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*This year Arbor Day is  
April 23 - It's always  
the last Friday in April*

A Newsletter for the New York State Urban and Community Forestry Council

**Final Report: Health and Incidence & Severity of Decay  
of Street Tree Maples in four Upstate New York Cities**

*This report was authored by Christopher J. Luley, Ph.D. of Urban Forestry LLC and David J. Nowack, Ph.D. and Eric J. Greenfield, Ph.D., both from the USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Research Station. The report is the result of a study funded by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Tree Fund as part of a Hyland Johns competitive grant.*

Across New York State maple species are the most common street tree. It is not unusual for Norway (*Acer platanoides*), silver (*A. saccharinum*), sugar (*A. saccharum*), red (*A. rubrum*), and other maple species, to comprise over 50% of the street tree population in many cities and smaller communities. In fact, it is also not uncommon for a single maple species to make up over half or more of the



*Dr. Luley shows a class how to test for decay using a mallet.*

total street tree population in some communities. Many of the maples on urban streets today were planted to replace American elms that were lost as a result of the Dutch Elm Disease epidemic that started in 1930's. Therefore, a significant portion of this maple population is mature, and the health and structural stability, as evidenced by wood decay, is in question. Further, the State's maple population is threatened by the presence of the Asian Longhorned Beetle now infesting New York City and Long Island. In addition to an aging maple population, upstate communities will be faced with a significant management issue if the insect spreads north.

This study was initiated to determine the health status, and incidence and severity of wood decay in street tree maples and other species in Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, New York. The project provides a benchmark for the condition of maples in these cities, and an evaluation of the potential risk associated with wood decay. The study will also allow a general assessment of the impact of urban tree management practices on tree health and decay in these cities.

Based on city inventory data, maple species over 12 inches in diameter comprise over 54% of the total tree population. With regard to tree condition, the field study found that unfortunately most trees were in fair or worse condition and condition deteriorated with increasing tree diameter; the largest trees were in the poorest condition. Also, incidence of severe decay was greatest for silver maples and Norway

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New York State's Urban and Community Forestry Program is a partnership of public, private and volunteer organizations and individuals that fosters comprehensive planning, management and education throughout New York to create a healthy urban and community forest and enhance quality of life.

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For newsletter and submission information, contact Gloria Van Duyne, Editor, at [globug111@hotmail.com](mailto:globug111@hotmail.com). Taking Root is made possible by a generous grant from the USDA Forest Service through the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

## Message from the President

*As we start into our new year, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful 2008. As we all know, it is amazing how quickly the time flies and the Council members have been very active. For this new year, I would like to bring you a brief update of what has been happening since our last newsletter. It has been determined that the next annual ReLeaf conference will be held in Region 7 at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, July 24 to July 26. This is indeed a special site in the beautiful Finger Lakes region and a unique opportunity as far as urban forestry is concerned. There is so much ongoing research at Cornell that a variety of unusual programs are currently being planned by the Region 7 ReLeaf committee.*

*Next, the Council web site is being expanded and updated to make our new site as attractive and helpful as possible. The Web Site Committee is convening to plan additional modifications and your suggestions and questions are always welcome and encouraged as this project progresses.*

*2008 membership renewal letters have been mailed out and, at this time, I would like to encourage all members not only to send in their tax deductible renewal and information but to consider who else might benefit by joining the Council. We sincerely welcome all those who have an interest in the future of urban forestry for our communities across New York State.*

*In November, we were fortunate to receive national recognition from the Washington, D.C. based Alliance for Community Trees (ACT), a nonprofit urban forestry organization. As president of our Council, I received ACT's "NeighborWoods Academy Scholarship" to help me attend their annual meeting in Baltimore. This Scholarship was donated by The Home Depot Foundation, the leader in investing in nonprofit*

*organizations that are in the business of building better communities through urban forestry.*

