THE SHADE TREE

A BI-MONTHLY BULLETIN DEVOTED TO NEW JERSEY'S SHADE TREES

Volume 97 — January - February 2024 – Issue 1 & 2

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GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hi; My name is Neil Hendrickson and I'm the new president of the NJ Shade Tree Federation, replacing the irreplaceable Pam Zipse for a two-year term.

As the old saying goes, we've hit the ground running, developing events to benefit our membership and any others interested in trees. The Federation's education/conference committee has already begun enthusiastically developing the agenda for our next (99th) annual conference on Oct 17th and 18th, 2024, at Harrah's in Atlantic City. We've already booked some great speakers. Not only that, we're already making big plans for our 100th anniversary conference, in 2025. We look forward to meeting you in person.

My job as president of the NJ Shade Tree Federation will be an easy one because of Emily Farschon, our Outreach Coordinator and "all-purpose get-things-done person," and Rich Wolowicz, our Executive Director and "Man Behind the Curtain," as well as our dedicated board members, whose vision and guidance promise an exciting and productive future for the organization and its members.

I look forward to working with all of you over the next two years.

Neil Hendrickson

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BULLETIN OF THE NEW JERSEY SHADE TREE FEDERATION
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NJ SHADE TREE FEDERATION OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2023-2024

Subsequent to The New Jersey Shade Tree Federation's Annual Business Meeting, a formal vote on the election of Officers and Executive Board was concluded in December 2023. The following are re-elected and new members of the Executive Team.

Officers:

Neil Hendrickson – President, Retired, with Readington Township
George Meglio – Vice-President, with Wood-Ridge Borough
Richard Wolowicz – Executive Director
Emily Farschon – Outreach Coordinator

Directors:

2024: Joshua Faas, Site One
John Linson, The Shade Tree Department
Liz Stewart, River Edge Shade Tree Commission
Thomas Ritchie, Freehold Township Shade Tree Commission

2025: Mary Charlotte Gitlin, NYC Parks Department, Staten Island Forestry
Al Birchler, Professional Tree Care
Jeff Cramer, South Brunswick
Christopher Raimondi, Raimondi Horticultural Group

2026: Pam Zipse, NJ Tree Foundation
Stephen Chisholm, Jr., Aspen Tree Expert Co.
George Sweetin, Chatham Borough
Barbara Ronca, PhD, Bridgewater Township

NJ COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN GUIDELINES UPDATE

By Brian McDonald, NJ DEP, Forest Service, Urban & Community Forestry Program, November 20, 2023

As some of you may have heard at the annual conference in October, the NJ Urban and Community Forestry program has been in the process of updating our Community Forest Management Plan guidelines. This update is complete! The NJUCF program is in the process of rolling out these new guidelines, including our presentation at the conference where we highlighted some of these changes.

We have made some structural and substantial changes to the guidelines, for these plans to be more data driven and include social data. We would like to let the NJ Shade Tree Federation membership know about these important changes.

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NJ COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN GUIDELINES UPDATE

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The biggest change to the plan guidelines is that an inventory is now required for the plan. This inventory could be complete, partial, sample, or some combination of all of that done over a period of time. It is meant to inform the management in the municipality or county and the plan should be based on this inventory data. It will be important to base management decisions on the inventory conducted, so knowing where and what to inventory will be crucial. There are minimum data requirements that must be collected for these inventories. Those requirements can be found on the program website.

Additionally, changes have been made to the mapping requirements and to the goals structure. The mapping requirements are all available through a variety of free websites, from sources such as Rutgers, NJDEP, or NGO's. The goals structure is meant to break down the process into more meaningful pieces, to better plan and evaluate progress. All of these changes are meant to make the CFMP a more data driven document and a plan that municipalities and counties can use.

If you have any questions about the new guidelines or would like to confirm when your current CFMP expires, please do not hesitate to reach out to the program.

Brian McDonald, NJ UCF Program Coordinator, *Brian.mcdonald@dep.nj.gov*

www.communityforestry.nj.gov

TREES FOR THE URBAN FOREST

By Steve Schuckman, Gardener News, October 2017

As I discussed last month, there are myriad problems facing the urban or municipal forester. Poor soils, de-icing salt, limited planting space, and the ever growing threat from exotic pests and disease keeps those of us responsible for the urban forest very busy.

