



# **COMMUNITY TREE PROGRAM**

**Athens-Clarke County  
Georgia**

**An Organizational and Procedural Guide To  
Community Tree Management**

**Adopted April 3, 2001**

**Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County  
Central Services Department  
Landscape Management Division  
350 Pound Street  
Athens, Georgia 30601**

**(706)613-3561 voice  
(706)613-3566 fax  
[www.athensclarkecounty.com](http://www.athensclarkecounty.com)**





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*Developed by  
Constance P. Head  
Consulting Urban Forester  
Technical Forestry Services*

*Drawings by  
Robinson Fisher  
Landscape Architect  
Robinson Fisher Associates, Inc.*



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# INTRODUCTION

- PURPOSE
- BENEFITS
- PROGRAM OVERVIEW
- THE COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCE
- ADMINISTRATION
- TREE CARE OPERATIONS
- EDUCATION AND OUTREACH
- COMMUNITY TREE PROGRAM CALENDAR



## PURPOSE

*The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia (ACC), strives to pro-actively conserve and professionally manage the public tree resource and actively support quality conservation and management of the private tree resource for public health and safety, environmental health, and enhancement of our quality of life.*

The purpose of the *Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Program* is to support public and private *tree conservation and management*. While “letting nature take its course” may be perfectly suitable for uninhabited and undisturbed natural areas, trees and the community forest are substantially altered and many benefits are lost as humans change the land for modern living. The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County provides a role in support of public health, safety, and welfare through many public services, including the *Community Tree Program* as described in this *Organizational and Procedural Guide to Community Tree Management*.

## BENEFITS

The benefits of the Community Tree Program are many and include:

- ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS, such as improvements to air and water quality, stormwater interception, noise abatement, shade, wildlife food and habitat, and reductions in soil erosion.
- AESTHETIC BENEFITS, such as softening of hard urban edges and increased beauty throughout the community.
- SOCIAL BENEFITS, such as pride in regional identity, calming of anxiety common to urban environments, improvements to human physical and mental health, harmony within and between neighborhoods, and a forum for partnership development.
- ECONOMIC BENEFITS, such as reduction of costs for heating and cooling, engineered systems for water and air quality control, and increased property values.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

This *Community Tree Program* (CTP) has been developed by ACC from community input gathered over the past five years. It is written as a comprehensive guide to existing *and* recommended community tree management program components adopted and supported by the Unified Government. It provides an administrative and organizational framework *for tree conservation and community tree management* activities throughout Athens-Clarke County.

*Tree conservation* is the preservation, establishment, and wise use of trees and is important because trees are a valuable part of the *community infrastructure*.

*Community tree management* involves the planning and implementation of annual tree planting, tree maintenance, tree protection, and tree replacement to conserve trees and tree cover throughout Athens-Clarke County.

*Every* member of our community is responsible for community tree conservation and management to some extent, as everyone has an impact on trees at some point in time, and often daily. The Community Tree Program includes components that address all community forest resource components, including publicly and privately owned trees.

## **THE COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCE**

Together the *publicly and privately owned trees* throughout Athens-Clarke County make up the *community forest resource*. This natural resource is an important component of the community's *infrastructure*.

*Publicly owned community trees* are located along the streets in the public right-of-way, in parks and public plazas, around governmental facilities, in utility corridors and on other publicly controlled properties. They are part of our community's *public* infrastructure.

*Privately owned community trees* are located on residential lawns, around commercial and industrial buildings, in parking lots, and in some utility corridors. These trees are considered part of our community's infrastructure because they benefit the property owner *and* everyone else who lives, works, and visits Athens-Clarke County. Private tree management is the responsibility of the tree owner, but ACC is committed to providing support services through Education and Outreach components of the CTP to assist private tree owners upon request.

## **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

The Landscape Management Division (LMD) of the Central Services Department administers the Community Tree Program. The Community Forester (CF), a tree care professional working within the LMD, is responsible for the coordination of the Community Tree Program, including public tree maintenance.

There are many other departments and individuals who are involved in community tree management and are considered fundamental to the success of the CTP. The *Community Tree Council (CTC)* and the *Planning Department* are two such partners who have a primary role in tree conservation and management.

The *Community Tree Council* is an active group of citizen volunteers that meets on a regular basis. The Council has the responsibility for community outreach and representation and is a primary partner in several program components described in this Guide. The LMD provides support services to the CTC and the Community Forester fills the role of the Council secretary.

The *Planning Department* is another primary partner in community tree care and is responsible for regulating the amount of *tree canopy cover* on commercial developments and residential subdivisions. The LMD provides technical support to the Planning Department upon request and to developers to facilitate compliance with the Development Code.

Each year the LMD develops a *Community Tree Program Annual Work Plan* and a budget based upon that Plan. Tree care partners are invited to provide input into the Plan.

The LMD also maintains a current inventory of public street trees which is used in the planning and budgeting processes. Trees are re-inventoried every 10 years.

The LMD and CF keep additional program records, including work requests, site and tree inspections, and tree care recommendations. The CF also regularly prepares and distributes reports on CTP activities, including a monthly activity report, monthly tree conservation notes, a quarterly newsletter, and an annual report to the Mayor and Commission.

## **TREE CARE OPERATIONS**

The LMD is responsible for public tree establishment and maintenance, which includes tree planting, mulching, irrigation, pruning, and inspection. Some of these activities are done on a routine basis, while others are completed as needs are identified. A work request system is used to record maintenance needs and schedule maintenance activities.

Trees are planted annually, with planting locations and tree species selected by the LMD with input from ACC staff, the CTC, and residents. All newly planted trees are mulched. Some larger, established trees are mulched routinely where possible. Newly planted trees are also watered during the first growing season; watering may continue in the second and third growing seasons when necessary to insure tree survival.

Pruning of established trees is done on a 10-year cycle by geographic area and may also be done outside of scheduled areas as the need is identified. Utility company contractors prune established trees growing within 15 feet of energized electrical lines. Newly planted trees are minimally pruned by ACC staff at the



time of planting when only dead, broken, crossed, or rubbing branches are removed, and then at least once more during the first three years after planting. Utility providers and their contractors complete tree pruning and removal required after storm damage, with assistance from ACC staff and contractors. All pruning conducted by ACC and its contractors will be accomplished according to National Standards and the ACC BMPs. Pruning conducted by utility providers and their contractors will be done in accordance with applicable ACC ordinances.

