



Exploring Volunteer Urban Tree Committees in Massachusetts

By Richard W. Harper, Emily S. Huff, David V. Bloniarz, Stephen DeStefano, and Craig R. Nicholson

Citizen involvement in contemporary urban forestry can be traced to notable events like the inaugural 1872 celebration of “Arbor Day” in Nebraska (U.S.) by J. Sterling Morton.

Volunteer citizen engagement also manifested itself around this period in the U.K., with the formation of citizen associations and committees including the Commons Preservation Society (1865) and the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (1882) (Johnston, 2015). In Massachusetts (U.S.), the Brookline Tree Planting Committee was also established around this time by founding members Charles Sprague Sargent and Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. in 1886 (N. Geerds, Pers. Comm.).

At present, volunteerism in the U.S. is both an important contributor to the American economy, providing an estimated annual value of \$172.9 billion USD (McKeever, 2015), and an important mechanism through which individuals may contribute their knowledge and resources to the community around them (Harrison et al., 2017). It is estimated that 62.6 million individuals, or approximately one in four American adults, is currently engaged in some form of volunteerism (US BOL Statistics, 2016). Though volunteers interest-levels, determination, work habits, and skill-sets may vary, they are often motivated by a strong sense of contribution, and the opportunity to learn new skills and gather information (Harrison et al., 2017; Domroese and Johnson, 2017). Volunteers may also be motivated by a sense of affiliation, recognition and achievement (Fazio, 2015; D. Bloniarz, Pers. Comm.).

Community members volunteering on tree committees find themselves working at critical junctures where biophysical factors like tree planting and maintenance, interact with social elements and human interests like policy decision-makers, municipal managers and employees, and property owners (Mincey et al., 2013). Tree committees endeavor to balance the demands of these different groups and to “reflect the will of the community” (Fazio, 2015) in an official capacity on issues pertaining to the management of the urban forest. Though tree committees are typically concerned with the care of trees located in urban streets and parks, they may also find themselves concerned with the management of urban trees found growing on private properties. This is an important consideration since trees growing in yards or on privately-owned landscapes may comprise up to 90% of the urban tree canopy cover of a community (Fazio, 2015).

Tree committees may arise for a variety of reasons. In some instances, they may be hastily conscripted to address the acute loss of urban tree canopy cover due to a rapidly-invading pest of importance, or perhaps in the event of a severe storm that has caused widespread damage or urban tree canopy cover loss (Town of Monson, 2017). Tree committees may also form, however, out of the need to address more

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chronic issues such as a community's aging and declining high-profile tree population.

Though there is a plethora of formal research concerning volunteer-led organizations and volunteerism in general, almost none of this information has been contextualized for members of urban forest tree committees, the vast majority of whom are volunteering at the municipal level (Fazio, 2015). The local conditions (challenges, opportunities) under which tree committees must function have been given little, if any, consideration in the research literature (Greenleaf, 2016). Urban forest tree committee members in New England states, for example, will likely interact with local officers known as "tree wardens" (Ricard, 2005; Harper et al., 2017). Tree wardens are unique to the New England region (i.e., Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine) of the U.S., and are a critical human component of urban and community forestry (Ricard and Dreyer, 2005). As an officer, a tree warden may potentially differ from a city forester in another state or region as they are a mandated position that may work in direct cooperation with local authorities to press charges, halt construction operations, levy fines, and/or declare a tree hazardous and fit for removal (Harper, 2017). Little is known about the nature of the relationship between an urban forest tree committee and a tree warden, however. Until now, no formal attempts have been made to establish even a baseline understanding of the characteristics of a well-functioning volunteer-led urban forest tree committee. Here, we explored various perspectives and characteristics of what a successful volunteer-led urban forest tree committee looked like in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Harper et al., 2018), with the hope that our findings may offer insights for other urban forest tree committees. Specifically, we aimed to determine 1) How tree committees are organized and operate, 2) What successes

and challenges tree committees have had and; 3) What relationships exist between tree committees and other urban forestry entities.

