

THE SHADE TREE

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

Volume 99 – May – June 2026 – Issue 5 & 6

This Issue Presents...

Tree Nursery Tour - May 30th

2026 NJSTF Scholarship & Community Tree Project Application
Periods Open

NJUCF Stewardship Grant- Canopy Maintenance Application
Deadline June 12

NJAISA Brings Prescription Pruning Qualification (PPQ) Program to
NJ July 2026

Think Twice Before Touching Your Neighbor's Tree – Legal Experts
Warn When Pruning Could Break the Law

U.S. Forest Service Unveils Extensive Closures of Research Facilities

TREE NURSERY TOUR MAY 30TH

See 'behind-the-scenes' where our towns' trees start: Gain an understanding of the nursery grower's process, technologies, and methods as they nurture shade trees from slip to sale. Small groups will rotate through 5 tour stations of live demos with real equipment and industry techniques for Production, Field Planting, Digging, Staging, and Installation & Establishment.

NJUCF & NJBTE LTE, LTCO pre-approved for 1.5 CEUs

Schedule:

- 9:30 AM Check-In, Coffee & Breakfast Snacks
- 10:00 AM Intro, Safety Brief, Start of Tour
- 12:00 PM Optional, additional tour of growing fields.

Location: Cerbo's Hampton Nursery Lot, 86 County Road 519, Newton, NJ 07860

Date: Saturday, May 30th, Check-In 9:30 AM

Registration: \$25 (+ cc, processing fees) Registration is required. Scan the QR code or visit our website: www.njstf.org

Register Online:



BULLETIN OF THE NEW JERSEY SHADE TREE FEDERATION

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2026 NJSTF SCHOLARSHIP & COMMUNITY TREE PROJECT APPLICATION PERIODS OPEN

The New Jersey Shade Tree Federation is pleased to open the annual application period for the William J. Porter Community Tree Project Award and Arboriculture Scholarship. Visit www.njstf.org to download the award and scholarship information and application forms.

The William J. Porter Community Tree Project Award is intended to provide up-front funding for a small project to benefit the tree resource in your community. The application deadline is COB August 31st, 2026. Award details as follows:

- Up to \$2,500.00 per award depending on availability of funds.
- Project funds provided upfront upon receipt of the award (this is not a reimbursement grant!).
- Project funds can be awarded to a municipality or tree organization working within their municipality (organization must have capability to accept fund – no checks to individuals).
- Awardee must be a current member of the NJ Shade Tree Federation (forgot to renew? There's still time! Download a Renewal/Application Form from our website: www.njstf.org/membership)
- Five year moratorium for past award recipients.
- Award Recipient(s) will be notified in September and must be available to accept the award in person at the NJ Shade Tree Federation 101st Annual Conference, Oct 22 & 23, 2026, at the DoubleTree Cherry Hill, NJ
- Applications may be emailed to TREES@NJSTF.ORG
- The application deadline is COB August 31st, 2026

The William J. Porter Arboriculture Scholarship is intended to encourage studies and careers in Arboriculture and Urban Forestry. The application deadline is COB June 30th, 2026. The award goes to a Rutgers student meeting the following criteria:

2026 NJSTF SCHOLARSHIP & COMMUNITY TREE PROJECT APPLICATION PERIODS OPEN

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- Recipient(s): A Rutgers Student – Application submission deadline is June 30th. The Recipient must be a full-time undergraduate student enrolled in a program of studies representing a demonstrated interest in Arboriculture or Urban Forestry. The student must be at least sophomore standing with a minimum GPA of 2.5. The ideal candidates would include those majoring in Ecology and Natural Resources, Plant Biology and Pathology, Environmental Planning and Design, or Landscape Architecture, but others may apply.
- Award(s): Awards will be up to \$2,500. Amount may be adjusted annually depending on available funds. Award Recipient(s) will be notified in September and must be available to accept the award in person at the NJ Shade Tree Federation 101st Annual Conference, Oct 22 & 23, 2026, at The DoubleTree Cherry Hill, NJ
- Applications may be emailed to *TREES@NJSTF.ORG*
- The application deadline is COB June 30th, 2026.

