

THE SHADE TREE

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

Volume 99 – January – February 2026 – Issue 1 & 2

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Oct 22-23, 2026

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GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello, My name is George Meglio, and I am honored to serve as the President of the New Jersey Shade Tree Federation. I step into this role for a two-year term, following Neil Hendrickson, who guided the Federation through its historic 100th anniversary. Neil, you did a wonderful job leading the Federation, and I certainly have big shoes to fill.

My role as President is made much easier thanks to the dedication and talent of our team—especially Emily Farschon, our Outreach Coordinator and all-around “get-things-done” professional, and Rich Wolowicz, our Executive Director and true “man behind the curtain.” Along with our committed Board members, their vision and guidance promise an exciting start to our next 100 years.

In 2026, we are hitting the ground running. The Federation is actively developing events designed to benefit our membership and all those interested in the management and care of our trees. I would like to share a personal goal for my term as President: I will set a goal for the Federation to achieve one big accomplishment—something meaningful, impactful, and shaped by all of you.

I am open and eager to discuss how the Federation can better support you. I ask that you share your thoughts with me: How can the Federation help you and your goals in caring for our trees? I am curious to find the one common issue we all face—from Cape May to Sussex County? I invite you to reach out and share your ideas. I will always make the time to speak with you.

I look forward to working with all of you over the next two years and hope to meet many of you in person at our upcoming events.

Please enjoy the show, I ask that you be conscious, be respectful and have a little fun. Thank you.

BULLETIN OF THE NEW JERSEY SHADE TREE FEDERATION

Executive Director: Richard S. Wolowicz

Editor & Outreach Coordinator: Emily Farschon

Blake Hall, 93 Lipman Drive, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Telephone: (732) 246-3210 Fax: (732) 640-5289

e-mail: trees@njstf.org

www.njstf.org

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**SAVE THE DATE: NJ SHADE TREE
FEDERATION 101ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 22-23, 2026**

**Location: Double Tree by Hilton Cherry Hill, 2349 Marlton Pike,
Cherry Hill Township, NJ 08002**

Date: Thursday, October 22 & Friday, October 23, 2026

Conference Registration to open Summer 2026. We look forward to distributing conference registration and preliminary program information to you! In the meantime, check out our website to see resources and pictures from the 100th Annual Conference: <https://njstf.org/annual-conference>

Did you renew your Federation membership for 2026? We were very pleased that you enjoyed the new member discount code method introduced last year (2025). Our conference will continue opening its doors to the public because access to education is important, but with the new pricing structure we're thrilled to have provided you, our membership, with the opportunity to capture major discounts off costs off Annual Conference attendance. Please remember to renew your or your group's membership for 2026 to continue enjoying this new Federation member benefit: <https://njstf.org/membership>

**NJ SHADE TREE FEDERATION OFFICERS
AND DIRECTORS FOR 2025-2026**

Subsequent to The New Jersey Shade Tree Federation's Annual Business Meeting, a formal vote on the election of Officers and Executive Board was concluded in December 2025. The following are re-elected and new members of the Executive Team.

Officers:

George Meglio – President, with Wood-Ridge Borough
Christopher Raimondi- Vice-President, Raimondi Horticultural Group
Richard Wolowicz – Executive Director
Emily Farschon – Outreach Coordinator

Directors:

2026: Pam Zipse, NJ Tree Foundation
Stephen Chisholm, Jr., Aspen Tree Expert Co.
George Sweetin, Chatham Borough
Barbara Ronca, PhD, Bridgewater Township

NJ SHADE TREE FEDERATION OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2025-2026

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2027: John Anderson, Retired, First Energy, Jersey Central Power & Light
Tim Foerster, Mendham Borough
Roslyn Dvorin, Rutgers University
Thomas Ritchie, Freehold Township Shade Tree Commission

2028: Neil Hendrickson, Retired, Readington Township
Al Birchler, Professional Tree Care
Jeff Cramer, South Brunswick
Dominic Derosa, Asplundh Tree Experts Co.

I-TREE FUNDING LAPSE: WHAT IT MEANS

Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Tree Link News,

January 14, 2026

We learned in December that a longstanding funding mechanism behind i-Tree, the suite of freely available tree assessment tools used by practitioners nationwide, was indefinitely halted. A change in USDA Forest Service policy ended the cooperative agreement that traditionally funded i-Tree's delivery, maintenance, and support, creating an immediate funding lapse for the platform and its tools.