Many older towns and cities have trees at or past maturity, and those trees will eventually decline and die. These trees, such as London plane, red oak, and sugar maple, were planted when conditions were far different than they are today. As our towns grew ad became more populated, the stress imposed upon our trees also grew. As my colleague always reminds me, it is very difficult to grow a forest in the built environment.

Yet, with the rushed American lifestyle keeping our blood pressure up, tree-lined streets provide a calming influence. I believe it is in our nature to feel comfortable surrounded by trees, and people seek out towns and cities with "forested" streets. In addition, trees provide shade that not only helps keep cities cool, but also increases property values.

As our older trees begin to senesce, replacing them is of utmost importance for the community. But it has become more and more difficult to find truly urban-tolerant trees that will survive to old age. The concept of allées, of one species on any given street, should not be practiced, as evidenced by what happened with American elm and now ash. Species diversity is the rule, to avoid devastating loss due to pests or disease.

The idea of planting only "native" species is also impractical, as first you have to define "native" and then find said trees that are urban tolerant. Sugar maple

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is a native tree, but it is not a good street tree for many reasons. So are hickory and white oaks, but just try to find them in a nursery, and they are almost impossible to transplant.

So urban foresters must use species that work, and sometimes these species are exotics. We also must use species appropriate for planting under wires or in small spaces, and these trees will never be large shade trees.

Some of my favorite and successful large shade trees are not common street trees. Rarely seen, hardy rubber tree, *Eucommia ulmoides*, has worked very well, as it is salt and drought tolerant, and so far pest-free. Two elms I use are *Ulmus parvifolia*, Lacebark elm, and *U. propinqua* "Emerald Sunshine." The latter is VERY urban tolerant (it was tested in Oklahoma!), and both are resistant to Dutch Elm Disease. Emerald Sunshine is more medium in size, but like all elms grows fast.

While no longer planting red and pin oak due to Bacterial Leaf Scorch, I instead have been planting swamp white oak, *Quercus bicolor*, Willow oak (*Q. phellos*), and Bur oak (*Q. macrocarpa*). All become large trees and seem so far to be good street trees.

One of my favorite trees is black gum or tupelo, *Nyssa sylvatica*. Not common as a street tree, it tolerates poor soils and for me has grown quite well. Add burgundy fall color, and you've got yourself a winner.

For small trees under wires or in small spaces, things get a little tough. I have had great success with *Acer buergeranum*, trident or duckfoot maple. Fast growth, beautiful bark, and blazing fall color make this a great garden tree, too. *Cornus mas*, Cornelian cherry, is not a cherry at all… it is a dogwood! Stays small, with early-spring yellow flowers, bright red fruit, and gorgeous bark. Also another good garden tree, it is not common but really, really tough. I plant it whenever I can find it.

I keep experimenting, and yes, sometimes things don't work. But when I look back at trees I planted that are doing great, well… maybe I will live long enough to see MY urban forest.

Editor's note: Steve Schuckman has since passed away. It is our honor to share his words and experiences and hope that the communities he served are continuing to enjoy the urban forests he developed.

NATURAL TURNED NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: URBAN FOREST PATCHES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Brian Cooke, USDA Forest Service, Summer 2020

The term "urban forest" is often used to refer to all the trees within a city or town. Trees along streets and sidewalks and within yards and parks are the most visible and have helped to shape how we conceive of the term. However, cities, communities, and neighborhoods nationwide contain natural areas—patches that have more in common with their larger, wild brethren than they do with a street tree or manicured park. We refer to these natural, wooded areas interchangeably as "urban forested natural areas," "urban forest patches," "urban woodlands," or

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"forests in cities." Indeed, recognizing and learning more about these spaces can help us better understand and care for them.

With about 82 percent of the U.S. population living in urban areas today, it may sometimes feel that we're removed from nature. Yet science is increasingly revealing how dependent we are on nature for our individual and collective physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as for climate resilience. In some cases, the connections we need for our own and other species' survival and well-being may literally be just down the street.