Approach

We generated a 21-question semi-structured interview instrument (Table 1) and gathered data from representatives from 13 urban forest tree committees in Massachusetts, representing both small communities and larger cities (Table 2). Questions posed to participants from the semi-structured interview tool were categorized into three groups: "Introductory" (questions 1-8), "Operational" (questions 9-12), "Community Relationships" (questions 13-21)

Table 1. Interview Questions with MA Urban Tree Committees.

1. Briefly tell us about your local TC and your involvement	have these partnerships been successful?
2. Briefly outline your background and your motivations for participating on your local TC.	14. Briefly identify some examples of some unsuccessful collaborations. Why?
3. When was the TC formed?	15. Is there a means of evaluating a program's or an initiative's success?
4. Does your TC have a charter?	16. How does your TC interact with the public (i.e., Facebook page, town meetings, etc.)
5. Does your TC have a mission?	17. Identify the steps taken by your TC to maintain volunteers & recruit new participants?
6. Is the TC advisory only, or is there an authority (regulatory) component?	18. Briefly describe the nature of your TC's interaction with the local Tree warden.
7. Please outline the number of members on your TC and the typical term length?	19. Briefly describe the nature of your TC's interaction with local municipal officials (i.e., mayor's office, select board, councilors).
8. How is an individual ratified (formalized) as a TC member?	20. Briefly describe the nature of your TC's interaction with local (municipal) agencies, organizations and/or associations?
9. When does your TC meet?	21. Has your TC helped to develop, shape or implement policy in your community – how?
10. How are meetings run and how are they evaluated?	
11. What sort of operational guidance (i.e., annual plan of work, budget) does your TC have?	
12. Briefly identify key programs or initiatives your TC carries out?	
13. Briefly identify some key collaborating groups – why	

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Table 2. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Urban Forest Tree Committee representatives from the following MA communities.

Municipality	Population
Fall River	88,712
Brookline	58,732
Arlington	42,844
Chelsea	38,861
Amherst	37,819
Saugus	26,628
Greenfield	17,456
Newburyport	17,450
Lynnfield	11,596
Great Barrington	7,104
Mattapoisett	6,045
Marion	4,907
Lanesborough	3,091

Findings

1. Introductory Questions

Interviewees introduced themselves by identifying their 'position' and/or their 'duration' on their urban forest tree committee, and by discussing the local 'history' and origins of their tree committee:

The tree committee was started by the board of selectmen in 2011. At that time, they were doing a whole renovation on Main street and there were...beautiful, beautiful pear trees planted along Main street. They had gone in around 40 years ago and in May they would be in bloom and they just made the town look quite majestic. But they were old and they were breaking and they were becoming quite a hazard and they were growing into wires. So the board of Selectmen decided to get a resolution to form a tree committee to be advisory...to come up with a new tree design for Main street. (Great Barrington Tree Committee)

Members appeared to serve as a result of a deep 'personal interest in trees and greening'. One participant summed up this sentiment well: "I've loved trees my whole life." - Amherst Tree Committee

The emergence of 'professional affiliation, interest' was also a prominently associated theme among interviewees, as many of them indicated their motivation to volunteer was due to the fact that they were formally credentialed and/or professionally experienced in fields related to urban forestry like 'horticulture', 'forestry', 'landscape architecture/design', 'planning' or as a 'naturalist'.

Urban tree committees have typically formed only in recent years, with all but one of the tree committees having been formed within the last 30 years. Almost all tree committees (n=10) featured a 'charter' as well as a 'mission statement'. According to the chair of the Fall River Street Tree Planting Program,

Yes, we do have a mission, to try to plant trees in the Fall River area and to reach out to the public and inform them of the benefit of trees in a community.

The vast majority (n=11) of interviewees indicated their urban forest tree committee played an 'advisory, educational' role and often worked in a cooperative, consulting manner with municipal staff on issues relevant to urban forest management:

We're an advisory committee so we advise the tree warden. We do vote on issues...that come before the committee...there is a committee vote, but it's always advisory to the tree warden (Brookline Tree Planting Committee)

[We are] advisory...all final decisions are made by the tree warden (Newburyport Tree Commission)

Interviewees indicated that urban forest tree committees typically featured a membership size ranging from 4-9 individuals, who are most likely serving a 'three-year' term limit (though some committees had 'undefined' terms).