For nearly two decades, i-Tree has been a cornerstone of data-driven urban forestry. From helping to estimate carbon storage and air pollutant removal provided by trees to placing monetary values on energy savings and stormwater benefits, these tools help cities, towns and community groups quantify the benefits that trees provide. i-Tree's usefulness depends on consistent updates to underpinning data, technical assistance, and ongoing maintenance – functions that are now at risk.

The tools remain available online and will continue to function for the time being. However, without a new funding mechanism, updates to models and data may eventually come to a halt. Long-term tool reliability is uncertain. The i-Tree team and partners are actively exploring alternative funding avenues, but the immediate impact is clear: The urban forestry community should brace for a period of transition and must advocate for the value of these tools.

Urban forestry professionals have long paired i-Tree with tree inventory data collected in the field to support local decision making. Tree inventory attributes such as species, size, condition, and location are the backbone of modules like i-Tree Eco, which helps to turn on-the-ground measurements into ecosystem service estimates that can inform tree planting plans, stormwater management strategies, and other decision packages. A potential disruption to i-Tree threatens the current seamless link between tree inventory data and meaningful analysis.



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I-TREE FUNDING LAPSE: WHAT IT MEANS

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This ripple effect extends beyond professionals to educators and youth programs. Organizations like Project Learning Tree (PLT) have used i-Tree in their teaching modules to help students learn real-world environmental science. By pairing classroom lessons with real inventory and analysis tools, PLT engages young learners in understanding how trees support local communities and helps to foster data literacy.

As we watch developments unfold, many have provided user testimonials to underscore how useful i-Tree is for planning, reporting, and community engagement. We will keep you updated with any additional i-Tree news. No matter what comes next, this moment underscores the importance of advocating stable support of the tools we value and use in urban forestry and arboriculture on a regular basis.

Note: In New Jersey, i-tree tools are used to calculate eco-benefits and produce monetary quantifications that estimate the value of our urban trees. These estimates have supported and served as justification for the allocation of millions of dollars in regional and federal grant funding to our state's municipal tree programs. These are just a few examples of major granting programs that cite i-tree resources or tools in their RFPs and grantee guidance documents:

NCSG RGGI: <https://dep.nj.gov/climatechange/mitigation/ncs-grant/>
DEP, Sustainable Jersey, TCNJ, Trees for Schools:

https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/25_0036/

NJ DEP Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry Program:

https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/24_0015/

Read more about i-tree online here:

<https://www.itreetools.org/usda-fs-funding-lapse>

PLANTING SPECS: “GOOD” TO “GREAT”

By Rebecca Johnson, New York State Urban Forestry Council,

www.nysufc.org, December 11, 2023

We all recognize that trees are a big part of the solution to global climate change. Organizations around the globe are launching ambitious and aggressive tree planting campaigns. To meet these goals, they are putting out bids for contractors to plant trees. Too often, though, they go back into the archive and dust off their old planting specifications, and don't examine whether these guidelines match current best management practices.

Planting specifications are the detailed plans and procedures provided to potential contractors to tell them how trees should be planted. Good planting specifications can ensure that there are no misunderstandings between the organization and the contracted company. They provide a mechanism for holding

PLANTING SPECS: “GOOD” TO “GREAT”

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contractors accountable for planting trees properly.

While each country has its own standards, the best management practices published by the International Society of Arboriculture have been developed using the best research available from around the world. Unfortunately, too often people may be unaware of their existence and haven't read them. They're using outdated information, so newly planted trees do not thrive.

Planting specifications should include such details as time of planting, type of planting stock, species selection, storage and handling of the new tree, depth of planting, how to stake (if necessary), mulching and pruning. They also need to show how each tree will be cared for during the establishment period — whether by the contractor or by the organization — as well as how the work will be inspected and the remedies for failure.

Along with planting specifications are the “planting details” — the illustration of your specifications. These do not take the place of writing good specifications but can move them from “good to great.” You don't have to reinvent the wheel to create good planting details, the Urban Tree Foundation has provided open-source examples available for use by anyone at https://www.urbantree.org/details_specs.shtml

Updating your planting specifications AND enforcing them can help ensure that you're not wasting the money you spend on tree planting campaigns.

HOW DO NURSERY GROWERS DECIDE WHAT TO GROW?

By Jane Beggs-Joles, Corporate ASLA, www.asla.org , August 10, 2023
It's August 2023, and growers are deciding on their inventory for 2025.