Visit www.njstf.org to download the award and scholarship information and application forms. Submissions may be emailed to us at *TREES@NJSTF.ORG*

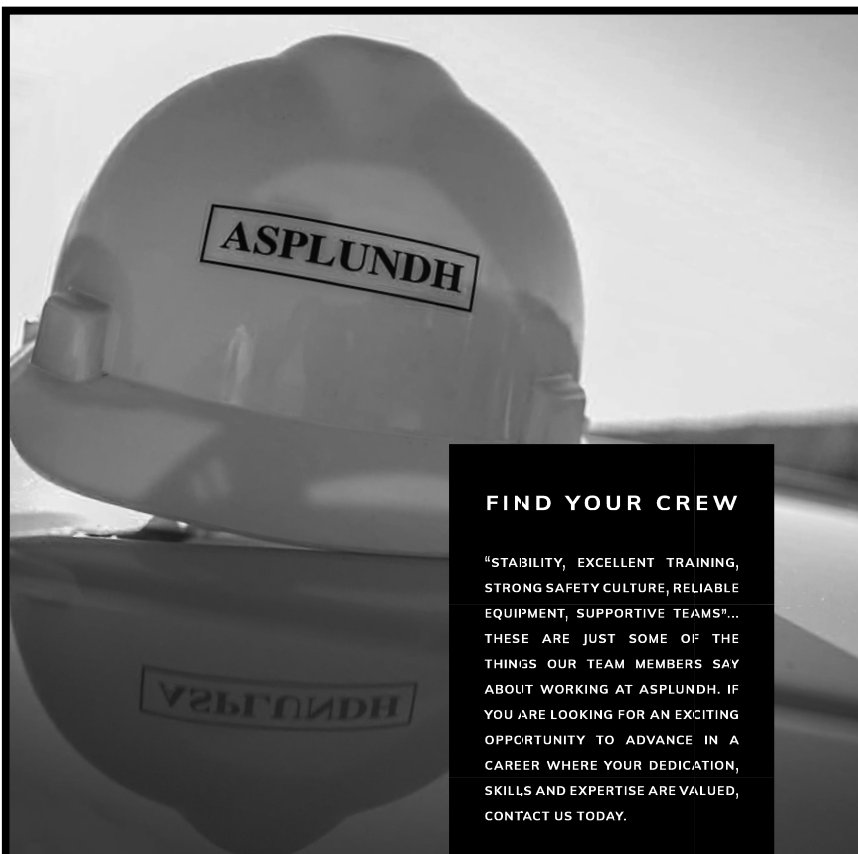
NJUCF STEWARDSHIP GRANT – CANOPY MAINTENANCE APPLICATION DEADLINE JUNE 12

NJ Urban & Community Forestry Program, NJ DEP GovDelivery
announcement, April 27, 2026

Stewardship Grant - Canopy Maintenance 2026: This grant will assist local governments in urban forest maintenance including tree pruning/maintenance and hazard tree removal. The Stewardship Grant - Canopy Maintenance supports municipalities and counties in maintaining healthy, safe, and sustainable urban and community forests through professional tree care services. All grant activities must align with an approved Community Forestry Management Plan (CFMP) and be completed within a 2-year work period.

This grant is now open, and will close on June 12, 2026 at 5pm. Applications should be filled out through the NJDEP SAGE website (IntelliGrants - Login). The maximum awarded amount is \$25,000 for tree pruning/maintenance and/or hazard tree removal. NJUCF expects to award ten (10) grants totaling \$25,000 each.

Funding is provided by the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community



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NJUCF STEWARDSHIP GRANT – CANOPY MAINTENANCE APPLICATION DEADLINE JUNE 12

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Forestry Program, the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forest Preservation License Plate Fund (N.J.S.A. 39.3-27.81), and the No Net Loss Compensatory Reforestation program [N.J.S.A. 13:1L-14.2(c)].

Please find the RFP on the NJUCF website here: Stewardship Grant - Canopy Maintenance RFP www.communityforestry.nj.gov

WHO IS ELIGIBLE : Municipal and county governments in partnership and collaboration with local shade tree departments, commissions, tree committees, tree boards, or tree councils who are legally responsible for tree and forest management. Applicants **MUST:**

- Be NJUCF Accredited for the year 2025
- Have a current inventory in place, and a TRAQ evaluation for trees to be removed
- NOT have an open 2021, 2022, or 2023 Stewardship Grant, or Leafing out Grant (LOG) for Management

Only projects carried out on public property owned or maintained by a municipal or county government are eligible for grant funding.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO COMPLETE AN APPLICATION Contact Us:

- General Email: communityforestry@dep.nj.gov
- Northern Region: Ryan.Bellinger@dep.nj.gov
- Central Region: Grace.Temple@dep.nj.gov
- Southern Region: David.DeCredico@dep.nj.gov



NJAISA BRINGS PRESCRIPTION PRUNING QUALIFICATION (PPQ) PROGRAM TO NJ JULY 2026

The NJ Arborists Chapter of the ISA, www.njaisa.com, 856-343-7571,
njarboristsisa@gmail.com

The Prescription Pruning Qualification (PPQ) is a voluntary credential that standardizes how pruning prescriptions are written and executed. It establishes a protocol resulting in consistency between the arborist preparing the prescription and the production arborist. This qualification course teaches you how to prescribe and perform pruning in accordance with industry standards and ISA's BMP, which is supported by the latest research and experience. To earn the qualification, participants must successfully complete a comprehensive written exam and a performance-based assessment.