*Lastly, in January, Andy Hillman, Council Secretary, Susan Kalin, Board of Directors member and Region 2 representative, and I visited Albany to encourage support for urban forestry funding through the State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). We were pleased to first meet with our DEC Commissioner, Pete Grannis and his staff, later with representatives of the Assembly Environmental Committee chairman, Robert Sweeney, and then with Paul Breyer of the Governor's environmental staff. They were all very supportive of our efforts and stressed the importance of having Council members and interested citizens encourage their local legislators to support urban and community forestry funding.*

*Please continue to provide your input as it is extremely helpful toward meeting our goals. In closing, I hope many of you will be able to attend our upcoming 16th Annual Conference at Cornell University in Ithaca this July.*

*Pat Tobin, President*



### Contact Us

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## The Right Tree in the Right Place Something New or Just Plain Old Common Sense?

You'd think that those involved in tree selection and planting decisions would, by 'nature', select and plant what's best for the site based on a variety of conditions and factors that would steer one automatically to the right tree for that particular spot. It's not a hard concept...there's more common sense in that approach than one would like to admit. So why is it more often than not, we see the wrong tree in the wrong place? What do we get in return for those errors in judgments and poor selections?



*A double "whammy"...a pin oak planted in alkaline soils directly underneath overhead power lines is doomed in more ways than one.*

But is that the only cold snap that you'll get over the life of that tree? Unlikely...so the pruning and replacement process starts all over again...and again...and again.

If the tree selected is susceptible to serious insect or disease problems, obviously the aesthetics of the plant are compromised, as may be the health, vigor and longevity of the plant. What else is the plant now predisposed to as its health deteriorates every year from future damages? Are the soil conditions suitable to support the tree...not just for the 1-2 year guarantee...but for the next 40-100+ years? Has the pH, structure, drainage, volume, composition and porosity of the soil been checked before the tree is installed? Acid loving trees installed in alkaline soils are doomed from the start. How often have we seen that nice pin oak do well for 15-20 years, then go chlorotic and die a slow death?

Why is your local utility company or their contractor to blame for pruning and disfiguring that potentially 60' tall tree that was planted right underneath the overhead

When the wrong tree is planted in the wrong place, the clock toward eventual failure starts ticking. If the tree selected is not suitable for the cold hardiness of the area, or is marginal for the zone, death or crown dieback is inevitable.

That in turns leads to either total tree replacement or a need to prune and reshape the tree.

But is that the only cold snap that you'll get over the life of that tree? Un-

likely...so the pruning and replacement process starts all over again...and again...and again.

electric lines? Why do abutting homeowners complain about all the spent crabapples on their sidewalk, lawn and driveway from your community's tree in the planting strip in front of their house? Are the merchants who loved the shade in front of their business when the tree was smaller now complaining the tree is blocking their sign and want you to clean up all the leaves that are being blown and tracked in the front door? And then there's that pesky multi-million dollar lawsuit against the community from that couple that was



*The use of columnar Norway maples planted behind overhead electric lines can be a great choice. No pruning and no disfigurement in the future.*

injured when someone ran the stop sign that couldn't be seen because a tree blocked the view of the oncoming driver. How can a tree be that costly? They are supposed to be an asset...not a liability! Who made those selection and planting decisions? Can't you always please everyone?



*This 60' high locust was not the best choice, like the pin oak, above, for a planting site directly under utility lines. A little research goes a long way when selecting the right tree and the right site.*

All too often, are we as professionals (or educated volunteers) making tree selections based on aesthetics...and not on the merits of the tree and the site...or with common sense? While the symmetry and aesthetics of our tree selections do impact the value and contributions those trees add to the community, it is

*continued on page 4*

## Right Tree - Right Place *(continued from page 3)*

important to consider what's necessary to assure that the initial investment made in selecting and planting that 2" caliper tree has the opportunity to reach maturity and provide maximum benefits for its intended use.