You read that right: two years out. That's the best-case scenario, and that's for flowering shrubs. Sure, perennials will have a quicker turn-around, but trees take even longer. And that two-year forecast? It's for a three-gallon container. If you like five- or seven-gallon specimens, the timeline gets even longer.

Here are the details:

Right now, growers are looking at what sold this spring and anticipating what will sell through the rest of the year. This tells them both what plants are popular and how much space they have for new crops. They do some math, make some educated guesses about demand, and then order their starter plants (liners) for delivery in spring 2024. Most of those flowering shrubs will need at least a year to grow to a finished size, and that's how we get all the way to 2025. For slower-growing plants and larger specimens, it will take even longer. If they can't



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HOW DO NURSERY GROWERS DECIDE WHAT TO GROW?

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get the liners until summer or fall, add another few months to the schedule.

When it comes to deciding what to grow, the most important factor for a nursery grower is whether or not it will sell. Plant people love plants and will often keep a small inventory of “pet” varieties that they really love. But growing plants is a business; if they can’t make money on a plant, they can’t afford to grow it.

That’s the second part of the decision: can they make money on it? There are some really fabulous plants that are just too slow or too finicky for nurseries to produce in large numbers. Growers may be able to justify maintaining a small inventory of these plants, but they will need to charge a premium price for them to cover their costs.

But what about new plants?

Good nursery growers know that new plants are key to long-term success. Customers’ tastes and needs change, new environmental stressors and pathogens develop, and we all are intrigued by the prospect of something new. So which of the new plants do they introduce?

As with established varieties, it comes down to whether or not they think they can sell it. Is it a better production plant that won’t need much pruning or disease control? Will it be attractive to consumers in a garden center? Is it something that landscapers are asking for?

That last sentence is an important one. Some landscapers ask for the same plants every year. That’s why nurseries grow them. Others would like something different, but they don’t see it on availabilities, so they don’t ask. If you don’t ask for it, growers are less likely to produce it, particularly if it’s a plant that is more appealing to professional landscapers than homeowners shopping on impulse appeal.

If there’s a new plant or a difficult-to-find one that you would like, ask your supplier about it. Remember, they have to plan years in advance, so it pays for you to think ahead, too.

Talk to your grower when the new catalogs come out. Tell them what varieties you think look interesting and why. If you’ve got a big project coming, tell your supplier about it as early as possible. They may be able to adjust their production so you have the plants you need. Even if they can’t make changes to meet your timeline, talking to your nursery supplier as early as possible will give you both time to source the material or find a good alternative. If you all of a sudden need five hundred of a plant you’ve never used before, don’t be surprised if your grower doesn’t have them ready for you.

Perhaps there’s a plant that you’ve used for years but now is getting hard

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to find. Some plants have seen a surge in demand, or their supply was affected by regional crop losses. There may be some new pest or disease that's making it difficult to produce, or there's a new selection that's a better choice. Ask your supplier about it; they can probably offer you a good substitute if you give them some details about your project.

One recurring theme here is that you should talk to your supplier. Let them know what you're interested in, and don't be afraid to ask for plant suggestions. Nursery growers know a lot about how plants will perform in their region and can steer you away from a plant that will struggle on a site. They can also clue you in to a "solution plant" that will make you look like a hero to the client.

If you don't work directly with a nursery grower and deal with a contractor instead, have this discussion with them. Going with them to visit their nursery suppliers will give you a good sense of what's being produced. Don't be afraid to advocate for a plant that you could use; just be prepared to give the nursery grower a realistic estimate of how many units you would use.

Nursery growers ultimately want to produce plants that people will buy. Open communication with them will help both the grower and the landscape professional who wants the best plant for their project.

Note: This article focused on shrubs and perennials, but the lessons apply to tree nursery stock availability too. Try to imagine Beggs-Joles examples stretched out to a 5-10 year timeline instead of 2 years. Planters have a responsibility to communicate to the nursery industry what they want to see come on to market. In community forestry we all work the long game.

HOW TO WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS- EFFECTIVELY

Arbor Day Foundation, Tree City USA, Dr. James R. Fazio

There is no substitute for systematic, continuous community tree care programs that are adequately funded by local governments. But rarely is there enough money to do all that is needed to plant trees or to care for those we have. From planting crews to fundraisers, volunteers can supplement the work of professionals, strengthen social bonds within the community, and provide advocacy and support for tree programs.

"We promise not to waste your time." This was welcome reassurance in a letter of invitation to participate as a volunteer in a new project. In fact, the concept behind the statement is probably central to the success of working with volunteers.