There are two (2) training tracks offered:

- Day 1 – Producers – ISA certification and New Jersey licensing are not required to take this course. Producers are finished with the training at the end of day one and each receives a certificate of completion. There is no exam.
- Day 1, 2, and 3 – Prescribers – Must be an ISA Certified Arborist or hold a current NJ LTCO or NJ LTE license.
- The second and third days of training focus on preparing pruning prescriptions using many examples which include outdoor exercises. This is an interactive program with many activities. There is a review and a multiple-choice exam on the third day. Those passing the exam will earn the PPQ credential.

Date: July 14-16, 2026

Location: Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Instructors: Ed Gilman, Professor Emeritus, University of Florida and Lindsey Purcell, Consulting Arborist, LP Consulting Group, LP

Registration Information visit: www.njaisa.com , 856-343-7571,
njarboristsisa@gmail.com





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THINK TWICE BEFORE TOUCHING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S TREE – LEGAL EXPERTS WARN WHEN PRUNING COULD BREAK THE LAW

By Rachel Bull, Homes & Gardens, February 19, 2026

It's tempting to prune an overhanging branch, but don't get snip-happy just yet

Overhanging branches can be more than a nuisance; they're also a legal minefield. The basic rule? You're usually allowed to trim branches that cross into your property, but only up to the property line. Go further, and you could be opening yourself up to legal trouble.

We spoke to attorneys and arborists to untangle the rules. While trimming overhanging branches is generally permitted, there are important caveats: how you cut, what you do with the debris, and your local laws can all make a difference.

In short, pruning your neighbor's tree isn't as simple as it seems. We reveal everything you need to know below.

What Attorneys Say About Pruning a Neighbor's Tree

Wherever you are in the country, the fundamental law is that you can trim overhanging branches up to the property line, but there's a lot to bear in mind as you prune.

Attorney Jeffrey Reisman explains the general principle most homeowners rely on.

'If the branches of a neighboring tree intrude into your yard, you would generally have the legal right to trim them up to the property line,' he says. 'This principle, often referred to as the self-help rule, grants property owners the right to trim encroaching branches without requiring their neighbor's permission.'

In other words, you can usually cut back anything that crosses into your airspace, but only up to the boundary line.

Attorney Jamie Wright agrees, though she cautions that the rules can vary depending on where you live.

'You can cut branches that grow into your property up to the property line, but you can't trespass or harm the tree,' she says.

'States differ on this; for instance, some require that you notify your neighbor, while others do not. City ordinances may also determine who is responsible for tree care and maintenance.'

The golden rule? You cannot trespass to prune a neighbor's tree.

That's where things can become more complicated, according to arborist Kaustubh Deo.

THINK TWICE BEFORE TOUCHING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S TREE – LEGAL EXPERTS WARN WHEN PRUNING COULD BREAK THE LAW

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‘Laws vary by state or city, but in many cases, you can legally prune branches that are in your property airspace, such as those coming over a fence,’ he says.

‘However, to safely prune overhanging branches, arborists may need to access the tree itself to set up ropes or climbing equipment. In that case, they will need the neighbor’s permission, since the tree is on their property.’

Why Local Ordinances Are Important

There are some exceptions that are helpful to understand. Some trees cannot be pruned because of local laws or homeowners’ association rules.

Attorney Jeffrey Reisman explains: ‘You may be prohibited from trimming the tree without getting a permit if it is also protected by local laws such as heritage tree ordinances or conservation regulations.’

‘Certain cities and homeowners’ associations have strict ordinances regarding liveries for trees deemed significant for their species, size, or environmental importance.’

On top of that, you cannot prune a public tree that grows onto your property.

Jeffrey says: ‘If the tree is located on public land but stretches over into your property, the matter may require consultation with the municipality or parks department.’

Give Fruit and Firewood Back

While you can usually cut back branches to the property line, ownership doesn’t transfer with the pruning. The wood, and anything growing on it, still belongs to your neighbor.

Attorney Jamie Wright explains: ‘The tree owner has the right to the fruit, even if it grows on branches hanging over your fence.’

‘Picking it without the owner’s permission is considered theft in most states. However, if the fruit falls naturally into your yard, you are generally entitled to keep it.’