The Value of Forest Patches

Ask most people to list what constitutes important public infrastructure in cities, and you may hear some familiar and important responses: roads, bridges, railways, electric lines, water and sewer systems, and the like. But it so happens that there is a layer of critical national—and natural—infrastructure that undergirds this all; one that is only beginning to be fully recognized and understood: urban natural areas, which often take the form of "forest patches."

Several researchers in the USDA Forest Service's Urban Field Station Network are studying urban natural areas, which can take the form of forested or shrubby areas that range in size from many acres to as small as 10,000 square feet, or about the size of a baseball diamond. Especially in the East, these natural areas are often forested (as opposed to western natural areas that may resemble shrubland or prairie patches). Forested natural areas, or forest patches, are "forests in cities." They are unique from more manicured parks and street and yard trees. Yet on another level, they are anything but unique; forest patches are far more prevalent and omnipresent than larger, more traditionally conceived, and more rural forests.

For urban dwellers, larger forests may be a vacation destination, but forest patches in cities, communities, and neighborhoods— whether visited or not—shape ecosystem health, quality of life, and our experience of nature in critical ways that research is just beginning to unpack.

Many forest patches support a wide variety of plant and animal life, although this benefit is limited by the habitat fragmentation inherent to these wooded "islands." Forest patches also cool the surrounding air temperature, provide shade, control stormwater runoff, provide habitat, and serve as stopover sites for migratory birds.

For these reasons and many more, they are a critical but sometimes overlooked component of climate resilience, public health, social justice, and community well-being. From an ecological perspective, the health of these patches cannot be considered in isolation. Forests across gradients are integrated and interdependent; their health is codependent, and society's health is dependent on all forests, no matter where we live.

Learning from Rural Forestry Rich Hallett, a research ecologist with the USDA Forest Service, says that some city governments and residents are championing their small wooded resources and are seeking to understand how to manage them to improve ecosystem health.

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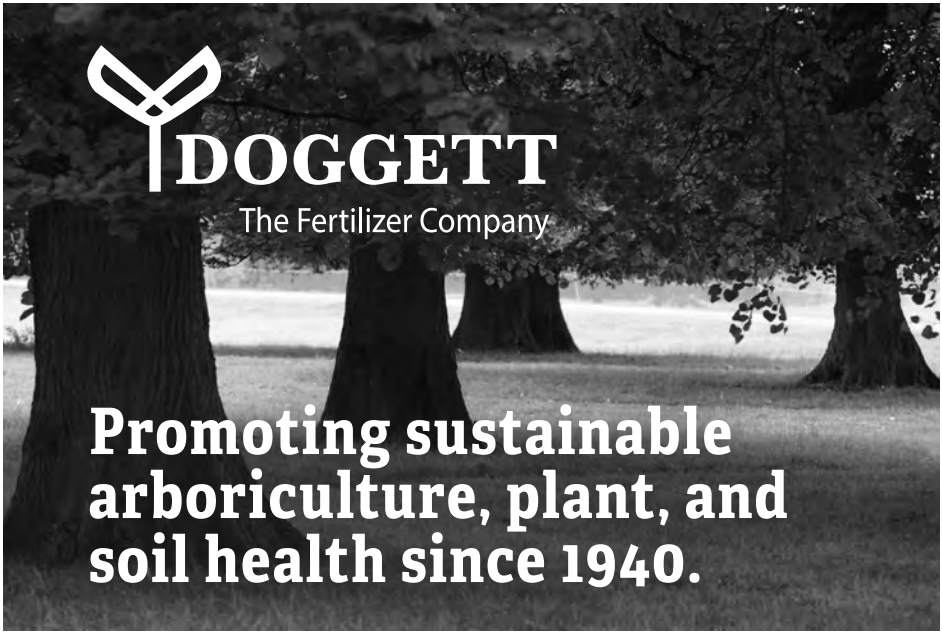

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According to Hallett, who divides his time between New Hampshire and New York City, "In rural areas, foresters and ecologists have stratified tree types for more than 100 years in support of different management strategies. Ecologists and managers are starting to do this for cities. What people are coming to realize is that not only are forest patches important to society on several levels, but management of trees in these forests has much in common with rural forest management."

