

# THE SHADE TREE

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

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**Volume 98 – March – April 2025 – Issue 3 & 4**

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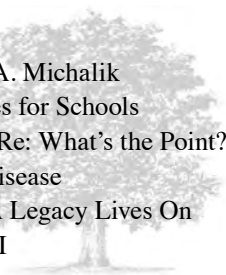
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## **IN MEMORIAM: BERNADINE A. MICHALIK**

It is with deep sorrow to share the news that “Bernie” Michalik passed away on January 29, 2025. Born in South Amboy, one of Bernie’s first full time jobs was at Rutgers University in the Agriculture Department. She later took on a position of secretary and then cheerleading coach at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Sayreville. Bernie was voted as the first woman President of the New Jersey Shade Tree Federation. She cherished her role and was a strong advocate for nature and community trees.

Bernie was a talented poet, publishing several works that expressed her creativity and depth. The NJ Shade Tree Federation extends our condolences to her husband George, their children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and her entire family. Her laughter, exuberance and dedication to the tree industry will be missed as her memory lives on in our hearts.

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## **FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: TREES FOR SCHOOLS**

**Attention New Jersey Public Schools, Colleges and Universities: Apply for a Tree-Planting Grant**

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# **BULLETIN OF THE NEW JERSEY SHADE TREE FEDERATION**

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## **A LETTER TO THE FEDERATION RE: WHAT'S THE POINT?**

**By Jason Grabosky, Rutgers University, January 2025**

Thank you to the NJ Shade Tree Federation for a moment of your collective time. I have been contacted by a Federation member with a great deal of concern over the remarks I contributed during my presentation to the general session at last year's meeting. I am asking for your time and attention to attempt to clarify my statement to affirm my endorsement and commitment to the many shade tree committees in New Jersey and beyond.

Folks who know me have heard me say: "You always give three talks. The talk you plan to give, the talk you actually give, and the talk you absolutely wish you gave....and on a good day you get two of the three." It seems the talk I planned and the talk I gave were notably different, and I regret the misunderstanding.

Now to be totally honest, I do not remember exactly what I said in that presentation, and reviewing the slide set for visual memory prompts does not work so well, since slides represent ideas that link to a mental notebook rather than a script. But I do pretty much remember what I had hoped to do in making a point, so I will try again.

I think I was making a point that the recent demands for shade tree protection ordinances as requirement for stormwater funding were not well thought through. A great statement of community values which place rules and requirements on individual actions, releasing aspects of individual autonomy for the common good. In this case the ordinance process was forced upon communities without the input of their own position of the values of trees as much as protection of their water management programming. Good intentions, maybe a not-so-great approach since tree folks were evidently not present or unable to be heard in the drafting of a template ordinance.

Where I was taking issue was in the language in a template ordinance that had to be changed, and the challenges of tree commissions to work through the ordinance process without overstepping boundaries, since the community was not pushing the action as much as the state was imposing the action. The template I had seen, filed comment and then had no reply, had language starting with municipal trees which, mid-way through the ordinance, turned to all trees private and public. Further, it took the ability of a Licensed Tree Expert to take action on the condemnation of the privately held tree out of context, including safety, and deferred it to the tree commission (if present) or some other municipal group with no clear assurance of tree knowledge.

I wanted to make clear that the commissions established for conservation of a resource were going to be on thin ice if this ordinance template was rubber-stamped. I

# A LETTER TO THE FEDERATION RE: WHAT'S THE POINT?

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had hoped (and failed) to call for communications with the Tree Care Professional and the municipal authority (tree commission) rather than set up an argument on authority. I am pretty sure I said that the Licensed Expert should have the ability to make a call and have a couple of days to organize a documented defense for that call to remove a tree rather than an automatic penalty to the home-owner for a lack of notice and review with its associated court fees and proceedings. I also feel certain, based on the request for this letter, that I made a hard line between the Tree Care Professional and the volunteer, setting a difficult dynamic.