Tree committees, tree boards, city planners, arborists, landscape architects, nursery growers and our educators can work together to promote better planning...BEFORE planting! Understanding what a tree needs for survival, what it needs for space, understanding all its good attributes as well as its liabilities...makes the decision process (seemingly) that much easier for all involved. It'd be nice if we could ask the trees what they think about our decision before we plant them. "Did we make the right choice? Will you like where you're going and will you be happy living there for the next multi-decades? How can we do better?"

Right tree-right place is a simple, logical concept and process that should bear great results and benefits



*Sometimes no tree is the best choice for a particular site*

for all in the community for decades in the future. We'll have assets that provide all the community benefits that we know about and promote. Trees will grow and thrive; maintenance costs will be reduced; utilities will have less to prune and service reliability and safety will be improved; community health and values will increase.

What will it take for communities to redirect their tree planting and planning efforts to incorporate the concept every time they select what to plant and where? We have all the tools, the books,

the professional guidance, the experience and expertise of the 'experts' and 'educators'. THINK...that one word and process got IBM to where it is today. All we have to do...is to follow through and do the same. THINK...and plant the right tree...in the right place. How hard is that? Simple...it's just plain old common sense!

*Brian Skinner  
Senior Arborist  
National Grid, Syracuse*

## Health of Maples Report *(continued from page 1)*

maples. Overall, street trees in Rochester were rated in better condition than the other three cities.

All trees in the study were sounded with a mallet and tested for decay with a Resistograph F400. The study showed that there was a high correlation between decay found by sounding with a mallet and Resistograph testing.

Study Implications suggest that:

- larger diameter maples (greater than 25 inches in diameter) of all species will likely require increased levels of inspection, removal, and replacement going into the future due to their poor condition and increased amounts of decay;
- the random selection of other non maple species in the study was in better condition and had lower severity of decay, suggesting the diversity is a buffer against decay, and for tree health;
- well funded urban street tree programs like Rochester's may result in trees that are in better condition and have less decay. However, the influence of other factors such as weather events were not



evaluated and may also be important;

- and sounding with a mallet can be useful in screening trees for decay. A full report on this study can be downloaded at the DEC's Urban and Community Forestry website at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41227.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41227.html). We thank Mr. Frank Dunstan, former DEC Urban Forestry Program Coordinator for

providing partial funding for this project. We gratefully acknowledge the provision of street tree inventory data by the cities of Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, New York, and for their cooperation with this project.



*Christopher J. Luley, Ph.D.  
Urban Forestry LLC*

## Planning for Green: Urban and Community Forestry, Trees in Our Community Conference

– January 24, 2008, White Plains

A brisk, but sunny day was the setting for the annual urban and community forestry conference in White Plains.

This conference was a joint effort by Cornell Cooperative Extension of the Hudson Valley Commercial Horticulture Education Program, Region 3 ReLeaf, NYS Urban and Community Forestry Council, Watershed Agricultural Council Forestry Program, NYSDEC, NYCDEP, USDA Forest Service and the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation.

Over 130 people attended. The audience was a mix of community leaders, elected officials, professional arborists, foresters, community volunteers, municipal employees and professional horticulturists.

Dr. Dennis Ryan, director of the urban forestry unit at the University

of Massachusetts was the keynote speaker. He gave two “lively” and informative talks on hazard trees: how to identify and prioritize selection and management and cabling and bracing and the big question “to cable or not to cable”. More community forestry topics and links are available at the NE Center for Urban and Community Forestry, [www.umass.edu/urbantree/](http://www.umass.edu/urbantree/).

Stephanie Mallozzi started out the conference with a formal introduction of the new Hudson Valley street tree inventory program (SWAT). The SWAT program was developed by Dr. Nina Bassuk at Cornell. Its purpose is to help small communities get started in a street tree management program by conducting an inventory.

Andy Pleninger, Vice President of Urban Forestry LLC presented on the development and implementation of community tree management plans. He offered strategies, budgets and

timelines as a means to set goals to maintain and expand the healthy community forest.