The same principle applies to the branches themselves. Even after trimming them back, you cannot automatically claim the wood for firewood or disposal.

Attorney Mark Hirsh says: ‘Permission is always required. Unless a neighbor relinquishes or gives you fallen branches, they own them.’

THINK TWICE BEFORE TOUCHING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S TREE – LEGAL EXPERTS WARN WHEN PRUNING COULD BREAK THE LAW

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Wright agrees, adding: 'Technically, those branches remain your neighbor's property until they say otherwise. The safest approach is to ask. Most people won't object to you keeping trimmed wood, but you shouldn't assume.'

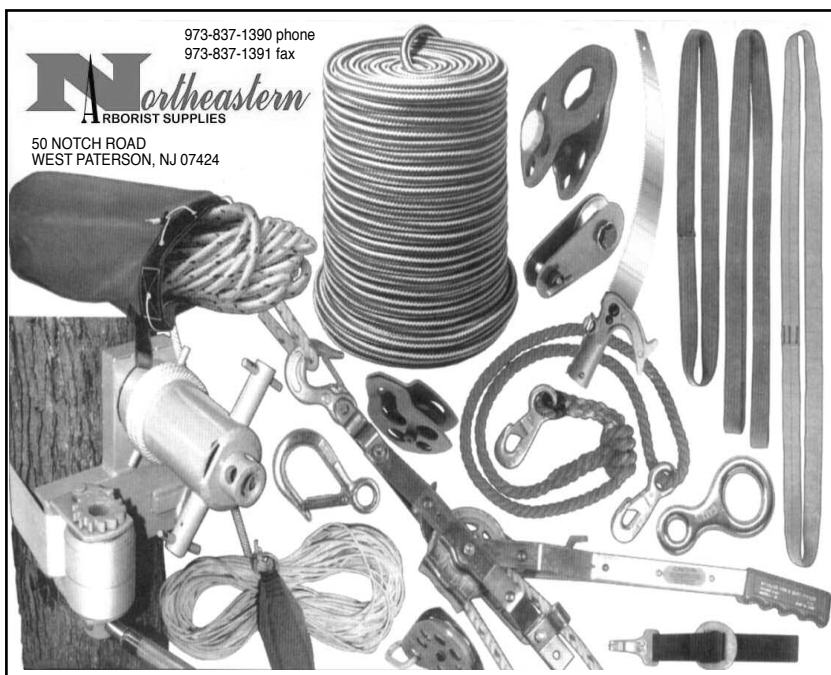
When the City May Step In

There are situations where pruning isn't just a neighborly issue; it becomes a municipal one.

If a neighboring tree is dead, diseased, or structurally unsound and poses a risk to your property, it may fall under local safety regulations. In these cases, the issue is no longer just about overhanging branches, but about hazard control.

Attorney Jamie Wright explains: 'If a tree presents a risk of falling or causing damage, most jurisdictions allow you to demand that your neighbor address it.'

If they refuse and the risk is significant, you may be able to take further action, particularly if local regulations require property owners to control hazards.





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In the most serious cases, you can report the issue to the city.'

Involving the city can sometimes resolve the situation without you bearing the cost. Local authorities may require the tree owner to prune, maintain, or even remove a hazardous tree at their own expense.

However, before escalating matters, it's wise to seek legal advice. Attorney Jeffrey Reisman says: 'You would need to obtain legal advice from a property or real estate lawyer specializing in your specific situation.

'Local government mediation offices, urban forest departments, or zoning offices may also provide invaluable assistance.'

He adds that trees may be officially deemed hazardous due to dead, diseased, or dangerously leaning branches, allowing you to file a formal complaint with your city or county regarding maintenance or removal at the owner's expense.

What To Do if Your Neighbor Prunes Your Tree

There are a few things to consider if you find yourself on the other side of the issue. 'If a neighbor cuts your tree lawfully (only what stretches out to their lot), then you can do nothing,' says Jamie.

'However, if they over-trimmed or harmed the tree, they might be responsible for the damages. Some states, including California, allow you to seek damages from the offender, which can be up to three times the value of the tree.'

The best way to establish harm is to have an arborist look at the tree. Kaustubh Deo advises 'If a neighbor prunes your tree in an unwanted manner, the first step would be to call an ISA-Certified arborist to come examine the results.***

'There's a meaningful difference between what looks good and what may actually be healthy for the tree. A trained professional can help you with that distinction, and then provide a course of next action.'

Trees aren't the only potential boundary issue with a neighbor. There are a lot of potential legal issues with building a pergola next to a neighbor's fence or establishing who is liable if a neighbor's tree falls in your yard.