Observations

While it was not surprising that individuals regularly indicated that they serve on an urban forest tree committee because they take great personal interest – and are indeed passionate – about matters concerning urban trees, it was

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noteworthy to see professional interests and backgrounds represented in this volunteer capacity as well. The ability of a committee to leverage professional expertise is an important asset in deepening its capacity to respond to change, as urban forest needs shift in accordance with community priorities. In the event that professional foresters, horticulturists, and/or landscape architects/designers are serving as urban forest tree committee volunteers, they will likely be able to provide in-house expertise regarding a practice or initiative such as proper tree planting; yet, if the community wished to expand activities and commence a citizen pruners initiative, those same professionals should be able to provide some degree of guidance and training in that capacity as well. It also speaks to the importance of attracting a diversity of individuals that represent that community as a whole, and can communicate successfully within their spheres of influence regarding municipal urban forest management activities and practices (Locke and Grove, 2016).

At an initial glance, it may appear that urban forest tree committees are highly structured, with well-placed systems in working order, ready to integrate new members from the community. The inherently disparate nature of volunteer committees, however, is that some groups are high-functioning while others are not (Harrison et al., 2017). So, while many committees featured a step-by-step system where community residents may get involved, others may be less clear in their procedures, as indicated by their 'undefined' term lengths for committee members in some towns.

Finally, it was of interest that, with the exception of the Brookline Tree Planting Committee, all other Massachusetts urban forest tree committees were formed in the last 30 years. Though there are aforementioned examples of volunteer citizen engagement in municipal parks and urban forest management from periods in

the late 19th century, this information speaks to the relative recency of urban forestry as a recognized profession in Massachusetts.

2. Operational Questions

Operationally (interview questions 9-12), tree committee meetings may be run by a 'chair', typically follow an 'agenda', may feature a 'member reports' segment, and typically document 'minutes'. A substantive number (n=5) of the urban forest tree committees indicated "yes" they have a municipal budget, though nearly just as many (n=4) indicated that they did not.

Interview data revealed that urban forest tree committees may engage the community with celebrations like 'Arbor Day' activities:

Every year we have an Arbor Day get-together and this year was planting four trees at the children's museum...the mayor actually has to sign the official form and preside over that [ceremony]. (Fall River Street Tree Planting Program)

...we have a very nice Arbor Day celebration which we happen to celebrate in May because April in the Berkshires is way too cold. We work with the third-grade class up at the Lanesborough Elementary...they do tree art, they write tree poems, and we go up and have a day of tree education with them. (Lanesborough Tree & Forest Committee)

Urban forest tree committees may also be engaged in assisting with a local 'urban forest inventory', 'urban tree planting', and/or some form of direct outreach like staffing an 'events booth, display', or generating 'printed media':

We put out a newsletter, now it's only once a year, we used to do it twice a year, but it's a thing called "Tree Talk" and we include it in the spring tax bill so that we try to reach many homeowners with as much tree information as we can, and there are a lot of people who comment on that quite often that they...like to get that and they learn new things... (Lynnfield Tree Commission).

Only one committee indicated that they interacted with the public via a blog.

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Observations

It was of interest that urban forest tree committees were essentially split on the issue of municipal budgets with 5 sources indicating they had access to formally allocated funds, while 4 sources indicated they did not. This issue was raised between the Chair of the Newburyport Tree Committee and Newburyport community leaders:

When I joined, the tree commission never received any money. And I went to the mayor and I said “why?” And she said, “show me a plan and I’ll show you the money.”

This interaction may be an important one, as it illustrates the impact of a grassroots, volunteer-led initiative that has the capacity to put together a cohesive plan of work, including how municipal dollars would be spent. Though data revealed that urban forest tree committees in Massachusetts may compose some form of a plan of work (n=4), a closer look reveals that in one of these instances it is essentially a legacy work cycle. Hence, it may be possible that strengthening this activity among more urban forest tree committees may result in a more favorable response from local decision-makers relative to providing financial support.

