

TREE BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Citizens working together for a healthier community forest

A tree committee or tree and forest board is a citizen-led group that works with local public officials to improve the health of the urban and community forest through advocacy, education, management, plantings, and maintenance activities.

Why Have a Tree Committee?

There are many benefits to having a tree committee in your community.

Such committees can:

- **Advocate** for better public tree and forest management and for more public support for urban and community forestry.
- **Get Work Done.** They may help complete an inventory, education campaign, planting program, tree ordinance, or may water or prune newly planted trees.
- **Bring in Additional Resources** for town trees and forests. Committees help apply for grants, solicit private donations, organize fundraisers, and advocate for larger budgets.
- **Reduce Conflicts.** Committees can help reduce potential conflicts by providing a forum for reviewing complaints, addressing safety issues, and supporting tree warden decisions.
- **Help Raise Public Awareness.** Citizen committees can be quite successful at educating residents about the importance of trees and urban forestry and at raising public awareness of the needs of trees and forests.
- **Improve your Urban and Community Forest.** Taken together, all these benefits result in an improved urban and community forest for your city or town.



Tree committee members, municipal officials and staff, and other volunteers gather at the annual DCR Tree City USA Forum and Award Ceremony for learning, recognition, and networking.

How Do Tree Committees Form?

Some tree committees have been around for decades. Others form when the tree warden or town officials see the need for more citizen involvement in forestry. Most are advisory to the town and tree warden, but some have the authority of the tree warden.

Most tree committees in Massachusetts form when a group of citizens wants to get more involved in forestry. In most cases, these groups go to the Mayor or Select Board and ask that an officially recognized tree committee be appointed.

Talk to your tree warden. Talk to local officials. Talk to other interested and knowledgeable residents. Ask how a citizen tree committee could help in your community. See if you can get one started.

Tips for Successful Tree Boards and Committees

- Try to build a board that is representative of the diversity of your community.
- Look for members with some area of expertise (arborist, communications specialist, grant writer, etc.). Some members should have knowledge of trees, forestry, and arboriculture.



- Find members who are interested in working positively with all constituents and especially with the tree warden, town commissions, and other public officials.
- Start with some easily achievable projects. Some tree committees have found that difficult projects (like writing a new tree ordinance or conducting a full inventory) often result in frustration and produce little to show for the effort.
- Rotate your leadership and membership often. This helps groups guard against “burn-out” and continually brings in new ideas.
- Make sure that all members are committed to finding solutions, not just identifying problems.

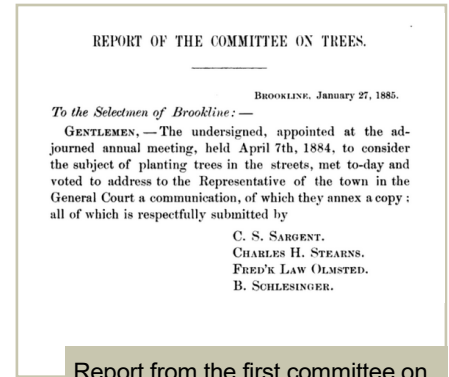
Examples of Tree and Forest Committees in Massachusetts

Town of Brookline: Established in 1886, the Brookline Tree Planting Committee is the oldest continuous tree planting committee in the nation. The Select Board appoints the three-member committee that advises the tree warden on tree selection and placement.

Town of Monson: This Committee formed following the tornado of June 1, 2011 and provides leadership, education, and resources for residents replanting trees following the tornado. The Committee meets once a month, and, in addition to replanting, works to advocate for trees in the community through development of a tree ordinance and management plan and through educational programming for residents.

Town of Amherst: The Amherst Public Shade Tree Committee works to preserve, protect, and promote the town’s public shade trees and its urban forestry goals. Since 1978 the Committee has played a key role in the Town’s successful application to state and national grants, run regular tree planting programs, and participates in the review of projects that impact the Town’s urban forest. They work with the DPW, Conservation Commission, Planning Department and frequently support surrounding communities with their public shade tree programs.

City of Greenfield: The Greenfield Tree Committee is a non-profit, volunteer group of concerned citizens, operating under the umbrella organization, the Connecticut River Conservancy. The group’s purpose is to promote a strong and resilient urban forest in the City of Greenfield by facilitating the planting of trees along public ways and by educating the public on the value of trees and the need for their care and maintenance. The Committee raises funds and works closely with the Greenfield Department of Public Works in an advisory and supportive capacity.



Report from the first committee on trees in the nation in Brookline, 1885. The Committee became official in 1886.

REFERENCES:

Tree Board University
www.treeboardu.org

Tree Board Handbook
<https://shop.arborday.org/tree-board-handbook>

Bureau of Forestry

Urban & Community
 Forestry Program

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