Public tree removal is done only as necessary, when trees are in poor or hazardous condition, or when a conflict that cannot be otherwise resolved exists with utility service lines or other infrastructure. Residents are notified of scheduled tree removal through the posting of a sign on the tree 10 days prior to removal (except in emergency situations). The notice will list the LMD as the ACC contact, providing an opportunity for the Community Forester to explain the reasons for tree removal and to discuss the CTP and its public tree removal and replacement programs.

Other tree maintenance is completed as necessary by the LMD. The LMD also makes annual inspections of trees in marginal condition to evaluate their maintenance needs and to insure the health and safety of the community.

## **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

Tree care education and community outreach are primary objectives of the CTP. The **EDUCATION** components included in the CTP are:

- Staff Continuing Education* to insure that the most current and effective practices are being used and promoted in Athens-Clarke County;
- Best Management for Community Trees* document to support and improve community tree management in general and facilitate compliance with the Development Code;
- Tree Conservation Workshop* open to anyone interested in community trees and their care;
- On-site Training Programs* tailored to meet a specific educational need;
- Off-site Training Programs* advertised, promoted, and attended by the CF and other ACC staff;
- CTP Newsletter* published quarterly with information with program results, partnership opportunities, and upcoming events; available on the ACC web site with limited distribution by mail and distribution at educational programs;
- Tree Conservation Notes* on timely tree care topics published monthly; available on the web site and distributed by mail upon request, as well as at educational programs.

A major component of the Community Tree Program is the companion document "*Best Management Practices for Community Trees*" (BMPs). The BMPs document is a technical guide to tree placement and maintenance and is intended for widespread community distribution during education and outreach activities.

The ***OUTREACH*** components included in the CTP are:

- Site and Tree Evaluations* upon request from ACC staff, developers, builders, neighborhood associations, and residents resulting in specific recommendations for tree care;
- Development Assessments* by a *Development Assessment Team* composed of the Community Forester and representatives from the Planning Department and Community Tree Council, for new commercial, residential (subdivisions), and industrial developments planned, in progress, or recently completed to provide an evaluation of tree conservation practices;
- Tree Conservation Award* given to property owners or developers of new commercial and industrial developments and residential subdivisions for conserving tree canopy cover in a quality manner;
- Neighborhood Forest Assessments* (NFAs) that define neighborhood forest resources and management goals and result in neighborhood forest improvement projects;
- Heritage Tree Program* that includes the identification, designation, and promotion of outstanding trees that contribute to the community's historical and aesthetic landscape;
- Community Tree Care Projects* for neighborhood associations, schools, and other community organizations and agencies.

## **COMMUNITY TREE PROGRAM CALENDAR**

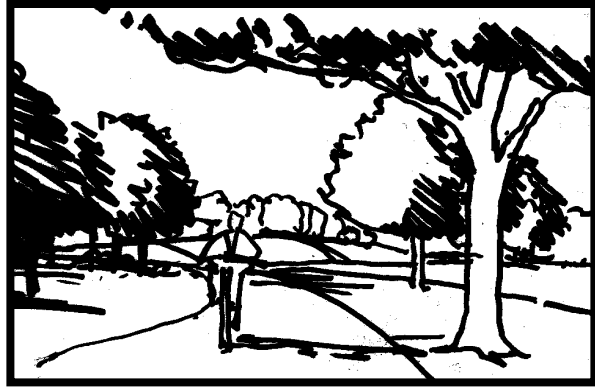
A *Community Tree Program Calendar* is maintained to organize and schedule program activities included in the Community Tree Program Annual Work Plan and Budget. Copies are provided to ACC staff and the public to keep them informed of upcoming CTP activities.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Unified Government encourages all residents, property owners, developers, businesses, agencies, and ACC staff members to use this Community Tree Program guide and calendar to support the conservation of our valuable community trees and participate in Community Tree Program activities. A detailed description of existing and recommended Community Tree Program components and activities follows.

# THE COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCE

- LIVING INFRASTRUCTURE
- PUBLIC TREES
- PRIVATE TREES
- TREE INVENTORIES
- TREE VALUE



## LIVING INFRASTRUCTURE

Our Community Forest is made up of *publicly and privately owned trees* located throughout Athens-Clarke County. This forest is an important part of our regional watershed and ecology. It is a green, living, and essential component of our community's *infrastructure*. Community needs and structures used to satisfy those needs are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. How Trees Function as Part of Community Infrastructure**

<b>Community Need</b>	<b>Structures Used</b>
<b>Air Quality</b>	Tree leaves, catalytic converters, stack scrubbers, etc.
<b>Noise Abatement</b>	Trees, other vegetative buffers, brick and concrete walls, etc.
<b>Public Health and Safety</b>	Trees, recreation sites, hospitals, public health departments, etc.
<b>Stormwater and Erosion Control</b>	Tree leaves and roots, vegetation, storm drains and sewer pipes, retention and detention ponds, soil berms and water bars, etc.
<b>Temperature and Wind Control</b>	Trees, air conditioning and heating units, architecture, etc.
<b>Transportation System Enhancement</b>	Trees, landscaping, signs and signal systems, etc.
<b>Watershed Protection and Water Quality</b>	Tree leaves and roots, rivers and streams, water treatment facilities, sewage treatment facilities, etc.
<b>Wildlife Habitat and Food</b>	Trees, all vegetation and soil resources, animals, etc.

Trees contribute as “living infrastructure”. They grow larger over time, require specific environmental conditions to survive, and have a lifetime of 50 to 150 years or more. Trees provide many functions and community benefits at one time, throughout their long lives. Other structures listed above are developed to meet one need only, and their useful service lives are much shorter than many

trees. All infrastructure, including trees, require management and an investment of resources in their establishment, maintenance, and replacement.

## **PUBLIC TREES**

The *publicly owned tree resource* is located on property owned and managed by the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, in both the Urban Services District (USD) and the General Services District (GSD). Street trees, park trees, public facility trees, and trees on other Unified Government properties make up this resource.

*Street trees* are located within the public street right-of-way, in the area between the curb or road edge and the private property line, within the “tree lawn”, on either side of the sidewalk if present. Human activities impact most of these trees regularly and to a major extent.

*Park trees* are located within established parks and recreational sites, within large landscape areas or open lawns, or in more confined spaces around buildings, recreational facilities, in plazas, or parking lots. Human activities impact many of these trees frequently and to a major extent. If these trees are located in undeveloped wooded areas, they escape much of the activity that impacts trees around more developed conditions.