Prominently emerging themes concerning urban forest tree committee activities like participating in Arbor Day festivities and urban tree planting were not surprising. These activities may be especially well-suited to volunteer-led urban forest tree committees due in large part to the popularity associated with both Arbor Day and tree planting efforts (Jonnes, 2016).

In part II of this article series on volunteer urban tree committees, the authors will discuss the community and organizational relationships closely associated with volunteer urban tree committees in Massachusetts.

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Species Spotlight

Eastern Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*

By Mollie Freilicher Eastern redbud is a small tree, native from New Jersey south to central Florida, west to south Texas and Missouri, and northern Mexico. This time of year, you may be noticing pods hanging from eastern redbud in Massachusetts. These are the developing fruits. Though eastern redbud is in the Fabaceae, a



Form, Mollie Freilicher

family whose members typically can [fix nitrogen](#) (convert atmospheric nitrogen to nitrogen compounds that plants can use), eastern redbud does not. Eastern redbud typically reaches 20 to 30 feet tall, with a slightly larger spread. It is hardy in the warmer parts of USDA zone 4 to 9, but when planting in Massachusetts, it is better to purchase more northerly stock or hardier cultivars. If you are not sure where the stock is from, just ask.

Leaves of eastern redbud are alternate, broadly ovate and somewhat heart-shaped, and are three to five inches around. The leaf margins are entire (smooth), and a shiny dark green, with five to nine veins radiating out from the base. The leaf has a long petiole, one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half inches long and is swollen at the base of the leaf. In summer they are a dark green and turn to yellow in the fall.



Flowers, [Wikipedia](#)

Twigs of eastern redbud are slender, not hairy, and are dark brown to blackish. They lack a terminal bud and this gives branches a zig-zag appearance. Lateral buds are 1/8-inch long or shorter, blunt, and dark. Flower buds are larger than leaf buds, which can be hard to see.

The flowers are where eastern redbud really shines. Appearing before the foliage emerges, the flowers are perfect and pink to reddish-purple, remaining through leaf emergence. Eastern redbud typically blooms in late April to early May in Massachusetts and attracts many pollinators. The fruit is a true pod (legume), characteristic of plants in Fabaceae family. Often remaining on trees into winter, they are brown to brownish-black in color and are about three inches long and a half-inch wide.

Eastern redbud can tolerate many soil types and does best in well-drained acid to neutral soils. Plant eastern redbud in full sun for the best flowering. It can be used as an accent plant, in groupings, and in small spaces, including along streets (with pruning). Of eastern redbud, Keith Warren and Michael Dirr write, "Every city, town, municipality, and garden should enthusiastically embrace redbuds; they add seasonal ornamental attributes to landscapes, rewarding with expressive and much-anticipated spring flowers, elegant and artistic branching structure, clean dark summer foliage, and respectable yellow fall color." In Massachusetts, the species as well as several cultivars are readily available. 'Forest Pansy' has purple leaves, but is hardy only to USDA zone 6. 'Pink Pom Poms' is fruitless and has double flower. Other cold hardy cultivars locally available include 'Minnesota Strain,' 'Royal White' (white flowers), and 'Pink Trim,' Lavender Twist® ('Covey'), 'Hearts of Gold' (yellow foliage), and others.



Leaves, Mollie Freilicher



Fruit, Mollie Freilicher

Dirr, Michael A. and Keith S. Warren. 2019. *The Tree Book*. Portland, OR: Timber Press.

From the Woods

DCR Service Forestry and the Topsfield Fair

By **Laura Dooley** Over the last three decades DCR Service Foresters have assisted The Essex County Christmas Tree Growers with their annual exhibit at The Topsfield Fair. This friendly competition between growers promotes high quality, locally grown Christmas trees such as Fraser fir, balsam fir, Douglas fir, and blue spruce.

Each year a variety of tree species ranging from six to eight feet in height are entered into the competition. Up for grabs each year is a “Best in Show” blue ribbon, engraved silver bowl, and bragging rights with hopes that visitors will find their way to their Christmas tree farm.



Christmas trees at the Topsfield Fair.