For example, one might assume that urban forest ecosystems have been degraded by the presence of nonnative and invasive species. Yet in one study that Hallett coauthored, a team of scientists determined that although invasive species have literally gained ground in the understory, the overstory of New York City's forest patches still tends to be dominated by native tree species, rather than the nonnative trees that are often found along the city's streets. Nonnative trees may have fewer ecological benefits than native counterparts, so these findings can have implications for prioritizing New York's forest conservation and restoration efforts. Another urban-rural commonality is that each type of forest can experience similar impacts from climate change and other human-influenced stressors, albeit on different timescales. Increased carbon dioxide concentrations, higher pollution levels, higher recreational use, increased runoff, and encroachment of invasive species are anthropogenic stressors well familiar to urban forest managers, but they are now seen in many rural forests.

Urban forest managers are beginning to embrace some silvicultural techniques associated with rural forests. Conversely, rural forest managers may be able to learn from the expertise urban managers have gained from managing for resilience in these small forests.

"One of our goals is to educate people about the existence of these forests and that they are forests. This may open up new opportunities for learning and knowledge exchange," says Hallett.

A Forest Patch in Manhattan's Back Yard

Forest patches can even be found in Manhattan, the most densely populated county in the United States. Consider Inwood Hill Park, located a short walk from where Hallett lives when he is in New York. Unlike many of New York City's more manicured parks, much of Inwood Hill Park is taken up by an old-growth forest that has historic and social importance. It is where, according to legend, Dutch settlers bought Manhattan from local Native Americans back in 1626 for 60 guilders worth of goods—an amount worth $1,000 today. Through Forest Service research and collaboration with local agencies and organizations, Hallett hopes to raise awareness of Inwood Hill Park and other forest patches throughout the city.

The goal is not simply to increase use of these natural areas, however. In a broader sense, Hallett and colleagues at the New York City Urban Field Station and across the Network are seeking to raise understanding and appreciation of these places and the benefits—climate resilience, public health, biodiversity, and more—they provide. In this way, the care and conservation of forest patches may factor more prominently into public dialogue and policy as we realize that they are a critical part of our nation's infrastructure.

The Role of Partnership Organizations

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As the scientific community works to achieve this more sophisticated awareness, they are often supported by volunteer stewardship organizations, particularly those that seek to expand and extend the public's relationship with nature. These efforts often apply not just to traditional, landscaped parks, but to urban natural areas, which may provide unique social and biophysical functions and benefits to the surrounding community.

One such organization is the Friends of Inwood Hill Park. In recent years, organized activities in the park have ranged from restoration efforts and outdoor movie showings to urban wildlife festivals and nature painting festivals. Many of these activities are sponsored or supported by the Friends of Inwood Hill Park.

According to the group's cofounder, Sally Fisher, awareness of the park and its forest patches is rising. Not only is Inwood Hill Park a place where you can immerse yourself in nature while still being in Manhattan, Fisher says, "It's an important place for reasons that range from history to geology to health. It's really Manhattan's backyard from a health and social standpoint. I love that I can get on the A train in Hell's Kitchen and be in the wilderness in 30 minutes."

Nonprofit environmental organizations such as the Natural Areas Conservancy are also key partners in this effort, according to Clara Pregitzer, a conservation scientist with the organization and a frequent collaborator with Forest Service scientists from the Northern Research Station. Some of Pregitzer's work has focused on characterizing the amount, type, and condition of forests in New York City, starting in Van Cortland Park, New York City's third-largest park and home to a forest that dates back about 17,000 years.

A Michigan native, Pregitzer says that before she saw Van Cortland Park, she wasn't convinced that there were forests in New York City. "People often don't realize how much nature and forests exist in New York City," she says.

Pregitzer recently led a study that found 5.5 percent of New York City's area is covered by forests found across dozens of parks, and the majority of trees, biomass, and native species in the entire city are found in natural areas, as compared to trees on the sidewalk or in backyards.

Fear of the Unknown

One of the factors that has contributed to the lack of public use and appreciation of urban natural areas is a fear of the unknown.

This perception is one that Nancy Sonti, a Baltimore-based ecologist at the Northern Research Station's Baltimore Field Station, is working to understand as part of her research on Baltimore's forest patches and their benefit to local residents. According to Sonti, "It can be a challenge to introduce people to urban forests so that they feel safe and comfortable. A lot of people get immense joy from just looking at the forest, but they never actually go inside."