Even establishing who owns a fence in the first place can be tricky, so it's no wonder that fences can cause so many legal headaches.

***Note: In New Jersey a LTE (Licensed Tree Expert) would be the appropriately qualified professional. www.njbte.org

U.S. FOREST SERVICE UNVEILS EXTENSIVE CLOSURES OF RESEARCH FACILITIES

By Erik Stokstad, Science , www.science.org , April 3, 2026

Cost-cutting move is expected to cause resignations and turmoil

Following up on sweeping changes promised last year, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) this week launched a dramatic reorganization that will move two-thirds of its headquarters staff from Washington, D.C., to Salt Lake City and upend its research program. The agency currently runs its research through five regional hubs spread across the country. Under the new plan, all science will be coordinated through the USFS office in Fort Collins, Colorado. The agency also plans to close more than 50 research facilities.

Many conservationists and scientists called the upheaval damaging and unnecessary. “These changes will have repercussions far beyond the boundaries of the Forest Service itself,” says Katharine Hayhoe, chief scientist of the Nature Conservancy.

Like many research agencies pressured recently by the White House to reduce staff, USFS has already experienced a year of researcher attrition due to layoffs and early retirements. Of the 633 STEM Ph.D.s who were employed by the agency in December 2024, 137 had left by December 2025—the third largest percentage loss among federal agencies with research staff, according to an analysis by Science of the impact of President Donald Trump’s return to office. “The loss of institutional capacity is just heartbreaking,” says economist Geoffrey Donovan, who took a buyout last year after more than 2 decades at the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station in Portland, Oregon, one of the facilities set to close.

Now, Forest Service observers are bracing for more losses. The agency sent letters on 31 March to more than 6000 USFS employees indicating whether they would be expected to relocate. In the past, such relocations, such as the move to shift the U.S. Bureau of Land Management’s headquarters to Grand Junction, Colorado, in 2020, have led to an exodus of federal employees. “It is really going to put folks in a challenging place,” says Terry Baker, who leads the Society of American Foresters.

The reorganization goal was first announced last summer. At the time, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Brooke Rollins emphasized that a key reason was to move more USFS headquarters staff closer to national forests. Cost-cutting was another incentive, as USFS had been running operational deficits in recent years, in part because of the cost of fighting wildfires.

On 31 March, after gathering and reviewing more than 46,000 public comments on the proposed reorganization, USFS announced it would be moving forward with its plan. It also provided more details about which research facilities would be closing. More than a dozen locations will remain open, including two labs

U.S. FOREST SERVICE UNVEILS EXTENSIVE CLOSURES OF RESEARCH FACILITIES

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that focus on wildfire and developing forest products such as fuel and composite wood. No research facility will remain in Alaska, which has 9 million hectares of national forest. “It’s mind-boggling, this elimination of labs,” says Tom DeLuca, dean of forestry at Oregon State University.

The timeline for closures has not been revealed. In an interview on Tuesday with the “Hotshot Wakeup” podcast, Chris French, associate chief of USFS said the priority is moving the D.C. headquarters and that changes to R&D facilities would follow. “We’ll be approaching this in a way that is very much making sure that we’re being very people-first and very thoughtful.” Centralizing research oversight, he added, “should bring more resources to those scientists or scientists in a more efficient program.”

Ann Bartuska, a former undersecretary for research at USDA, says some consolidation of research labs and leadership makes sense, but she was surprised by the extent of the plans. “I think we will start seeing some pushback,” she says, especially from congressional delegations from states that will lose research funding.

Bartuska adds that the plans do not specify what will happen to the 82 experimental forests run by USFS around the country. Many of these sites have decades-long experiments that are tracking how forests are changed by timber harvesting practices and climate change. Hayhoe says that relocating scientists from these forests would jeopardize the mission of USFS. “You can’t just pick up an experimental forest site and move it to Salt Lake City.”

Many observers have their fingers crossed that USFS will allow scientists to be based at a nearby university, nonprofit organization, or state agency. “If that happens, there’s real hope ... we can avoid a bunch of retirements and departures,” says Chris Swanston, chief scientist of the Save the Redwoods League. “And if it doesn’t, then we’ll see losses.”

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2026

May 30	NJSTF & Cerbo’s Tree Nursery Tour, in-person Newton, NJ
June 30	NJSTF Arboriculture Scholarship Application Deadline
July 15	NJSTF Tree Talk Zoom– 7:00-8:30 pm
August 31	NJSTF Community Tree Project Award Application Deadline
September 16	NJSTF Tree Talk Zoom– 7:00-8:30 pm
October 22-23	NJ Shade Tree Federation 101st Annual Conference, DoubleTree Cherry Hill, NJ



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