Young visitors to the exhibit booth like the hands on experience of touching samples of trees native to Essex county woodlands. Another educational feature is the stack of cordwood. The 4 x 4 x 8 stack of wood represents what a homeowner should receive when purchasing one cord of wood from a Massachusetts firewood dealer. The cordwood is raffled off to a lucky fairgoer on the last day of the fair.

The Topsfield Fair which began in 1818 has only been cancelled twice in its history. In 1918 all agricultural fairs in the state were cancelled due to the Spanish Flu. It was cancelled again in 1943-1945 because of World War II. For the safety of the staff, exhibitors and visitors the fair has been cancelled this year but looks forward to celebrating again in October 1, 2021.

Laura Dooley is a DCR Service Forester and covers northeastern Massachusetts. To find out more about DCR Service Forestry, go to: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/service-forestry>.

Growing on Trees

Reminder! Inbox Alert!

Upcoming Survey on the Economic Contributions of Urban Forestry

There is a study underway led by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources that is evaluating the economic contributions of the urban forestry sector in the Northeast-Midwest region of the U.S. This study is the first in the nation to focus specifically on the economic contributions of urban forestry across multiple states. A **random sample** of businesses, non-profits, and local governments will receive an invitation to participate in a web survey in late summer.

Look for an email with the subject line [The Urban Forestry Economic Contributions Study Invites You to Participate](#) from [The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources <noreply@qualtrics-survey.com>](#). The questions will ask about your organization's sales and revenue (or budgets) in 2018. There will also be questions about the number of full- and part-time employees for that year. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and individual responses are kept completely confidential. Survey results will inform regional and state-specific reports. Thanks in advance for your participation!

Growing on Trees

DCR Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grants

Deadline for Intent to Apply: October 1

Full Application Deadline: November 1

Challenge grants are 50-50 matching grants (75-25 for environmental justice projects) to municipalities and nonprofit groups in Massachusetts communities of all sizes for the purpose of building local capacity for excellent urban and community forestry at the local and regional level.

The USDA Forest Service provides funding for the grant program, and DCR administers the grants with guidance from the Massachusetts Tree Wardens' and Foresters' Association.

The DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program assists communities and nonprofit groups in their efforts to protect and manage community trees and forest ecosystems, with the ultimate aim of improving the environment and enhancing the livability of all of Massachusetts's communities.

Project areas include:

- Building and strengthening citizen advocacy and action organizations
- Securing or training professional staff
- Developing and implementing systematic urban forestry management through tree inventory and analysis, resource assessment, and development of plans
- Completing strategic community tree plantings and "heritage" tree care projects
- Establishing a wood bank
- Other projects

Read the complete guidelines and download the application at:

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/urban-and-community-forestry-challenge-grants>

For more information on the Challenge Grants, including our Eversource Go Green grants and National Grid Partnership Grants, contact Julie Coop at 617-626-1468 or julie.coop@mass.gov, or Mollie Freilicher at 413-577-2966 or mollie.freilicher@mass.gov.

NASF Centennial Challenge

Please help support the Massachusetts DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry in our participation in the National Association of State Forester's 100th anniversary Centennial Challenge! Our theme for this challenge is "100 Legacy Trees Across Massachusetts." We are asking people to help us reach our 100 legacy tree goal by nominating unique, significant, and otherwise noteworthy trees on public and private land across Massachusetts. A legacy tree can be any tree that is compelling for its age, size, form, history, species, and/or botanical interest.

Please visit <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-legacy-tree-program> to learn more about the legacy tree program and to fill out an online nomination form or print a pdf of the form.

To learn more about the NASF centennial challenge, please visit <https://www.stateforesters.org/centennial/>.

EPA Campus RainWorks Challenge—Register by Oct 1, 2020

The [Campus RainWorks Challenge](#) is a green infrastructure design competition for American colleges and universities that seeks to engage with the next generation of environmental professionals, foster a dialogue about the need for innovative stormwater management, and showcase the environmental, economic, and social benefits of green infrastructure practices. Check out the official [2020 Campus RainWorks Challenge Competition Brief](#). Deadline for Entries: December 11, 2020. If you have questions about the Campus RainWorks Challenge please direct them to RainWorks@epa.gov.