Each year, Americans contribute more than 7 billion hours of time to good

HOW TO WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS

- EFFECTIVELY

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causes, including tree programs. In most cases, volunteers are already busy people, and in all cases, they have hearts of gold and a sincere desire to make the world a better place in which to live. These people deserve our thanks — and they deserve careful attention so the best possible use is made of their time and talents.

In community forestry, volunteers have served on tree boards for decades, planted millions of trees, spent untold hours pruning small trees, raised large sums of money, and contributed in other ways too numerous to list. Of the many lessons that have emerged from this experience, perhaps the most essential is that when volunteers are well-organized and guided by skilled leaders, the result is mutual satisfaction for both the individual and community officials.

Unfortunately, too often the happy marriage between volunteers and managers soon goes sour. In some cases, volunteers find that they are really not needed. Standing around on a cold, spring morning with more people than trees to be planted is nobody's definition of a good use of time. Neither is sitting in on a poorly conducted meeting that goes on and on, dominated by a few outspoken individuals or producing little more than the need to schedule another meeting.

Then, too, there are professionals who have been let down by volunteers. Many have watched initial enthusiasm wither away when the fun wears off. Others have been promised equipment, supplies, or donations that don't materialize. And then there is the matter of long-term care of a project site or trees that have been planted. Many urban foresters have found that volunteers show little interest in watering, pruning, stake removal or the other care a young tree needs in the years following planting. If crews are not able to handle the additional workload, the trees suffer and the project may even fail.

When well-managed — and when not expected to substitute for the professional workforce that is the backbone of larger communities — volunteers are a valuable resource. When not managed effectively, or when city officials view volunteers as a way to avoid financial responsibility for trees, volunteers can actually be detrimental to community forestry. This bulletin contains suggestions that should help nourish a positive, beneficial relationship both within volunteer groups and between volunteers and the professionals with whom they work on behalf of trees.

Note: this bulletin is available as a free pdf download online here: <https://www.arborday.org/tree-resources/how-work-volunteers-effectively>

For a more in-depth resource, search online for a full pdf copy of the "Celebrate Arbor Day Guidebook" originally published and distributed by the arborday foundation as a paper booklet, it is available as a free pdf from some digital public libraries.

Happy planning & planting for your 2026 Arbor Day celebrations!



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WHERE HUMANS AND FORESTS MEET: THE RAPIDLY GROWING WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

By Miranda H. Mockrin, USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station,
May 14, 2025

People love to live near forests, lakes, open space, and scenic beauty. These natural settings draw people to build homes in areas classified as the wildland-urban interface (WUI): spaces where human development meets the natural world. Although houses in the WUI are built on private land, they are often close to national forests, within inholdings (patches of private land within national forests), or close to other public land. Tracking and understanding WUI growth therefore has implications for forest health and management across public and private lands. Miranda Mockrin, a research scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Northern Research Station, and colleagues have mapped and analyzed changes in WUI areas in the continental United States. Between 1990 and 2020, the size of the WUI increased by 179,000 square kilometers, an area equivalent in size to the state of Washington. During the same 30-year period, the number of houses in the WUI increased by 46 percent, growing from 30 million to 44 million. And although the growth of the WUI slowed between 2010 and 2020, 2.6 million new houses were built in WUI areas during that decade. As of 2020, 9.4 percent of the land area and almost a third of all houses in the continental United States (32 percent) were in WUI areas.

As human populations expand, residential development increasingly encroaches upon undeveloped wildland areas, creating a dynamic interface where human communities intersect with natural ecosystems. As housing developments proliferate in proximity to wildland areas, they bring about many ecological changes, including alterations to biodiversity, habitat fragmentation for wildlife, increased wildfire risk, and pollution. These changes extend beyond the boundaries of privately owned lands, affecting neighboring public lands and ecosystems as well. Recognizing the importance of understanding WUI dynamics, researchers are interested in identifying patterns and trends that can inform land management practices and wildfire mitigation strategies.

In a recent study, Mockrin and her colleagues have gone beyond mere quantification by categorizing WUI types into intermix and interface categories. The study allows for a deeper understanding of the ecological and management implications associated with different forms of WUI development.

Intermix and Interface WUI Areas

Researchers have defined two primary types of WUI lands— intermix and interface.

Intermix areas have lower density housing intermingled with wildland vegetation and are often on large parcels of private land. Houses are scattered and infrastructure, like long driveways break up wildlife habitat. Human development

WHERE HUMANS AND FORESTS MEET: THE RAPIDLY GROWING WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

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is also a source of noise disturbance, septic pollution, invasive plant spread, and other ecological disruptions.

