

# Community Forestry Assistant



Northwest  
Management, Inc.

## Newsletter

August 2007

### Sustainable Community Forestry

*Sustainable urban forestry is based on the concept of sustainable urban ecosystems, or landscapes designed and managed to minimize impact on the environment and maximize value received for dollars expended in the long term.*

This relatively new concept stresses the interrelatedness of all components of the urban forest. Today's challenge is to stop viewing and managing urban trees as "pretty pictures" and begin treating them as urban ecosystems and essential parts of a city's infrastructure. Urban forests have been proven to lower utility costs, keep parking lots cool, increase property values, stimulate economic growth, attract customers to commercial centers, increase tourism, ease stress, reduce air pollution, minimize storm water runoff and erosion, and improve ground water quality.

There are four basic steps for initiating a sustainable tree program in your community.

- 1. Identify needs by conducting an inventory.** An inventory of street and/or park trees is still the best foundation for an active, productive community forestry program. An inventory not only gives stakeholders, city officials, and volunteers the opportunity to work together, it also provides facts about the current condition of the community forest. An inventory can also be used as a mechanism to garner publicity about the local forest resource, its management needs, and its importance to the community.
- 2. Create a vision of what is desirable and possible.** The inventory shows you what you have, but what you really need to decide is what you want in the future. A vision statement is a search for the ideal – a goal for the state of the community trees 10 to 25 years in the future.
- 3. Plan, plan, plan, then act!** The "long range" planning horizon is typically around five years. The goal is to change the forest as you know it from your inventory into the one you described in your vision statement. The long range plan gives you the opportunity to create a strategy for an action program and prioritize projects. You should also focus on developing an annual work plan or "to do list" for your community. Many organizations also choose to create an emergency plan for the inevitable time when a storm or other disaster causes severe damage to your urban forest.
- 4. Check progress regularly.** At the end of the year, hold a meeting to review your accomplishments. An annual evaluation not only helps justify expenditures, but it is also essential for achieving the kind of sustainable urban forest described in your vision statement.

Some Examples of Sustainability	
Unsustainable Actions	Sustainable Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overusing pesticides</li> <li>• Paving surfaces</li> <li>• Including all materials in landfills</li> <li>• Clearing woodlands for houses</li> <li>• Building more power plants</li> <li>• Tolerating social injustices</li> <li>• Excluding or marginalizing minority populations</li> <li>• Operating solely on grant money</li> <li>• Unplanned plantings</li> <li>• Forgoing tree maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting principles of Plant Health Care</li> <li>• Using porous materials; preserving open spaces</li> <li>• Recycling; making products out of waste</li> <li>• Building with trees; planting new trees, and caring for those you already have</li> <li>• Conserving energy by using shade effectively</li> <li>• Assuring healthy living conditions for all</li> <li>• Including and partnering with all people, making special efforts to reach out to all</li> <li>• Obtaining local broad-based financial support and encouraging entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Well designed plantings</li> </ul>

The information contained in this article is adapted from Urban and Community Forestry: A Practical Guide to Sustainability, a National Arbor Day Foundation publication by James R. Fazio.

*If you would like assistance developing a sustainable community forestry program, please contact your local Idaho Department of Lands supported North Idaho Community Forestry Assistant, Northwest Management, Inc.--Tera King at 208-883-4488.*