Growing on Trees—Webcasts and Online Events

CT Tree Protective Assoc.

September 3, 2020 | 12:00-1:00 p.m. (EDT)

Beech Leaf Disease

Free, registration required: ctp.org.

TickTalk Webinar

September 9, 2020 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. (EDT)

The Biology of Ticks and Tick-Borne Disease

Free, registration required: <https://ag.umass.edu/landscape/education-events/ticktalk-with-tickreport-webinars>

TREE Fund Webinar

September 29, 2020 | 1:00 p.m. (EDT)

Soil Assessment for Urban Trees—Part 2 Actions

Bryant C. Scharenbroch, PhD, Asst. Prof. of Soil Science, Univ. of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, Research Fellow of The Morton Arboretum

Find out more: <https://treefund.org/webinars>

UMass Green School (Online)

October 26 - December 10, 2020

Specialty Tracks Offered: Arboriculture, Landscape Management, Turfgrass Management. [Find out more.](#)

Partners in Community Forestry Conference Events (Online)

November 17: Alliance for Community Trees

November 18: Partners in Community Forestry

November 19: Society of Municipal Arborists

November 20: Urban Woods Network Meeting & Natural Areas Conservancy Meeting

Find out more: at arborday.org

Native Plant Trust

Many online offerings this fall. Find out more at www.nativeplanttrust.org/education/classes/

USDA Forest Service Urban Forest Connections

September 9, 2020 | 1:00-2:15 p.m. (EDT)

New Guidance for Tracking Long-Term Tree Survival, Growth, and Health

Lara Roman, USDA Forest Service; Natalie van Doorn, USDA Forest Service; Dana Dentice, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

To view the webinar and watch past webinars, go to www.fs.fed.us/research/urban-webinars/.

Urban Forestry Today

September 10, 2020 | 12:00 p.m. (EDT)

Insect Pests in the Landscape

Tawny Simisky, UMass Extension

Attend live and earn free ISA/MCA CEUs. To attend, click [here](#) OR visit: <http://www.joinwebinar.com> and enter the code: 272-670-491

To view archived webcasts, go to www.urbanforestrytoday.org/

New England ISA Annual Conference (Online)

53rd Annual Conference and Trade Show

October 4-6, 2020

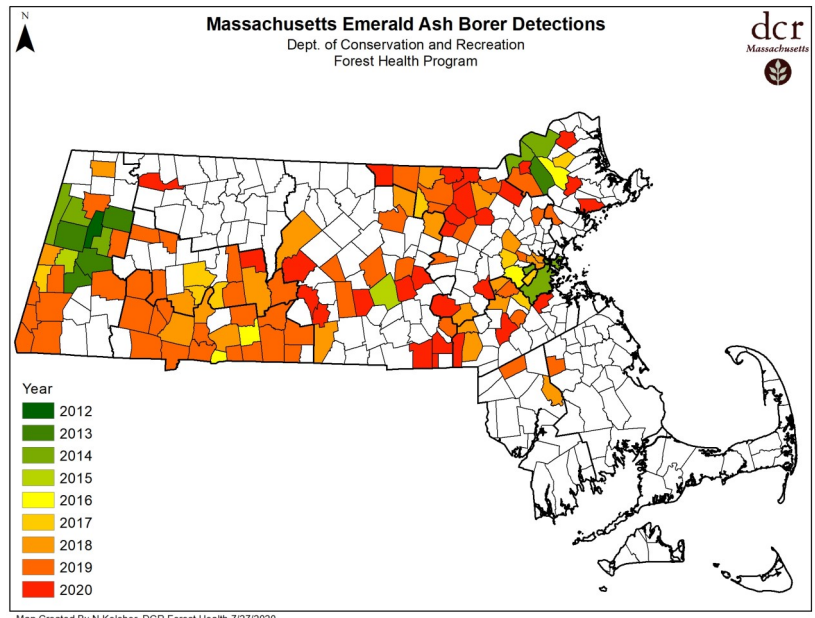
Powered by EventMobi, this year's conference is more than a series of Zoom webinars. Check out the amazing group of speakers who will be available LIVE for Q&A sessions. Network with your fellow arborists and urban foresters and earn CEUs in our ALL NEW, interactive ignite sessions. You can visit the virtual trade show and connect via chat or live video with exhibitors. Don't miss the keynote speakers **Nina Bassuk** and **Peter Trowbridge** who will be presenting "Creating the Sustainable Urban Landscape."