In intermix WUI areas, fuel treatment, wildfire management, and evacuations can be expensive and challenging, especially when viewed at the landscape level. “There might be fewer homes to protect during a fire, but they are in a much larger area and in a remote setting,” Mockrin says. Cooperative strategies like managing fuels across ownerships can be helpful in reducing fire risk.

WUI areas in and around national forests and grasslands reported dramatic growth of intermix WUI areas in recent decades. Between 1990 and 2010, the number of houses in intermix WUI increased by nearly 50 percent, and the total WUI intermix land area expanded by nearly 40 percent, far more than WUI intermix expansion for other areas of the conterminous United States (32 percent growth WUI intermix houses and 36 percent in WUI intermix area).

Interface areas are densely developed neighborhoods that lack trees and other vegetation among the houses but are near wildland vegetation like forests or grasslands. Interface areas typically have larger and denser groups of houses and hard barriers like roads or paved surfaces that break the connection to wildland areas. Interface areas lack substantial vegetation after development, but effects from human disturbances like light and noise can be more pronounced.

Interface WUI areas may be especially vulnerable to wildfire because fires can spread quickly from house to house. More than half of the California buildings destroyed by wildfires between 1985 and 2013 were located in interface communities, even though these areas made up only 2 percent of the fire-impacted lands.

Heavily developed interface areas may have better access to firefighting resources and may be protected by fuel treatments along the boundaries between public lands and houses. Ordinances and regulations can reduce wildfire risk and reduce noise, light, and other disturbances that affect wildlife and habitat. In both intermix and interface WUI areas, programs often run by homeowner associations, volunteer fire departments, or road associations help to educate and engage property owners in activities such as planting native species, reducing the risk of invasive species, and managing wildfire risk on their properties.

Looking to the Future

Mockrin and her colleagues call for additional research and monitoring into the future, stating that monitoring future WUI growth and its interaction with large-scale perturbations such as climate change impacts is crucial for understanding

WHERE HUMANS AND FORESTS MEET: THE RAPIDLY GROWING WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

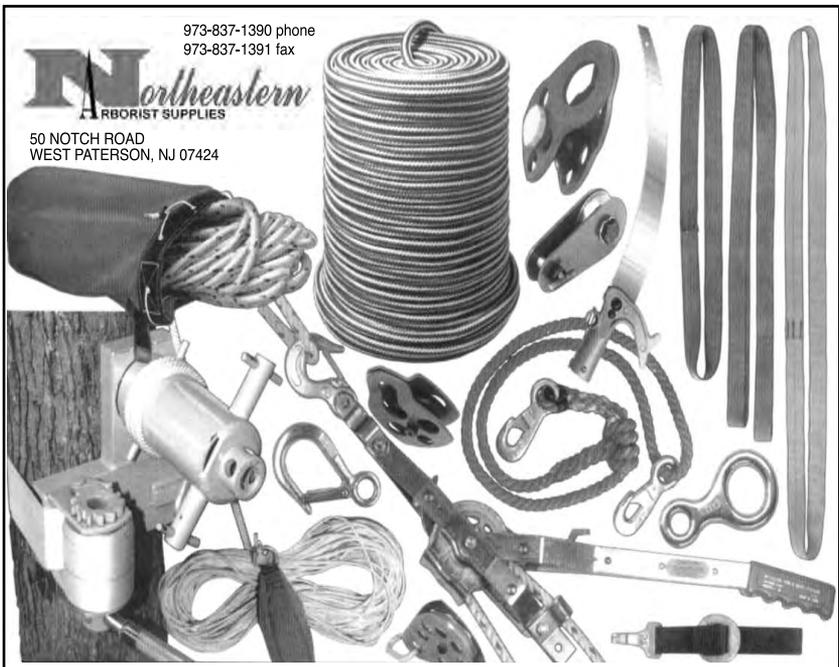
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future ecological challenges. Additionally, the researchers call for efforts to focus on demographic and economic changes associated with WUI development and its implications for public land management.

Mockrin and her colleagues are currently updating the analyses of WUI areas within and around national forests to include the years 2010 to 2020.

In the long term, WUI expansion is likely to continue. Research can inform strategies for wildfire prevention, mitigation, and response, helping to minimize the impacts of wildfires on both WUI residents and adjacent wildland areas.

Note: further reading, including the full 2024 scientific brief to which this article refers is available online here: <https://research.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/67667>





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