*Public facility trees* are located on the grounds surrounding public buildings and other facilities. They may be in large landscaped areas, open lawn areas, buffers, or more confined spaces around buildings, public facilities, plazas, or parking lots. Human activities impact these trees occasionally and to varying extents.

Trees on *other public properties* may be growing within greenways, along trails, in riparian zones and drainage areas, in buffers, or in utility easements. Trees within these areas are often found in unmanaged wooded areas, although some may occur as individual trees at the edges of wooded areas in more lawn-like situations. Human activity impacts most of these trees only occasionally and to varying extents.

Public trees located on property controlled by the Athens Housing Authority and the Clarke County School System are not directly addressed in the Community Tree Program, nor are they maintained by the LMD. However, needs of these trees and their owners are addressed under Education and Outreach components of the program.

## **PRIVATE TREES**

*Privately owned community trees* are located on private property that includes residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial sites, as well as rural and undeveloped land. These trees are an important part of our community

infrastructure because they benefit their owners and everyone else who lives, works, and visits Athens-Clarke County.

*Residential properties* include single- and multi-family housing with trees located in large landscape areas, road frontages, parking lots, buffers, riparian zones and drainage areas, and utility corridors. Human activities regularly and significantly impact many of these trees, especially those in lawns, on road frontages, and in parking lots. These trees are likely to be growing in close proximity to buildings, utility service lines, pavement and other hardscape where growing space is often limited.

*Commercial sites* are small or large business locations where trees are located along road frontages, in parking lots, utility corridors, and buffers, and less frequently in riparian zones, drainage areas, and large landscape areas. Human activities impact many of these trees regularly and significantly.

*Institutional sites* include civic, religious, and educational facilities, and trees on this sites may be growing in large landscape areas, along road frontages, in parking lots, plazas, and buffers and utility corridors. Human activities impact some of these trees significantly, but most locations contain adequate growing space for trees. Where trees are growing in close proximity to buildings, pavement, and other hardscape, the human impacts on their health are greater.

*Industrial sites* often include large landscape areas, but also include parking lots, plazas, and buffers. They may also include riparian zones, drainage areas and utility corridors. Human activities impact the trees on these sites occasionally and to varying extents depending upon the trees specific site situation.

*Rural lands* include agricultural fields, managed timberland, and undeveloped wooded and non-wooded areas. Most of these sites include large, open areas that are more than likely not landscaped. Human activities impact the trees on these sites only occasionally as agricultural or forestry operations are conducted.

## **TREE INVENTORIES**

Tree inventories conducted by the LMD over the last 10 years have provided information on 10,144 public street trees in the USD, 892 trees in regional parks, and 900 trees around public facilities. Private trees growing within the road frontage in the ACORTS future right-of-way have also been inventoried. No inventories have yet been done of any trees in the GSD.

During the inventories the maintenance needs of public trees were recorded. Tree pruning and removal were the most commonly recommended maintenance activities. Many large trees growing beneath or near power and other utility lines require pruning on a regular basis, or removal, to provide line clearance.

As is the case with large trees beneath utility lines, many trees are growing in locations where they do not have adequate growing space for their roots, trunks, or crowns. The impact of restricted root space and the other pressures of the urban environment have caused root, trunk, and limb decay, root damage, trunk

wounds, broken and poorly pruned branches, general stress, and a decline in vigor.

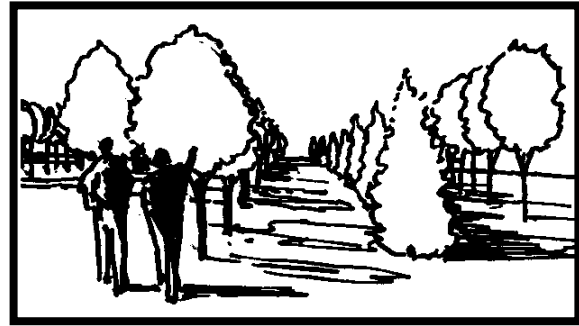
The privately owned trees growing within the future street right-of-way that were included in the street tree inventories are not included in any of the public tree maintenance plans or budgets developed annually by the LMD. The needs of private trees are addressed through the Education and Outreach components described in this Guide.

## **TREE VALUE**

Because trees provide us with many benefits, they have value. It can be difficult to establish the exact value of a tree since there are many variables involved in their ability to perform the functions listed above. A widely accepted method of determining the dollar value of trees is a formula developed by the Council of Landscape and Tree Appraisers as described in the *Guide To Plant Appraisal*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, published by the International Society of Arboriculture. This formula takes into account the tree species, size, condition, location, and replacement cost. The CF uses this formula to determine the value of public trees in Athens-Clarke County.

*The asset value of the 10,144 public street trees during the inventories was estimated at \$9.5 million—equivalent to an average of \$800 per tree!*

# PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION



- THE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT DIVISION
- THE COMMUNITY FORESTER
- TREE CARE PARTNERS
- THE COMMUNITY TREE COUNCIL
- THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT
- ANNUAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING
- PROGRAM RECORDS AND REPORTING
- TREE INVENTORY MAINTENANCE

## THE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

The *Landscape Management Division* of the Central Services Department administers the Community Tree Program in Athens-Clarke County. A *Community Forester* reports to the LMD Administrator and coordinates the Program. The LMD staff and CF maintain Athens-Clarke County's public landscape and trees.

## THE COMMUNITY FORESTER

The *Community Forester* is a tree care professional with specialized training and expertise in forestry and arboriculture. As mentioned earlier, the CF is responsible for the coordination of the CTP. The job description of the CF includes major responsibilities listed below.

- annual planning, budgeting, and maintenance of a Community Tree Calendar
- tree inventory maintenance, program records, and reports
- partnership development and maintenance
- secretarial duties for the CTC
- coordination of public tree maintenance
- review utility line clearance quality and offer technical assistance to utility companies
- revision and distribution of BMPs and CTP guide
- technical support for ACC staff, residents, and development community
- site and tree evaluations
- support for annual Arbor Day celebration
- coordination of Heritage Tree Program
- Development Assessments and Tree Conservation Award programs
- Neighborhood Forest Assessments
- coordination of annual Tree Conservation Workshop
- coordination of community tree care projects
- coordination and presentation of on-site training programs
- production and distribution of quarterly CTP newsletter and monthly Tree Conservation Notes
- maintenance of current CF job description

**TREE CARE PARTNERS**

The Community Tree Council and Planning Department are primary partners to the LMD in community tree care. However, there are *many* individuals who have a “stake” in community tree conservation. *Partnerships* between these “stakeholders” are essential for progressive and cost effective management of our community forest. The CTP provides many opportunities to create and strengthen partnerships as public and private tree owners work together to achieve common goals.