Find out more: www.newenglandisa.org.

Growing on Trees

EAB Update

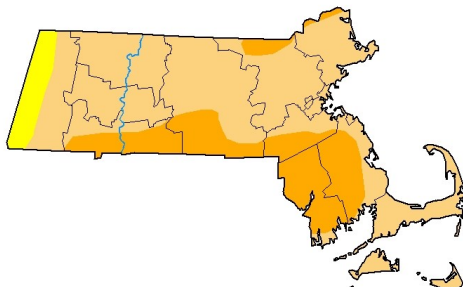
No new update this month. In July, the DCR Forest Health Program confirmed the presence of [emerald ash borer](#) (EAB) in Ashby, Beverly, Carlisle, Hardwick, Lawrence, Leicester, Milton, Natick, Northborough, Shrewsbury, West Brookfield, and West Newbury. The total number of municipalities with confirmed EAB is 127, with 28 detections in 2020. Barnstable is the only county on the Massachusetts mainland without a known detection of EAB. EAB has also not been detected on the islands. Want to know more about EAB? Go to: <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/>



Map Created By N. Keleher, DCR Forest Health 7/27/2020

U.S. Drought Monitor Massachusetts

August 25, 2020
(Released Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Intensity:
None
D0 Abnormally Dry
D1 Moderate Drought
D2 Severe Drought
D3 Extreme Drought
D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:
David Simeral
Western Regional Climate Center

USDA
NRCC
droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Weather and Climate

Drought conditions in Massachusetts have deteriorated over the last month, with all of the state in a drought status or abnormally dry. As of August 25, 5% of the state was classified as D0-Abnormally Dry, 68% was classified as D1-Moderate Drought, and 26% was classified as D2-Severe Drought. While conditions may vary across the state, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs has [classified the whole state in a Level 2—Significant Drought](#).

Want to see how much time your area has been in a drought status since 1895? Check out [this map](#) and select “Percent Time in Drought Categories” and “Massachusetts” (or your northeastern state).

Looking for information on what this means for plants? Check out the [UMass Landscape Message](#). There you can learn about conditions around the state, from weather, to insect and disease activity and management, growing degree day reports, phenology, and cultural problems.

Find out more

Mass. Drought Page | www.mass.gov/ma-drought-management

The Northeast Regional Climate Center | www.nrcc.cornell.edu/regional/drought/drought.html

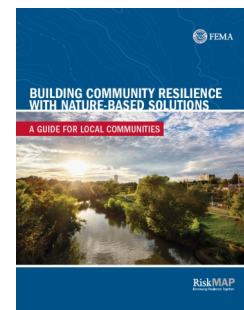
The U.S. Drought Portal | www.drought.gov/drought/states/massachusetts

National Climate Report | www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/

Gleanings

New FEMA Guide: Building Community Resilience with Nature Based Solutions

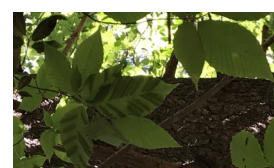
The Federal Emergency Management Agency has released [Building Community Resilience with Nature-Based Solutions: A Guide for Local Communities](#), which makes the business case for using nature-based solutions in planning for natural hazards. It offers examples and federal funding opportunities for projects through FEMA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



News

Public Asked to Monitor Beech Trees and Report Potential Infection

BOSTON – The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) [announced](#) that agency foresters have positively identified [Beech Leaf Disease](#) (BLD) symptomatic trees within Massachusetts in the communities of Plymouth, Worcester, and Blandford. Infected trees include both American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) and European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees. This is the first time the tree disease, which affects beech tree varieties, has been identified in the state, and members of the public are asked to monitor beech trees on their property and report potentially infected trees to DCR for analyses. [Find out more](#). Think you've seen it? Contact DCR's [Forest Health Program](#) at (857) 337-5173 or email at Nicole.Keleher@mass.gov.