Once they make a habit of spending time in natural wooded areas, Sonti says, they may begin to benefit from the many health advantages associated with the outdoors, including reduced anxiety and increased ability to focus. They may also

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place a higher priority on learning about, preserving, restoring, and creating natural areas.

Getting more people into urban natural areas is one of the goals of Forest Service partner Baltimore Green Space, a nonprofit organization that works with communities to preserve and support community gardens, forest patches, pocket parks, and other open spaces that are managed by city residents. This fills a real need in Baltimore, where about 20 percent of the tree canopy lies in forest patches outside parks. These patches often exist because they are on land that has been abandoned or that is undesirable for development due to economic or biophysical factors.

The Monster of Springfield Woods

Katie Lautar, executive director of Baltimore Green Space, describes how one community is reconnecting with a forest patch called Springfield Woods. This 3.5-acre forest is located in Wilson Park, a small community in northeast Baltimore that was one of the first African American communities in the city.

"For years," Lautar says, "you couldn't see kids there. People were more likely to use it as a dumping area. But a local resident named Butch Berry, who used to play in Springfield Woods as a boy, came back to the neighborhood a few years ago and spearheaded an effort to preserve and restore the woods." Activities like clearing vines and restoring streams can make a site more accessible and appealing, as well as more ecologically functional.

Katie continues, "Last year we worked with Friends of Springfield Woods to host a fundraising event called Monster of Springfield Woods Haunted Trail, which is inspired by a short film Butch and his friends made in their younger days. Loyola University students participated by dressing up in scary costumes, and about 75 people showed up. You could hear screams all over the forest."

Efforts like this, along with community cleanup events, are changing public attitudes toward Springfield Woods. "Locals would make signs for Springfield Woods, but they'd never step foot in it," Lautar says, adding, "Now volunteers come to pull out poison ivy, build trails, and remove trash." It's an encouraging situation in light of Baltimore's 1,000-plus forest patches, which Lautar defines as a wooded area between 10,000 square feet and 20 acres.

This increased awareness and participation ties into Sonti's work, which includes evaluation of historical and current environmental conditions and changing human use patterns in urban natural areas. According to Sonti, "Many urban forest patches have surprisingly intact soils and high native species abundances, and some provide habitat for species of concern. This information has helped build a case for the human and ecological values of these places. On the other hand, the soils in other areas aren't as healthy as they could be, and we see threats from invasive species." She goes on to say, "Our hope is that by raising awareness of the value of forest patches, you're also elevating the importance of maintaining and improving these places."

FRAMING Research at the University of Delaware

In Newark, Delaware, Forest Service entomologist Vince D'Amico has been

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busy with a related study called FRAME, or FoRests Among Managed Ecosystems. A collaboration between the Forest Service and the University of Delaware, the FRAME study has the goal of understanding the causes and consequences of soil, plant, and animal changes in the forest patches that are found in our country's urban parks, riparian buffers, and undeveloped lots.

Most of the forests in the eastern United States are not virgin; the vast majority of forested land in the east was cleared at some point after European colonization. Then, due to changes in agricultural practices, development patterns, and demographic patterns, it was given a chance to regrow in some places. As a result, "we now have lots of heterogeneous forests that have grown up where they had a chance to do so, that are close to lots of people, and are very important," says D'Amico.

Some of the 50 forest patches in the FRAME study were also studied by the Forest Service in the 1960s, which has allowed for valuable comparisons related to invasive species, bird habitat, soil conditions, altered climate conditions, and more. Comparing today's findings with data from more than 50 years ago has yielded a wealth of insights, D'Amico says, adding, "We've followed changes in bird populations, seen the effects of pesticide use in the 1960s, measured how deer populations have risen with reforestation in some areas, and noted how there's much less recreating in these places than there used to be. We're trying to understand everything about them from the soil to the canopy."

Raising awareness of the benefits of forest patches is a critical first step. However, there is a need that extends beyond conservation of these places, to improving their ecological function. To the untrained eye, all urban forested natural areas may appear similar, yet there can be large differences in ecological function and benefits.