A list of *Partners in Community Tree Care in Athens-Clarke County* is located in Table 2 along with each partner’s primary contributions. “Primary Partners” are listed first, followed by other important “Community Partners”.

**Table 2. Partners in Community Tree Care in Athens-Clarke County**

<b>Primary Partners</b>	<b>Contribution</b>
<b>Central Services Department</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Program planning and budget approval
<b>Community Forester</b> Landscape Management Division 350 Pound Street Athens, Georgia 30602 (706)613-3565 voice (706)613-3566 fax	<input type="checkbox"/> Program coordination <input type="checkbox"/> Public tree maintenance <input type="checkbox"/> CTP planning and budgeting <input type="checkbox"/> BMPs and CTP <input type="checkbox"/> Tree inventory maintenance
<b>Community Tree Council</b> Landscape Management Division (see contact information above)  Monthly meetings held at the LMD office at 4:00 p.m. the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month.	<input type="checkbox"/> Advise Mayor and Commission in tree related matters <input type="checkbox"/> CTP planning and budgeting <input type="checkbox"/> Development Assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Approve neighborhoods selected for NFAs <input type="checkbox"/> Approve Tree Conservation Award recipients <input type="checkbox"/> Approve Heritage Trees <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct educational programs <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Arbor Day celebration coordination <input type="checkbox"/> Annual report to Mayor and Council
<b>Planning Department</b> 120 W. Dougherty Street Athens, GA 30601 (706)613-3515 voice (706)613-3844 fax	<input type="checkbox"/> Development code administration, site monitoring, and enforcement. <input type="checkbox"/> Tree conservation and canopy cover on developments <input type="checkbox"/> CTP planning and budgeting <input type="checkbox"/> Development Assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Distribution of BMPs <input type="checkbox"/> Development and tree canopy conservation records

*Table 2 is continued on the following page...*



**Table 2. Partners in Community Tree Care in Athens-Clarke County**

<b>Community Partners</b>	<b>Contribution</b>
<b>ACC Leisure Services Department</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Community tree care education
<b>ACC Solid Waste Department Recycling Division</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pickup of leaves and limbs <input type="checkbox"/> Provide mulch for community tree projects
<b>ACC Transportation and Public Works</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pruning and protection of trees in local and state road right-of-way <input type="checkbox"/> Tree canopy cover conservation
<b>Athens Garden Club Council</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Heritage Tree identification <input type="checkbox"/> Arbor Day celebration participation
<b>Athens Housing Authority</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree canopy cover conservation
<b>Athens-Clarke County Residents</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree canopy cover conservation <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance and protection of private trees
<b>Clarke County School District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Establishment and maintenance of community trees on School District properties <input type="checkbox"/> Arbor Day celebration participation <input type="checkbox"/> Tree canopy cover conservation
<b>Cooperative Extension Service</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree identification and evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Educational materials and technical support <input type="checkbox"/> Soil sample analyses
<b>Georgia Forestry Commission</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree identification and evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Support of community Arbor Day celebration <input type="checkbox"/> Provide educational materials, training programs, and other technical support to the community <input type="checkbox"/> Administration of Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program <input type="checkbox"/> Ex-officio member of the CTC
<b>Georgia Power Company</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pruning and protection of trees within power line easements <input type="checkbox"/> Storm damage response <input type="checkbox"/> Ex-officio member of the CTC
<b>Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ex-officio member of the CTC <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas tree recycling program and tree "give-aways" <input type="checkbox"/> Arbor Day participation
<b>Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ex-officio member of the CTC <input type="checkbox"/> Tree canopy cover conservation

**THE COMMUNITY TREE COUNCIL**

The Athens-Clarke County *Community Tree Council* was established by ordinance on October 4, 2000. The CTC has 15 volunteer, voting members--one from each Commission District (10 members), four (4) at large, and one ACC liaison from the LMD. The CTC may also have up to 10 ex-officio members. The CTC is an advisory council to the Mayor and Commission in all matters relating to trees. The CTC's main responsibilities are listed below.

- Provide information, long-range planning, and evaluation to the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County.
- Develop networks and coordination among tree management partners.

- Provide education to public and private sectors.
- Provide recommendations on policy and procedures.
- Provide partnership to the LMD and its implementation of the CTP.
- Coordinate the community's annual Arbor Day celebration.
- Identify and designate Heritage Trees.
- Partner with neighborhood associations in the application for and implementation of NFAs.
- Represent CTC on Development Assessment Team.
- Encourage and facilitate tree canopy cover conservation.
- Seek federal, state, and private funds for the operation of the CTC and its programs.
- Attend and take advantage of training available through state, federal or private agencies to further the education of the CTC members.

The Community Tree Council holds an annual Arbor Day celebration on or around the third Friday in February--Arbor Day in Georgia. The goal of the celebration is to promote the planting and care of community trees. The celebration includes a ceremonial tree planting and a gathering of staff, officials, and guests at an Arbor Day luncheon. The luncheon agenda includes a summary of the previous year's CTC and CTP activities, presentations of the Tree Conservation and Friend of Trees awards, and the announcement of neighborhoods selected for Neighborhood Forest Assessments (see Page 22).

The CTC maintains a budget and makes a report on Council expenditures and activities to the Mayor and Commission at the annual Arbor Day celebration. Residents are encouraged to discuss their community tree care needs with members of the CTC.

## **THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

The Planning Department is responsible for the administration of the Athens-Clarke County Development Code. These regulations require the conservation of tree canopy on commercial developments and some residential sub-divisions. To facilitate compliance with these regulations, the LMD provides the Planning Department and developers, builders, construction contractors, and equipment operators with:

- technical information;
- site plan review;
- tree and site evaluations;
- on-site training in tree conservation, protection, pruning, planting, and soil health maintenance.

The CF provides Development Assessments at the request of the Planning Department staff to assess or monitor compliance with the tree conservation provisions in the Code. Development Assessments are more fully described under "Education and Outreach" beginning on Page 18.

