay and David Krotz of Marion, Iowa. Today, Trees Forever has a staff of 18 and is the catalyst behind thousands of volunteers working throughout the state on behalf of trees in their communities. With funding from utilities and nearly 50 other partners, Trees Forever has significantly increased the cooling canopy cover in hundreds of cities, beautified rural roadsides, improved water quality through an aggressive buffer strip planting program, and promoted soil-saving windbreaks and numerous other projects.

Statistics alone can not approach the greater contributions made by this organization's innovative processes and cutting-edge programs, but the tangible results to date include:

- Assisting community leaders with more than 3,900 planting projects
- Involving more than 160,000 volunteers
- Logging more than 1.1 million volunteer hours
- Providing partial funding for the planting of more than 2.78 million trees and shrubs
- Granting more than \$8 million in community assistance
- Coordinating more than \$14 million in match of donations and volunteers hours

# More Successful Nonprofits

## LARGE CITIES

*Large cities have greater opportunities for supporting nonprofits and other volunteer organizations than their smaller counterparts, but often, they also face larger challenges in gaining public interest in trees as a resource. Thanks to teamwork, trees are being planted and residents of all ages and backgrounds are coming together in social settings that benefit society in ways that go beyond a healthy community forest.*

## TREES ATLANTA

Trees Atlanta's roots are in downtown, urban tree planting — it was conceived and launched in 1985 by a powerful group of civic boosters, including Central Atlanta Progress and the Junior League of Atlanta. Since that time, both the organization's geographic scope and their breadth of programming have grown to meet the needs of the Deep South's largest city, but engaging communities and building a network of volunteers is still at the heart of its achievements. Over the years, tens of thousands of Atlanta residents have participated in this nonprofit's planting, restoration, and education programs, including many who contribute professional skills — landscape architects, public relations experts, contractors, photojournalists, printers, graphic artists, computer experts, and lawyers. The results speak for themselves — nearly 120,000 trees planted and maintained, hundreds of acres of forest restored through invasive species removal and tree replanting, and education opportunities that have engaged thousands of youth and adults, creating a civic culture of canopy preservation.

Perhaps most impressive is the network of volunteers that make Trees Atlanta's work possible — supporters log an average of 33,000 volunteer hours a year in total. A tiered system that rewards volunteers for repeat visits has participants who have been helping for more than 20 years — volunteers even lead some projects now. A robust corporate volunteer program helps Trees Atlanta engage with the rapidly growing business community, with representatives from small

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Thousands of volunteers have helped Trees Atlanta plant nearly 120,000 trees over more than 30 years.



firms and massive Fortune 500 companies working side by side to plant and restore Atlanta's canopy. These projects have built a true community of volunteers, with participants getting together in their free time, playing on the Trees Atlanta softball team together, and working together on planting projects outside of Trees Atlanta's work. Some volunteers have even fallen in love and gotten married!

Atlanta is known as the "City in the Forest," and it is because of groups like Trees Atlanta that the city's reputation for shade-lined streets and beautiful, tree-filled neighborhoods continues to be strong despite its rapid growth.

## PHILADELPHIA'S MANY NONPROFITS

Philadelphia has a number of active nonprofits helping to promote tree planting and care. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHC) serves as a coordinator and partner of most of these volunteer efforts that have resulted in tens of thousands of new trees. According to Alan Jaffe, the Society's senior director of communications and media, a major thrust of his organization has been reclaiming vacant lots and converting them from urban blight to gardens and mini-parks. "We track down the owners for permission, and then we clean them and green them," he says.

The goal of PHC is: "Working in partnership with neighborhood residents, community organizations and city agencies, the program uses greening as a community building tool. It educates and empowers people to make the city a more attractive and livable place through horticulture." One of the many ways of doing this is through PHC's Green City Teachers who receive a basic training course and then help work with Green City Youth. This program introduces children in grades K-12 to trees, gardening, and the joys and benefits of nature.

Financial support comes from proceeds from the annual Philadelphia Flower Show as well as businesses, foundations, government agencies, and individual donors.



Rupert Boneham of “Survivor” fame (center) is surrounded by mentees. Boneham’s nonprofit organization benefits both at-risk young people and Indianapolis’ community forest.