I did not mean to discredit or offend any of the many shade tree commissions, their volunteers, or supporters in drawing this line. I wanted to call out the need for careful approach methods and to keep talking. The purpose of a Licensure law (which we should be very proud to have) is to ensure a level of training and education to do right by our trees. The ordinance ought to elevate and endorse that training rather than supersede with a procedural vote without reference to time, risk or site.

We always have more to learn and further to go in professional behavior and the balance of the community versus the private landowner. My concern is that ordinances do not always work toward progress if the wording is off. And I do not want to be viewed as adding to a conflict here.

We need professionalism, we really need tree commissions to get their training and deploy their tireless informed efforts to work on behalf of their communities. Those are difficult and continuous tasks on both sides. And volunteers need to work with their communities.... for their specific local needs and values. The Stormwater action uses funding for one thing to impact policy on another with obvious linkage.... but it does not include the context of the site (in these communities). It forces ordinances without the public support for such a process. The challenge for the Shade tree commission is to engage and inform the communities on how and why it is worthy of the ordinance (and their communal loss of total control) for the common good. AND to be very very careful with language, especially when it works against what NJ has achieved with educational programs and professional licensure in tree care.

**Note:** Dr. Grabosky is writing in reference to his presentation delivered on Friday, October 18, 2024 at the NJ Shade Tree Federation 99th Annual Conference titled “So, What’s the Point... Just Because it is Alive does not make it Valuable” and mentionings of the NJ DEP Stormwater Program new Tier A MS4 permitting regulations which required NJ municipalities to adopt and enforce a Tree Removal & Replacement Ordinance by May 1, 2024. Read more here: <https://dep.nj.gov/njdpdes-stormwater/municipal-stormwater-regulation-program/example-ordinances/>

He is also discussing NJ’s tree care professional licensing legislation the “Tree Experts and Tree Care Operators Licensing Act” enforced by the NJ Board of Tree Experts, under which all companies conducting “Tree Care Services” must register and individuals (NJ Licensed Tree Experts and NJ Licensed Tree Care Operators) must obtain and maintain their license with continuing education. Read more here: <https://www.njbte.org/>



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# SPOTLIGHT ON BEECH LEAF DISEASE

By Matthew Borden, DPM, TCI Magazine, December 1, 2024

**Another doom-and-gloom story? There is an ever-growing lineup of new and invasive pests, weeds and diseases with which we, as tree care professionals, must keep up. For foresters and arborists in the mid-Atlantic, New England and parts of the upper Midwest, beech leaf disease (BLD) is one such problem. It has raced toward the front of the line due to its alarming severity, rapid spread and unique characteristics that require new management tactics. But there is hope.**

## **How bad is the disease, and why is it unique?**

BLD was first identified around 2012 in Ohio and has spread at an astounding pace, moving primarily east and north. Already it affects beech in at least 15 states, plus Ontario. Unfortunately, BLD has brought a second epidemic to much of the same region of American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) forests already severely affected by the beech-bark-disease complex. The beech-bark-disease epidemic began around 1890 in Nova Scotia and has moved at a much slower pace south and west through much of the northeastern United States and adjacent regions in Canada.

BLD is caused by a nematode, *Litylenchus crenatae mccannii*, a type of microscopic roundworm. Unlike most nematode plant pests which infest roots, this species infests the developing buds on beech twigs and causes dramatic gall-like deformities in the leaves. As it is a relative newcomer to science, there is still much to learn about the nematode, particularly how it spreads and some aspects of the life cycle. Evidence points to the species originating in Japan, where it causes a nonlethal, minor form of the disease on the native beech there. In North America, however, it causes a severe, progressive disease that deprives beech leaves of their ability to produce food and energy, turning from a net gain of resources to a net loss. Over the course of several seasons, and as the nematode populations build up, we see defoliation, bud abortion and eventual branch dieback. Other pests and secondary diseases may take hold once the tree is severely weakened, leading toward a decline spiral.