## **ANNUAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING**

The LMD develops a *Community Tree Program Annual Work Plan* by April 15 of each year and then a budget based upon that Plan. Each year in March the LMD

and the CTC host an all-day facilitated *Community Tree Program Planning Meeting* of tree care partners who are asked to provide input on:

- planned projects or initiatives by partners with potential impacts upon community trees;
- technical support and educational needs;
- outstanding tree care efforts and success stories;
- CTP effectiveness.

## **PROGRAM RECORDS AND REPORTS**

The CF completes special program reports and makes informational presentations to the community upon request. In addition, the CF and LMD staff maintain additional records of CTP activities, including:

- work requests for public tree care (LMD);
- individual tree and site inspection records (CF);
- Neighborhood Forest Assessments, Development Assessment Reports, Community Tree Care Recommendations (CF);
- educational program schedules, agendas, and lists of participants (CF);
- meeting minutes of the Community Tree Council (CF).

The CF also prepares periodic reports throughout the year to summarize CTP activities. The reports and target audiences are listed below.

- Monthly CTP Activity Report* (distributed to LMD Administrator)
- Monthly Tree Conservation Notes* (distributed to ACC staff, CTC, and citizens)
- Quarterly CTP Newsletter* (distributed to ACC staff, CTC, and citizens)
- Annual CTP Summary* (presented to the ACC Mayor and Commission, staff, and citizens at the Annual Arbor Day Celebration)

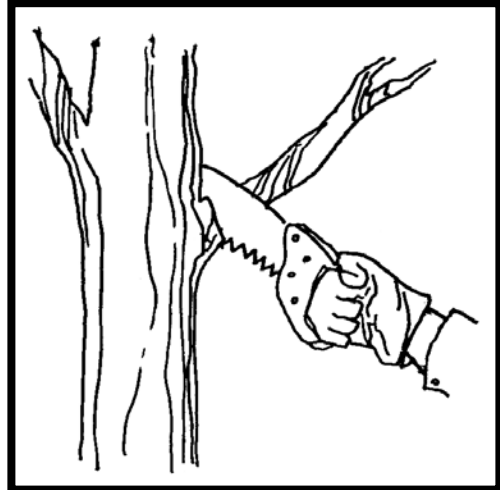
## **TREE INVENTORY MAINTENANCE**

The LMD maintains the inventory of public street trees and trees within the future rights-of-way in the USD, primarily for planning and budgeting purposes. As trees are planted or removed the database is updated. Trees are re-inventoried every 10 years, in the year prior to scheduled pruning, with 1/10<sup>th</sup> inventoried each year. A *Tree Inventory and Pruning Schedule* is located in Table 3 on Page 17.

Every year the trees within neighborhoods selected for Neighborhood Forest Assessments are also inventoried (see "Education and Outreach", Page 18). This inventory may include public street trees, park trees, and trees within the future street right-of-way. Other privately owned trees may be included in this inventory with the approval of private property owners.

# TREE CARE OPERATIONS

- RESOURCES
- WORK REQUESTS
- TREE PLANTING
- TREE MULCHING
- TREE IRRIGATION
- TREE PRUNING
- TREE REMOVAL
- TREE INSPECTIONS
- TREE PROTECTION



## RESOURCES

The LMD has personnel and other resources available to provide operational support for public tree care. The staff is well trained, experienced, and knowledgeable in tree conservation, establishment, and maintenance. The staff has available the equipment and materials required for public tree care. Contract tree services are budgeted for large tree maintenance.

The LMD is responsible for public tree establishment and maintenance. Tree planting, mulching, irrigation, pruning, and inspection are completed both on a routine basis and as non-routine activities as maintenance needs are identified. Tree removal is done as necessary, and tree protection is done when construction or infrastructure installations and repairs are expected to have an impact on community trees.

You can contribute to the health of the community forest by keeping the public trees in front of your residence or business mulched, and by watering newly planted trees during drought periods. Your assistance in these tree care activities is encouraged and appreciated by the LMD staff.

## WORK REQUESTS

The LMD uses a work request system to record tree maintenance and other landscape needs identified by ACC staff and residents. Upon notification of a maintenance need, a work request is filled out by the LMD secretary and sent to the appropriate individual for response and action. The action taken and staff hours required are recorded on the work request to complete the process. Requests are retained and filed in chronological order.

## **TREE PLANTING**

Trees are planted each year in Athens-Clarke County. The types of trees planted and their locations are selected by the LMD with input from other ACC staff, the CTC, and residents by August 1 of each year for planting in the winter months.

## **TREE MULCHING**

All newly planted trees and some larger, established trees are mulched routinely. Mulch is also applied over the root zones of trees that will be impacted by construction activities. Only good quality organic mulch is used.

Free mulch is available for community tree projects and is delivered upon request. Eligible projects are those involving the public tree resource or shared community greenspace whether public or private. Requests for mulch must be made at least 4 weeks prior to the date it is needed.

## **TREE IRRIGATION**

All newly planted trees are watered regularly throughout the first growing season after planting, in the absence of adequate rainfall. Watering may continue in the second and third growing season if necessary to insure tree survival. Residents and businesses can assist ACC in insuring new tree survival by keeping new trees mulched and watered during periods of drought.

## **TREE PRUNING**

Several pruning programs take place simultaneously in Athens-Clarke County. Trees located near electrical distribution and transmission lines are pruned routinely by the service providers and their contractors. Trees 6 inches and less in diameter that are not located near utility lines and are accessible without climbing or the use of an aerial lift truck are pruned by ACC staff. Trees greater than 6 inches are pruned by arboricultural service contractors using an aerial lift truck or climbing techniques.

The pruning of public trees is done on a routine basis, as well as on an “as needed” basis. Newly planted trees are pruned by ACC staff at the time of planting to remove dead, broken, crossed, or otherwise objectionable branches and then once more during the first three years after planting. Established trees not located within 10 feet of energized electrical lines are pruned on a 10-year cycle, by geographic area, either by ACC staff or by contractors selected through a standard bidding process. Table 3 shows the tree inventory and pruning schedule by 10 geographical areas that are being defined on an ongoing basis during the first full pruning rotation. All public trees within a geographical area are inventoried in the year prior to scheduled pruning to gain an accurate estimate of the volume of pruning and other maintenance work required.

Older, established neighborhoods, other areas with old and large trees, and areas where high priority pruning needs have been identified are pruned first. Utility providers and their contractors complete tree pruning required immediately after storm damage, with assistance from ACC staff and contractors.