## INDIANAPOLIS USES GAPS

GAPS stands for Grants, Alliances, Partnerships, and Sponsorships. Indianapolis is expected to use the GAPS approach to stretch an already thin city budget. Fortunately, thanks to local utilities and nonprofits like Keep Indianapolis Beautiful and Indianapolis Downtown, Inc., the city is able to meet the expectation. Another source of assistance comes from the nonprofit organization, Rupert’s Kids. These are at-risk young people between the ages of 16 and 20 who have been taken under the mentoring wing of Rupert Boneham, author and an all-time favorite contestant in TV’s Survivor program. Former city forester Lindsey Purcell founded and orchestrated an adopt-a-park project that puts Rupert’s Kids to work planting trees, mulching, pruning, and gaining marketable skills and attitudes that can lead to employment in the landscape industry and others.

## ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY TREES — PULLING TOGETHER

The Alliance for Community Trees program at the Arbor Day Foundation is a good example of synergy that comes from joining with other organizations to help support community forestry. The Alliance for Community Trees is made up of a coalition of nonprofit organizations nationwide. It provides a strong collective voice for community forestry, offers cost-effective training, and facilitates networking and the sharing of ideas. By sharing ideas, members large and small can impact the communities where they work with innovative programs.

Alliance for Community Trees members are also the recipients of funding that provides tree planting capacity to communities across the country. Through funding partners, the need for trees in communities is addressed. Additionally, many times this funding gives members the opportunity to share the benefits of tree planting by engaging employees from companies that contribute to the program through the Arbor Day Foundation.

## WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

A companion bulletin is available that provides helpful information about working effectively with all kinds of individuals who volunteer to help with community forestry. It also discusses what roles are appropriate for volunteers and what jobs are best left to professionals. Please visit [arborday.org](http://arborday.org) to order Tree City USA Bulletin No. 36, How to Work With Volunteers Effectively.

## NEW PARTNERSHIP HELPS QUALIFY FOR GROWTH AWARD

The assistance of your city forester, tree board, or municipal officials in helping to create a tree-related nonprofit will qualify for points under Category B of eligible activities leading to a Tree City USA Growth Award.



Arbor Day Foundation employees with the help of city foresters and city employees plant 25 trees at a local elementary school.

# Arbor Day Foundation – A History of Partnerships

The first Arbor Day in 1872 was the brainchild of J. Sterling Morton, a resident of Nebraska City, Nebraska. Even in those pioneering days it took teamwork to turn a vision into action on the ground. Morton proposed his idea to the State Board of Agriculture. The board liked the idea and worked with agricultural societies in each county, offering \$100 to the county that planted the most trees on that initial Arbor Day, and \$25 worth of books to the individual who planted the most trees.

The Arbor Day Foundation was born 100 years later when Nebraska was searching for a way to commemorate the centennial of the tree planting holiday. Former Gov. James Exon appointed a 9-member commission to get things started and the legislature provided \$10,000 to support the effort. The core group soon became the Arbor Day Centennial Foundation, and then Arbor Day Foundation, Inc., an educational nonprofit organization. This enabled the Foundation to independently raise money and use it to promote not only Arbor Day celebrations, but also the broader cause of natural resource stewardship. The success of the Arbor Day Foundation has been built on partnerships as some examples will demonstrate:

- **1976 TREE CITY USA®** USDA Forest Service, National Association of State Foresters, local communities, National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors were the partners that made this possible.
- **1983 CONSERVATION TREES PROGRAM** Support from the Nebraska Energy Office, the Union Pacific Foundation, and others helped launch this program to promote tree planting, especially on farms and where trees can help stop erosion or provide other practical benefits.
- **1992 TREE LINE USA®** In partnership with the Utility Arborists Association and professionals from utilities nationwide, this program was launched to provide incentives for tree care during line clearance and other utility operations.
- **1998 BUILDING WITH TREES** This national awards program was created in partnership with the National Association of Home Builders to recognize builders and developers who save trees during construction and to encourage others to do likewise.
- **2008 TREE CAMPUS USA®** Building on the success of the Tree City USA program, the Foundation launched Tree Campus USA in 2008 to recognize campuses that practice sound tree management and care. Five core standards must be met to receive Tree Campus USA recognition.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, please visit [arborday.org/bulletins](http://arborday.org/bulletins). This dynamic site is updated regularly, so we suggest that you bookmark it and visit frequently.

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