Brian Liberti, City Arborist for Syracuse followed up Andy’s talk by discussing the city of Syracuse’s community tree management plan. He spoke of the plan on paper and how it translates to reality.

The day ended with a talk by Dr. Paul Weston of Cornell who spoke about invasive insect pests in the Hudson Valley. His talk focused on the history, current pest status and what steps are being taken to eradicate these serious pests. The newest invasive insect to arrive in the Hudson Valley is viburnum leaf beetle. Dr. Weston has conducted much research on the management of this invasive insect. His “Citizen Science” web site [www.hort.cornell.edu/vlb/](http://www.hort.cornell.edu/vlb/) offers great information.

*Stephanie D. Mallozzi  
Horticulture Team Coordinator  
Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County*

### Second Lives for Urban Trees: *We want to hear from you.*

Some community trees come down in storms or need to be removed for various reasons. Many people and communities have used the wood from these trees to make fine furniture, benches for public parks and even signs and sculpture. Tell us your story and you may see it here in *Taking Root*. Photos (300 dpi) are encouraged. Please write to us to share your story at: Taking Root Editor, 6660 State Route 10, Sharon Springs, NY 13459, or email [globug111@hotmail.com](mailto:globug111@hotmail.com).



#### Yes. Count me in as a Council Member!

- Regular Membership @ \$20
- Student Membership @ \$10
- Not-for-Profit Organization @ \$50

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please designate a representative)

- Small Business @ \$50

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please designate a representative)

- Government Agency @ \$50

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please designate a representative)

- Large Corporation @ \$500

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please designate a representative)

In addition to my membership, I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

**Council Members** receive discounts to the annual statewide conference and Council sponsored workshops. You are also supporting the dissemination of knowledge about tree care and the importance of tree programs for our health and well-being.

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## Invasives Update: Spread of EAB

Emerald Ash Bore (EAB) has now spread to Toronto, Canada and has been found in a West Virginia Campground. The EAB's appearance in Toronto is disappointing but not a surprise, since it has been known to travel several miles per year. It's a concern since every species of ash is threatened and this pest has already been responsible for the destruction of 50 million ash trees in the U.S. since its discovery in Michigan in 2002.

What is a surprise is EAB's appearance in a healthy forest campground in West Virginia. The closest known location of EAB is 175 miles away in Ohio.

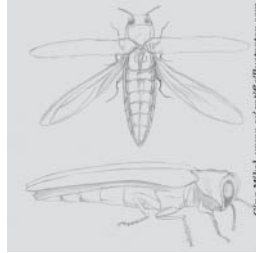
Could this occurrence be the result of moving infested firewood? In 2007, most of the new EAB infestations in Michigan were because of firewood. Many states, the National Forest and National Park Systems have adopted regulations restricting movement of firewood, or require treatment to kill pests, or both.

Eggs and larvae of insects such as EAB, Asian Longhorn Beetle and Sirex Woodwasp, can travel hidden in firewood.

New York State is exploring the possibility of regulating the transport of firewood. Since last year campers have been encouraged to leave their firewood at home and buy it in or near their campground.

It makes sense that campers would understand the importance of protecting those forests they visit for rest, relaxation and recreation. For more information about New York's "Don't Move Firewood" campaign, visit [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html).

*Drawing courtesy of Gina Mikel, [www.scientificillustrator.com](http://www.scientificillustrator.com).*



## Tree City U.S.A.

### Annual Recognition Luncheon

The Annual Tree City U.S.A. recognition luncheon will be held on March 28 in Albany. Save that date. There will be good speakers, good food and good company.

Has your community recently Embarked on a major tree planting program? Developed a master plan? Please keep us posted on you community's successes and include pictures (300 dpi). You might see your project in a future issue of *Taking Root*. Send your story to our editor. See page 2 for contact information.

## Save the Date

The ANNUAL STATEWIDE Urban and Community Forestry Conferenc will be held in Region 7 at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, July 24 to July 26.

WINTER 2008 NO. 23

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