**Table 3. Tree Inventory and Pruning Schedule**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Inventory Year</b>	<b>Pruning Year</b>
1	2001, 2011, 2021, etc.	2002, 2012, 2022, etc.
2	2002, 2012, 2022, etc.	2003, 2013, 2023, etc.
3	2003, 2013, 2023, etc.	2004, 2014, 2024, etc.
4	2004, 2014, 2024, etc.	2005, 2015, 2025, etc.
5	2005, 2015, 2025, etc.	2006, 2016, 2026, etc.
6	2006, 2016, 2026, etc.	2007, 2017, 2027, etc.
7	2007, 2017, 2027, etc.	2008, 2018, 2028, etc.
8	2008, 2018, 2028, etc.	2009, 2019, 2029, etc.
9	2009, 2019, 2029, etc.	2010, 2020, 2030, etc.
10	2010, 2020, 2030, etc.	2011, 2021, 2031, etc.

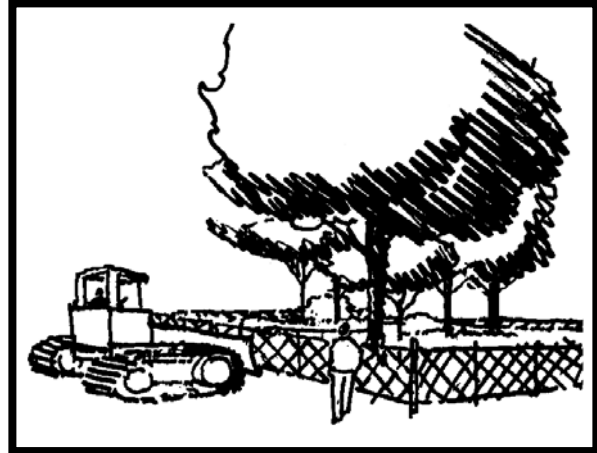
## **TREE REMOVAL**

The removal of public trees is done only when necessary, when trees are in poor or hazardous condition, or when they cause conflicts that cannot be resolved with utility service lines or other infrastructure. Trees requested for removal are inspected by the LMD who either approves or denies the request. Residents are notified of scheduled tree removal through the posting of an 8" x 12" sign on the tree at least 10 days prior to removal, except in emergency situations.

## **TREE INSPECTIONS**

The LMD makes annual inspections of trees in marginal condition to re-evaluate their condition and maintenance needs to insure the health and safety of the community.

# EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



## **EDUCATION**

- STAFF CONTINUING EDUCATION
- BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY TREES
- TREE CONSERVATION WORKSHOP
- ON-SITE TRAINING PROGRAMS
- OFF-SITE TRAINING PROGRAMS
- PROGRAM NEWSLETTER
- TREE CONSERVATION NOTES

## **OUTREACH**

- SITE AND TREE EVALUATIONS
- DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENTS
- TREE CONSERVATION AWARD
- NEIGHBORHOOD FOREST ASSESSMENTS
- HERITAGE TREE PROGRAM
- COMMUNITY TREE CARE PROJECTS

# **EDUCATION**

## **STAFF CONTINUING EDUCATION**

Staff members regularly attend continuing education programs in arboriculture and urban forestry to insure that the most current and effective practices are being used and promoted in Athens-Clarke County.

The LMD maintains an extensive library of community tree care information that includes books, journals, videos, and software. All of these resources are available for review by ACC staff and the public. Resources also include free brochures on tree care available upon request.

## **BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY TREES**

In anticipation of the community's needs for technical information on tree care, Athens-Clarke County has produced *Best Management Practices for Community Trees* (BMPs), a technical guide to tree conservation in Athens-Clarke County. Developed specifically for ACC by professional arborists and landscape architects, this guide contains a wealth of information on basic tree care practices

such as tree selection, placement, conservation, protection, establishment, soil health maintenance, tree maintenance, removal, and replacement. The BMPs provide support for the Development Code, community tree projects, and educational programs. The guide is available for a minimal cost from the LMD, the Planning Department, and at ACC sponsored workshops.

## **TREE CONSERVATION WORKSHOP**

Athens-Clarke County sponsors a full-day workshop in April of each year during Athens Greenfest at Sandy Creek Nature Center that covers basic tree conservation topics, such as species selection, tree section, planting, mulching, protection, etc. The workshop is free and open to anyone interested in learning more about trees. The workshop is advertised on the ACC web site, in local newspapers, and on radio and television.

The BMPs are promoted and available at the workshop. Workshop speakers may include guests as well as ACC staff and contractors. The CF is responsible for coordinating the workshop.

## **ON-SITE TRAINING PROGRAMS**

The CF is available to provide brief, on-site training programs to ACC staff, the development community, neighborhood associations, school staff and students, and other individuals and organizations involved in community tree care. Some of the training topics that can be presented are listed below.

- Tree Inventory and Measurement
- Tree Protection
- Tree Planting
- Tree Mulching
- Tree Pruning

## **OFF-SITE TRAINING PROGRAMS**

While the BMPs provide important information on basic tree care, implementing these practices and achieving community tree management goals can be accomplished in many ways. To learn about the latest tree care techniques, creative solutions to common tree care problems, and knowledgeable resources that exist in the tree care community, ACC encourages all community tree care partners to take advantage of off-site workshops, seminars, training sessions, and networking. Utilizing these learning opportunities is one way to help insure that Athens-Clarke County stays on the forefront of tree care.

The organizations that provide regular off-site training are listed in Table 4 in the left-hand column, along with their contact information. In the right-hand column information on some of their educational initiatives is listed.