## **Why care about beech?**

For the benefit of those not lucky enough to work with beech, these trees are the muses of art and lore. They are prized by landowners lucky enough to have a mixed beech forest or a majestic specimen tree accenting their property. They are iconic trees known for their smooth gray bark, muscular root flares, spreading canopy of vibrant leaves, shady understory and marcescent leaves that wither but persist over the winter. In eastern North America, the American beech is sometimes called the “aristocrat of the forest.” Like oak, beech is considered a keystone species for its role in local ecosystems, providing vast crops of beechnuts in masting years once trees are mature, as well as nesting habitat and deep shade throughout the season. While American beech is grown as an ornamental shade tree in landscapes, the European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) plays a prominent landscape design role. It is the European beech cultivars, such as weeping beech, copper beech, tricolor beech and fern leaf beech, that are prized for their architectural form, leaf color and stately nature.

So far, all beech species commonly grown in the United States are susceptible to BLD, although some natural variation in severity has been observed.

## **Learning from the past**

Many of us may recall sitting in a dimmed classroom, hearing case studies

# SPOTLIGHT ON BEECH LEAF DISEASE

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of the devastating tree killers of recent history. For me, the classroom was at Virginia Tech, where I listened to plant pathologist Anton Baudoin and “Tree Doc” Jay Stipes. Together with students from the horticulture and forestry programs – some of whom are now also arborists and landscape professionals – we heard about chestnut blight, Dutch elm disease, hemlock woolly adelgid and emerald ash borer. Undoubtedly, these are culture- and ecosystem-altering epidemics, leaving untold millions of native trees dead.

While fascinating, there was no denying that it was all rather bleak. But we endured the doom-and-gloom lectures to learn from the past in hopes of answering the question, “What can we do about it?” Until very recently, when asked of BLD, this question was met with a disappointing string of, “There are no known treatments.” Finally, with a series of discoveries and extensive research trials, this has changed! We are entering the next phase of BLD management.

## **BLD management**

BLD poses unique management challenges and is, in many ways, unlike any other pest or disease we currently deal with in forestry, agriculture or the turf and ornamental industry. Even strategies for managing pine wood nematode (*Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*) and other foliar nematode pests (*Aphelenchoides* spp.) common in herbaceous ornamentals were of little use for BLD. With no historical precedent to easily apply to the new problem, a team of scientists and technicians at Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories, led by Dr. Andrew Loyd, began the long process of lab work and field trials to investigate possible treatments.

The first exciting development was one standout treatment among many failures in our 2021-2022 season field trials. This was the first treatment to directly target the nematode with a foliar application program, preventing the nematodes from infesting beech buds, where the bulk of damage occurs. We published this in the first-ever collaborative BLD management paper earlier this year. Several subsequent field trials have since been completed to help fine-tune the foliar program, and a second publication is forthcoming. This program is intended for small- to medium-sized beech in landscapes and nurseries and is not for forestry use.

## **Injection treatment**

Our second breakthrough came during the 2022-2023 BLD season, where one of several root-flare injection-treatment options we have tested showed excellent results. After deploying two additional field trials, we introduced the program commercially this past summer. The injection treatment, using macro-injection systems, is capable of suppressing BLD in large, mature beech trees for up to several seasons. This research will be officially published this winter in ISA’s *Arboriculture & Urban Forestry*, but news has already been released. Rainbow Ecoscience, the distributor of Arbotect 20-S, has been particularly helpful in donating product, time and expertise to help us get the extensive field trials implemented and offer training for professional applicators.

While these discoveries are by no means a solution to BLD at the forest ecosystem level, it is immensely encouraging to know that some beech can be protected in places such as landscapes and arboreta, where they are valued as shade



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trees and historic specimens and represent genetically diverse collections. We hope these can be preserved for future work and future generations to enjoy. As with most invasive pests and diseases, the scene will change over time and new tools will become available, such as resistant or tolerant varieties and more treatment-rotation products. We also anticipate that, similar to management of hemlock woolly adelgid, these tools developed for individual beech will eventually find use in the preservation of select, mature beech in natural areas.