Infected leaves, showing dark bands between the veins.

Don't Sweat it, Plant It: Trees Boost Overall Health and Cut Cooling Costs

By Jon Gorey

August 19, 2020—Some home improvements — a sleek new kitchen, a fresh coat of paint — have an instant visual impact that improves the value of your home and your life within it. Others, like a more efficient furnace or insulation retrofit, are less glamorous, but can lower your energy bills for years to come. Either type of project, of course, will generally set you back a bunch of money. But there's another improvement that can beautify your home, boost curb appeal, and lower your energy bills at the same time. And while it can still be costly, sometimes a squirrel will do the job for free. Trees. Read the full story at boston.com (and hear from Mathew Cahill, DCR)

Headlines in Brief

[How Decades of Racist Housing Policy Left Neighborhoods Sweltering](#)

[Austin Tracks The Rise In Temperatures In Its Neighborhoods](#) (also [this](#))

[‘Trees Are Cool’ Specialty License Plates-FL](#)
[Brookline Asks Residents to Participate in 2nd Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Forum](#)

[Can Vermont's Forests Help Save The Planet?](#)
[Cloning Giant Sequoias](#) and [Forest Bathing for Health](#) (From Living on Earth)

[Fossil Leaves Show High Atmospheric Carbon Spurred Ancient 'Global Greening'](#)

[How Racism and Classism Affect Natural Ecosystems](#)

[Invasive Shrubs in Northeast Forests Grow Leaves Earlier and Keep Them Longer](#)

[Researchers Assemble First Comprehensive List of Panama's Trees with Geographic Ranges](#)

[Creating Meaningful Change in Cities Takes Decades, Not Years, and Starts From the Bottom](#)

[Cities That Heal: How The Coronavirus Pandemic Could Change Urban Design](#)

[Study Shines New Light on Young Tree Seedlings](#)

On the Horizon

- Sept 3** Webinar: [Beech Leaf Disease webinar](#), 12:00 p.m., CT Tree Protective Association
- Sept 9** Webinar: [New Guidance For Tracking Long-Term Tree Survival, Growth, and Health](#), 1:00 p.m.
- Sept 9** [UMass Tick Talk Webcast](#), 12:00 p.m.
- Sept 10** Insect Pests in the Landscape, Urban Forestry Today Webcast, www.urbanforestrytoday.org
- Sept 16** Webinar: [ROW Reclamation](#), 1:00 p.m.
- Sept 21** MAA Sept. Online Learning, Forest Health Update, www.massarbor.org
- Sept 29** Soil Assessment for Urban Trees Part 2 Actions, TREE Fund, 1:00 p.m., www.treefund.org/webinars
- Oct 4-6** New England ISA Annual Conference (Online), www.newenglandisa.org
- Oct 7** Mass. Arborist Exam, www.massarbor.org
- Oct 7-8** [Climate Change Workshop](#), Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center
- Oct 19** MAA Sept. Online Learning, Rope Tension and Forces, www.massarbor.org
- Oct 23- Dec 10** UMass Extension Green School (Online), www.umassgreeninfo.org
- Oct 29-31** SAF National Convention (Online), www.eforester.org
- Nov 18** Partners in Community Forestry Conference (Online), www.arborday.org/pcf
- Nov 19** Society of Municipal Arborists Conference (Online), www.urban-forestry.com
- Anytime:** [Archived webinar](#) on tree planting in the era of COVID-19

All times are Eastern.

Check out the calendar of the New England ISA for additional opportunities:
<https://newenglandisa.org/events>

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Bureau of Forestry

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www.mass.gov/dcr/urban-and-community-forestry

Charles D. Baker, Governor

Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor

Kathleen A. Theoharides, Secretary, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Jim Montgomery, Commissioner, Department of Conservation and Recreation

Peter Church, Director of Forest Stewardship, Department of Conservation and Recreation

If you have a topic you'd like to see covered or want to submit an item to *The Citizen Forester* (article, photo, event listing, etc.), contact [Mollie Freilicher](#) or click [here](#).

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