**Table 4. Organizations Offering Tree Care Educational Programs**

Organization Name and Contact Info	Programs and Materials
<b>American Forests</b> P.O. Box 2000 Washington, DC 20013 (202)955-4500, <a href="http://www.amfor.org">www.amfor.org</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> National Urban Forest Conference (bi-annual) <input type="checkbox"/> CITYgreen Ecological Analysis Software
<b>Georgia Urban Forest Council, Inc.</b> P.O. Box 961 Macon, GA 31202 (800)994-4832, <a href="http://www.gufc.org">www.gufc.org</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Urban Forestry Conference <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Forestry Awards Program <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Tree Care Workshops <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly Meetings
<b>International Society of Arboriculture</b> P.O. Box 3129 Champaign, IL 61826-3129 (217)355-9411, <a href="http://www.isa-arbor.com">www.isa-arbor.com</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Conference and Trade Show <input type="checkbox"/> Publications, videos, and other resources <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Arborist, Tree Worker, and Utility Arborist programs
<b>National Arbor Day Foundation</b> 100 Arbor Avenue Nebraska City, NE 68410 (402)474-5655, <a href="http://www.arborday.org">www.arborday.org</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> TreeCity USA Program <input type="checkbox"/> TreeCity USA National and Regional Conferences on Trees and Utilities and Trees and Building Sites
<b>Southern Chapter International Society of Arboriculture</b> 213 Apollo Drive Mt. Airy, NC 27030 (336)789-4747 voice, <a href="http://www.isasouthern.org">www.isasouthern.org</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Conference and Trade Show <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Conferences and Workshops <input type="checkbox"/> Publications, videos, and other resources <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Arborist, Tree Worker, and Utility Arborist programs
<b>USDA Forest Service</b> 1720 Peachtree Road, NW, Suite 811N Atlanta, Georgia 30367-9102 (404)347-1647, <a href="http://www.usfs.gov">www.usfs.gov</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Publications, videos, and other resources <input type="checkbox"/> Source of Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program grant funds administered through the Georgia Forestry Commission

## **PROGRAM NEWSLETTER**

A Community Tree Program Newsletter is published quarterly on the web site with limited distribution by mail. Each issue includes information on upcoming educational opportunities, resource availability, and program activities and results, as well as a focus on one or more program components. Listed In Table 5 are suggestions for the newsletter publication date, deadline for submission of information, and issue focus.

**Table 5. Quarterly Newsletter Publication Information**

<b>Publication Date</b>	<b>Submission Deadline</b>	<b>Issue Focus</b>
<b>January 15</b>	December 15	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertise Arbor Day plans <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise Tree Conservation Workshops <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise Heritage Tree Program
<b>April 15</b>	<i>March 15</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Arbor Day report <input type="checkbox"/> Announce NFA selection <input type="checkbox"/> Announce Tree Conservation Award recipient <input type="checkbox"/> Announce Intern selection <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise Tree Conservation Workshop
<b>July 15</b>	<i>June 15</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss storm preparedness <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise technical support services available
<b>October 15</b>	<i>September 15</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> NFA report <input type="checkbox"/> Best Management Practices update

## **TREE CONSERVATION NOTES**

Brief *Tree Conservation Notes* are posted on the ACC web site on a monthly basis. These notes include seasonal reminders and recommendations for community tree care. The Notes are also provided to local newspapers for publication at their discretion.

They are posted on the first of the month and focus on timely topics in community tree care. The following list includes some suggested monthly topics.

- January – Tree Planting, Tree Pruning
- February – Tree Protection, Critical Root Zone
- March – Mulching, Fertilization
- April – Preparing Trees for Summer, Maintaining Healthy Dogwoods,
- May – Irrigation, Mower and Weed Trimmer Damage
- June – Pruning, Tree Value
- July – Storm Preparedness, Tree Evaluation
- August – Pest Management, Plant Health Care
- September – Preparing Trees for Winter, Leaves as Natural Mulch
- October – Soil Health, How Roots Grow
- November – Tree Growth Requirements, Planting Space Above and Below Ground
- December – Tree Selection, Outstanding Native Tree Species, Crapemyrtle Pruning

## ***OUTREACH***

### **SITE AND TREE EVALUATIONS**

The CF, upon request from ACC staff, developers, builders, neighborhood association, or residents, makes on-site visits to evaluate site and tree conditions and provides specific recommendations for tree care. After completion of the on-

site visit, the CF forwards *Recommendations for Community Tree Care* to the property owner and the individual requesting the evaluation.

## **DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENTS**

Throughout the year, a *Development Assessment Team* composed of the CF, a representative from the Planning Department, and a representative from the CTC completes evaluations of development projects as requested by the Planning Department. The objective of these assessments is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Development Regulations and BMPs in tree canopy cover conservation.

During these evaluations the Team assesses the extent to which the Development Code and BMPs have been followed and the impact of the development on the community's tree canopy cover. The Team then makes written recommendations directly to property owners, developers, and their contractors on ways to improve their tree conservation techniques. During this process the Team also identifies developments eligible for ACC's annual *Tree Conservation Award* (see below).

## **TREE CONSERVATION AWARD**

Each year a *Tree Conservation Award* is presented to the owner of a development who demonstrates responsible and aggressive tree conservation and protection, thereby contributing substantially to conserving canopy cover in Athens-Clarke County and maintaining or improving our natural environment.

Commercial properties and residential subdivisions that have been completed during the previous year (January 1 through December 31) are eligible. Anyone can nominate a property owner for the award and nominations are solicited through all ACC departments, the ACC web site, and local newspapers. Property owners are encouraged to nominate themselves for the award. *Nominations are due at the LMD office by January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.*

The extent of the property owner's compliance with Development requirements for tree canopy conservation and tree protection, and the extent to which BMPs are followed form the two main criteria for selecting each year's award recipient. The Development Assessment Team selects each year's award recipient by January 31<sup>st</sup> of each year and the Tree Conservation Award, a framed print of the "Tree That Owns Itself", is presented at ACC's annual Arbor Day celebration held on or around the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday in February. The recipient is also presented with a sign for them to place on their property to identify their site as a Tree Conservation Award winner.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD FOREST ASSESSMENTS**

Each year at least one (1) neighborhood is selected jointly by the CF and CTC to participate in a *Neighborhood Forest Assessment*. The objectives of the NFA are to:

- involve the participation of neighborhood in defining the character of its forest resource;
- develop long-term tree management goals for the neighborhood;
- plan and implement activities to achieve management goals;
- increase the quality of private tree conservation through information and education.

The NFA includes gathering data about the trees, their history, and the neighborhood, and development of a long-term conservation plan for the trees within the neighborhood. The NFA can also be tailored to meet the specific needs of the neighborhood.

The involvement of a CTC member and endorsement of the Neighborhood Association are key components required for eligibility for the NFA, although it is not necessary for all residents to participate.

It is required, however, that a CTC member involved in the project and one person from at least 20% of the households in the neighborhood attend the Tree Conservation Workshop held annually in April, prior to the beginning of the NFA.

The activities undertaken and the basic components included in the NFA are listed in Table 6 along with the partner expected to take the lead for each component.

A written application is required and is due at the LMD by December 31<sup>st</sup> in the year prior to the assessment. The neighborhood selected to participate in an NFA is announced at Athens-Clarke County’s annual Arbor Day celebration.