## **Bartlett-exclusive treatment?**

We recognized BLD as a severe issue with immediate, dire need for management tools. Where possible and appropriate, we want beech to be saved and preserved, so it is important that treatment options use products that are widely available commercially. Therefore, we are developing treatment protocols and BMPs (best management practices) using products accessible to arborists and certified commercial pesticide applicators in our entire industry. We investigate many possible tools using field trials, and then adapt those tools to the new problem of BLD and new host beech trees.

Additionally, we strive to publish all research in open-access journals, so the tree care community can freely access the information. We also have a series of publicly available BLD research posters that provide a summary of the ongoing work online at Research Gate.

## **Foliar control**

For the management tools Bartlett has developed, what are the active ingredients and the modes of action used?

Our foliar program utilizes a next-generation nematicide known as fluopyram, one of several chemistries developed to help replace old, broad-spectrum nematicides that were highly toxic. Although various products containing this active ingredient are labeled for nematode management in turf and agriculture, the only product containing fluopyram that is available for use on ornamental plants in residential and commercial landscapes, as well as in nurseries, is Broadform.

In order to use Broadform (a formulation labeled as a fungicide) for managing the nematode causing BLD, we assembled our early field trial and bioassay data to request a new use against this invasive disease. The result was a 2(ee) recommendation (pesticide registration addendum) supported by the manufacturer, permitting Broadform “For Control of Beech Leaf Disease on Beech Trees.” Fluopyram works both as a fungicide and nematicide by a SDHI (succinate dehydrogenase inhibition) mode of action. In basic terms, it acts to rapidly deplete the nematode of energy, and tests have shown that it targets the BLD nematode exceptionally well.

## **Injection control**

Our root-flare injection program utilizes an older chemistry, but one with a fascinating history. Many arborists know the fungicide product Arbotect 20-S as a go-to for treatment of Dutch elm disease and sycamore anthracnose. Few, however, know that the active ingredient, thiabendazole (TBZ), was once widely used for its anthelmintic



# SPOTLIGHT ON BEECH LEAF DISEASE

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(anti-parasitic) properties in veterinary medicine, particularly sheep, horses and cattle. Thiabendazole is said to bind tightly with the target pests' beta-tubulin, disrupting a key component of their cell-division process. However, we have performed a series of bioassays that strongly points to TBZ also having a rapid mode of action, likely by inhibiting a step in their metabolic processes. Either way, the nematodes are quickly incapacitated even at low doses.

Like fluopyram, thiabendazole is a good example of a chemistry that has valuable uses against certain fungal diseases and also certain nematode parasites. Following our early field-trial results, we assembled the compelling data and requested a new use of the product for BLD and beech trees, again with support from the manufacturer and states. So far, we have obtained special-use labels in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia.

## **BLD and climbing/rigging**

How about untreated trees affected by BLD – do they immediately get crispy and fall apart? This is a valid concern stemming in part from conscientious climbers who are aware of the hazards of working in heavily infested ash trees, which quickly become dry and brittle. However, this is not a concern for beech trees affected by BLD. Remember, BLD is a progressive disease that reduces the tree's ability to support itself through functional foliage and gradually depletes resources. Assess the tree as you would in the absence of BLD, paying attention to structural defects and secondary fungi that cause dieback and decay.

Other than defoliation, is there a degradation in the trunk tissues? The nematodes causing BLD have not been found within branches, trunks or roots. As such, they do not directly degrade woody tissues or cut off the vascular system, as do the pine wood nematodes that cause pine wilt disease, a rapid and lethal wilting of some non-native pines. As BLD worsens, there is bud abortion and twig dieback, which can lead to other secondary fungi and borers moving in, but this is not exclusive to BLD. One other concern we see on many mature beech in urban areas is the prevalence of brittle cinder fungus (*Kretzschmaria deusta*). Because of the difficulty in assessing the extent of basal decay for this organism, extra caution should be taken and tree removal is typically prescribed.