Patches covered in weeds and vines that have fewer native species and degraded soils may not offer the same level of climate resilience or stormwater benefits; they may be less aesthetically appealing or accessible, thereby reducing potential mental-emotional and public health related benefits. The data collected at these sites are being analyzed to help cities and landowners manage urban forested natural areas to optimize ecosystem services and improve resilience. This includes predicting areas that are most likely to be exposed to invasive species in order to mitigate invasion, as well as determining whether simple soil treatments can lead to healthier and more productive green spaces.

Though street, park, and yard trees may be the most visible in a city, in many cases small forests outsize their influence and benefits. As research continues to enumerate the roles and benefits associated with urban natural areas—from climate resilience, to public health, to biodiversity, and more— some communities may recognize that it is not feasible to recreate what nature provides, and the care and stewardship of these forest patches may become more of a priority.

The Forest Service's Urban Field Station Network is working to optimize the health of these patches by connecting silvicultural research and best practices across cities and urban rural gradients nationwide. As climate and forest health impacts from invasive insects and disease threaten to tatter the often suboptimal health of our nation's existing urban natural areas, this knowledge will be essential to preserving and enhancing these critically important forests. We would be wise to

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realize that our health, wellbeing, and resilience may be directly tied to the health of these natural areas.

Editor's Note: This publication contained additional snippets of information and suggested further reading, you may read the full version online here: *https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/sites/default/files/2022-03/cross-pollinator_issue-1-summer-2020.pdf*

NJ URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY HOSTS COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE (CORE) TRAINING ONLINE THIS SPRING

March 1, 2024- April 5, 2024, Registration fee: $30.00, Additional Information: *https://urbanforestry.rutgers.edu/njucfce/*

One requirement to be Accredited with the NJUCF program is that at least two representatives (one municipal employee and one local volunteer), active in the local Urban and Community Forestry Program and the care of its tree and forest resources, complete Core Training.

This Spring, Core Training will be hosted online as a 4-week short course consisting of 6 pre-recorded "modules" for registrants to complete at their own pace from March 1 to April 5. To complete Core Training registrants must complete the online material/quizzes and participate in two mandatory real-time discussions over Zoom (March 21 and April 2).

Core Training online Short Course Agenda & Pacing Guide 2024

6 modules to complete on your own time / 2 discussions to attend in real time via Zoom

Friday, March 1st through Monday, March 4th, 2024

- Course Opens on Rutgers Canvas
- Familiarize yourself with the Core training Canvas site
- Post an introduction on the "Introductions & Conversations" discussion board

Monday March 4th, 2024

- LIVE Zoom: Introduction and Canvas Demo, OPTIONAL (recording will be posted on the Canvas page)

Monday March 4th through Thursday March 21st, 2024

- Watch videos and complete quizzes for modules 1-3

Thursday March 21st, 2024

- MANDATORY: Q&A with speakers from modules 1-3
  - 12pm-1pm – Session One OR
  - 4pm – 5pm – Session Two

Friday March 22nd through Tuesday April 2nd, 2024

- Watch videos and complete quizzes for modules 4-6

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NJ URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY HOSTS COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE (CORE) TRAINING ONLINE THIS SPRING

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Tuesday April 2nd, 2024

- MANDATORY: Q&A with speakers from modules 4-6
  - 12pm-1pm – Session One OR
  - 4pm – 5pm – Session Two

Tuesday April 2nd through Friday April 5th, 2024

- Complete all modules and quizzes
- Submit Qualtrics survey (MANDATORY for Core Certification)

Course closes on April 5th

- All quizzes and CORE Trainee Information Form must be submitted prior to April 5th!

Core Training will be accessed through the Rutgers Canvas learning management system and will require reliable internet access. Registrants will receive an account login invitation for the email account registered prior to the March 1 start date.

No refunds are provided. To receive Core Training credit participants must attend and complete all required sections of the course. Core Training does not provide credit for NJUCF CEUs

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2024

February 7th	NJSTF Tree Talk Zoom, 7:00-8:30pm
May 8th	NJSTF Tree Talk Zoom, 7:00-8:30pm
September 4th	NJSTF Tree Talk Zoom, 7:00-8:30pm
October 17-18	NJ Shade Tree Federation 99th Annual Conference, Harrah's Atlantic City, NJ
December 11th	NJSTF Tree Talk Zoom, 7:00-8:30pm

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