**Table 6. Neighborhood Forest Assessment Activities and Leadership Roles**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Leader</b>
Tree inventory (all public trees located on the street right-of-way and private trees located within the future right-of-way)	CF
Research into the history of the neighborhood’s trees	CTC and Neighborhood Residents
Identify, list and photograph heritage trees within the neighborhood	CTC and Neighborhood Residents
Survey of resident opinions about trees	CTC and Neighborhood Residents
Tree management recommendations	CF
Tree planting plan	CF
Planning and coordination of tree management services provided by ACC	CF

**HERITAGE TREE PROGRAM**

The goal of the *Heritage Tree Program* is to help preserve the community’s historical and aesthetic heritage by identifying, inventorying, maintaining, and protecting old, large, unusual, and historic trees throughout the County. The effort to identify and designate Heritage Trees is led by the Community Tree

Council. The program will also include education on tree preservation techniques and the periodic publication of a Heritage Tree Program guide.

Heritage Trees are defined as those that meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. trees greater than 150 years of age as determined by planting records or an arborist's written opinion;
2. trees greater than 18 inches in diameter for small-sized trees, 24 inches in diameter for medium-sized trees, and 36 inches in diameter for large trees (see the Athens-Clarke County Tree Species List for size designations by species);
3. trees of an unusual species, form, or character;
4. trees that are part of an historic or neighborhood-wide planting project that affect the greater landscape beyond the property on which they grow;
5. trees associated with an historic event, person, or community landmark.

Heritage trees may be publicly or privately owned. The Heritage Tree application must be submitted by the tree's owner to the Community Tree Council or Landscape Management Division. The CTC is responsible for distributing, reviewing, and approving Heritage Tree applications. The CF will maintain an inventory of these trees.

## **COMMUNITY TREE CARE PROJECTS**

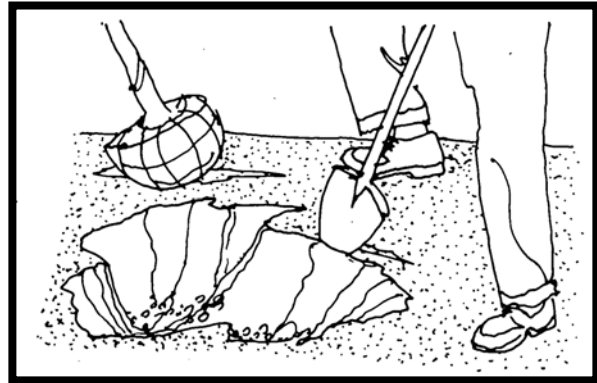
The LMD facilitates the planning and coordination of other community tree projects as requested by neighborhood associations, schools, businesses, and civic groups as time and resources allow. Eligible projects are those that include volunteer participation in one of the following activities on public property or community greenspace:

- Tree Planting;
- Tree Pruning;
- Tree Mulching;
- Tree Care Demonstrations.

*Free mulch* is available for use in community tree projects. Requests must be made to the LMD at least 4 weeks prior to the time it is required.

# COMMUNITY TREE PROGRAM CALENDAR

- GENERAL INFORMATION
- SAMPLE CALENDAR



## GENERAL INFORMATION

A *Community Tree Program Calendar* is maintained by the LMD and CF to assist in planning for upcoming program activities. The Calendar is updated annually to reflect changes in the Community Tree Program Annual Work Plan and Budget resulting from the annual planning meeting. Copies of the most current version of this calendar are distributed to ACC staff to keep them informed of upcoming CTP activities. The calendar is also provided to the general public during education and outreach activities and on the ACC website.

## SAMPLE CALENDAR

A sample Community Tree Program Calendar that includes the activities described in this CTP guide is located on the following pages. The Calendar lists program activities by month and are grouped according to their scheduled completion times during the month, i.e. throughout the month, or by the 1<sup>st</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, or end of the month.

<b>Sample Community Tree Program Calendar</b>				
<b>MONTH</b>	<b>TO BE DONE*...</b>			
	<b>Throughout the Month</b>	<b>By the 1st</b>	<b>By the 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>By End of Month</b>
<b>January</b>	Tree Planting	Tree Conservation Notes	CTP Newsletter	Select NFA Location
	Tree Pruning		TCA Nominations Due	Select TCA Recipient
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
<b>February</b>	Tree Planting	Tree Conservation Notes	Arbor Day Celebration	
	Development Code Support	Prepare CTP Summary	Present CTP Summary	
	CTC Support			
<b>March</b>	CTP Annual Planning	Tree Conservation Notes	CTP Planning Meeting	
	Tree Mulching			
	Tree Fertilization			
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
<b>April</b>	Tree Mulching	Tree Conservation Notes	CTP Newsletter	Tree Conservation Workshop
	Budget Development		Complete CTP Annual Plan	
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
<b>May</b>	Budget Development	Tree Conservation Notes	CTP Guide Revision	
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
<b>June</b>	NFA Tree Inventory	Tree Conservation Notes		
	Tree Inventory by Area			
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			

Abbreviations:            CTC = Community Tree Council  
                                   CTP = Community Tree Program  
                                   NFA = Neighborhood Forest Assessments  
                                   TCA = Tree Conservation Award

<b>Sample Community Tree Program Calendar (cont'd.)</b>				
<b>MONTH</b>	<b>TO BE DONE*...</b>			
	<b>Throughout the Month</b>	<b>By the 1st</b>	<b>By the 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>By End of Month</b>
<b>July</b>	Tree Pruning	Tree Conservation Notes	CTP Newsletter	
	NFA Tree Inventory			
	Tree Inventory by Area			
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
<b>August</b>	NFA Tree Inventory	Tree Conservation Notes		
	Tree Inventory by Area			
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
	Tree Inspections			
<b>September</b>	NFA Development	Tree Conservation Notes	BMPs Revision	
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
<b>October</b>	NFA Completion	Tree Conservation Notes	CTP Newsletter	
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
<b>November</b>	Tree Mulching	Tree Conservation Notes		
	Tree Planting			
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			
<b>December</b>	Tree Planting	Tree Conservation Notes		NFA Applications Due
	Development Code Support			
	CTC Support			

Abbreviations:            CTC = Community Tree Council  
                                   CTP = Community Tree Program  
                                   NFA = Neighborhood Forest Assessments  
                                   TCA = Tree Conservation Award