## **Prognosis**

How much of an infestation is needed before the tree succumbs? With EAB, we have some thresholds to help make decisions. Do we know this for beech trees?

Over time, research and trial-and-error, thresholds become vital to help make pest-management decisions. For emerald ash borer, research has demonstrated that once roughly 50% of the canopy has died, it is too late to have reasonable treatment success and save the tree.

An equivalent threshold does not yet exist for BLD, but this is in part because BLD is a very different disease and severity varies by location and the individual tree. Indeed, we sometimes see some beech trees suffer near complete defoliation one summer due to BLD, but then put out a flush of leaves in relatively good condition the next spring. Presumably, this is due to the tree shedding the majority of its nematode

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leaf-dwelling parasites before they can move into the next season's buds. Unfortunately, total defoliation is not a long-term, sustainable defense strategy that can be repeated without significant stress.

Instead, we recommend focusing on the health of the individual tree and paying close attention to the canopy. Both of our treatment programs require foliage to be present in order to perform the application. After all, you cannot perform a foliar application – nor expect good uptake from a root-flare injection – on a bare tree. Therefore, severe defoliation or the presence of other advanced health concerns should draw pause. Instead of rushing to treat or giving up hope entirely, wait until the next flush of leaves to reevaluate the tree's condition and determine if treatment is possible and worthwhile.

Give yourself time to learn about BLD and observe how the disease will impact beech in your area.

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## **RANDOLPH'S LIBERTY TREE: A LEGACY LIVES ON**

By Eric Blair, Morristown Minute, February 8, 2023  
Center for Private Forests, May 4, 2024

Randolph Township, NJ - The Historical Society of Old Randolph (HSOR) and the Rotary Club of Randolph have come together to preserve a piece of history and natural beauty in the form of the Liberty Tree. This historic white oak, located behind the bank near Quaker Church and Center Grove roads, has stood tall since 1720 and is the last surviving tree from the Revolutionary War in Randolph.

Dr. Tom Ombrello, a professor at Union County College specializing in propagating old trees, has given the Liberty Tree a new lease on life. After the tree did not produce many acorns in recent years, committee member Meg Sullivan gathered about a dozen acorns from it following a wind storm in 2013. One of these acorns was deemed viable for growing by Dr. Ombrello and has now germinated, providing a chance for the Liberty Tree to live on through its offspring.

The landmarks committee has taken great care of the Liberty Tree over the years and is hopeful that the seedling will thrive in a protected environment for a few years before it is planted and becomes a living legacy for future generations of Randolph residents.

Note: Most of our country's original "Liberty Trees" are gone, but preservation projects like Randolph's acorn project have helped capture and give new life to these historical living monuments thanks to dedicated tree enthusiasts and professionals. If you know the locations of "Liberty Tree" progeny or trees bearing the "Liberty Tree" designation in our state, please assist this cataloging project by reaching out to: [viceregentprinceton@gmail.com](mailto:viceregentprinceton@gmail.com)



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## 100 YEARS OF HISTORY: PART I

**The NJ Shade Tree Federation is looking forward to our 100th Annual Conference, October 16 & 17, 2025 at Harrah's Resort, Atlantic City, NJ. In planning our centennial celebration, we're reminded of how much history our organization has accumulated over 100 years of existence.**

**So, having dove into the archives on the hunt for some historical treasures, I am happy to present the first part in a series called "100 Years of History." Jump back through time with us, starting 25 years ago, in 2000 on the eve of the Federation's 75th Annual Conference.**

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## EDITORIAL...LOOKING BACK-75 YEARS AND STILL GROWING

By Richard Wolowicz, The Shade Tree Vol. 73. Nos. 9 & 10, October 2000

Looking around, you cannot help but notice that the New Jersey Shade Tree Federation is particularly proud of celebrating its 75th Meeting Anniversary. It would be overwhelming to count the number of people who made presentations, and or, attended the sessions throughout this time frame. Place yourself at the first meeting, the war to end all wars was still fresh in everyone's mind. Still to come were Black Tuesday, the Depression, subsequent wars, conflicts, international strife, national protests, space travel, computers and the world wide web. What topics were discussed over the years? Were the advent of chainsaws, synthetic ropes, bucket trucks, and chippers seen as new fangled improvements? Were Dutch elm disease, DDT issues, spray equipment, spongy moth outbreaks, pesticide regulations, safety and accidents topics of the times? Were street tree plantings and nursery stock transplanting issues that were talked about?

It would seem that these topics had to be subject matters. They were important issues of the time. The same basic issues, with respective technological advances, still are the focus of lectures and small group discussions. What promoted this zest of knowledge is the belief that trees are an important part of people's lives. Whether it be for purely sentimental or quality of life reasons, trees are planted for future generations. It was and is the hope that the longevity of trees were improved by doing the work correctly.

In the New Jersey State Forester's Report dated 1910, page 65, there is a section on Shade Trees. There is a reference to tree concerns:

*"Realizing at once this inability and the imperative need for some organization or authority that would advance the shade tree interests of the State, the Forester, with the approval of the Forest Commission, called a conference of shade tree interests in the State House on September 27. Invitations were sent to executives of 124 municipalities. Many welcomed the suggestion, and 30 delegates from 24 cities, towns and boroughs attended the meeting. The adequacy of the State Shade Tree laws, the needs of various communities, the impending insect danger, and other subjects of vital importance were discussed, after which the conference unanimously voted to form a permanent association of Shade Tree interests to act as a sort of clearinghouse. The committee charged with the organization of this association is now at work and hopes to be ready to submit its plan to the Shade Tree Commission, or other interested body,*

# EDITORIAL...LOOKING BACK-75 YEARS AND STILL GROWING

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*of each community in the State, at an early date.”*  
*“Manifestly nothing can be said now concerning the work of this organization, yet it is universally agreed that the State at large, as well as its several and separate communities, suffers severely through the neglect of its shade trees. New Jersey is unique amongst the States of the Union in two respects. The one that it affords place for the homes of thousands who work and spend most of their lives beyond its borders. The other that its resorts, seashore and mountain, are objective points of many who have no immediate interest here. If the desirability of making the State attractive to these people be added to the argument that New Jersey should be, as it may be, a land of pleasant places to its own people, a reason is found for giving every care to the trees that shade its streets and roads, and to those which compose its parks and groves.”*

In the June 30, 1927 State Forester’s Report, the section, “Shade Trees” (page 39), mentions the Federation:

*“In 1925, the Department initiated a movement for closer co-operation among the shade -tree commissions in the State and was successful in securing the organization of the “N.J. Federation of Shade-Tree Commissions,” which seeks to establish a more intimate contact between the local shade-tree interests and to work out general problems common to the entire State. At its beginning, 37 commissions and three private individuals affiliated themselves with this organization. The organization has been holding two well attended meetings annually, one of which each year has been a field meeting.”*

There is a re-occurring theme, that trees are appreciated and need care. It was fortunate for the State that the tree planting initiatives and concerns for the health of New Jersey’s shade trees stated early in the century.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2025

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April 9th	Tree Talk Zoom, 7:00-8:30 PM
June 11th	Tree Talk Zoom, 7:00-8:30 PM
June 30th	Applications Deadline: 2025 Porter Community Tree Project Award & Scholarship
September 10th	Tree Talk Zoom, 7:00-8:30 PM
October 16-17	NJ Shade Tree Federation 100th Annual Conference, Harrah’s Atlantic City, NJ
December 10th	Tree Talk Zoom, 7:00-8:30 PM







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