

# LINKING ARBORISTS, FORESTERS, AND CITIZENS<sup>1</sup>

by Gary Moll

Trees are the common ground for many professionals including arborists and foresters. Trees play a significant role in the life of the man on the street in New York City and the farmer in Idaho. Trees play a major role in the quality of our lives. Without question, trees are a great resource and also the fiber that links arborists, foresters, and citizens (Figure 1). Recognizing the link reveals the opportunity for these three groups to work together for the good of their like concern, trees. The logic seems simple but this trio has had only a casual relationship for the last fifteen years or so. Here are some ideas for improving the weak links.

Urban Forestry helps to bring together many specialists that work with trees and challenges

them to work together to answer questions that are common to many elements of the profession. The concept has been well received by those in the society that can step away from their daily work with trees and see the forest for the trees. Recognizing the collective concerns and working together as a team will not answer all the questions we encounter in the field every day but does create the framework we need to move forward.

Urban Forestry is a many segmented beast. Its complexity is both its strength and its weakness. Forestry and arboriculture have developed into sciences by arranging many complex facts into a logical order, starting as theory and moving to management systems, standards or practices.

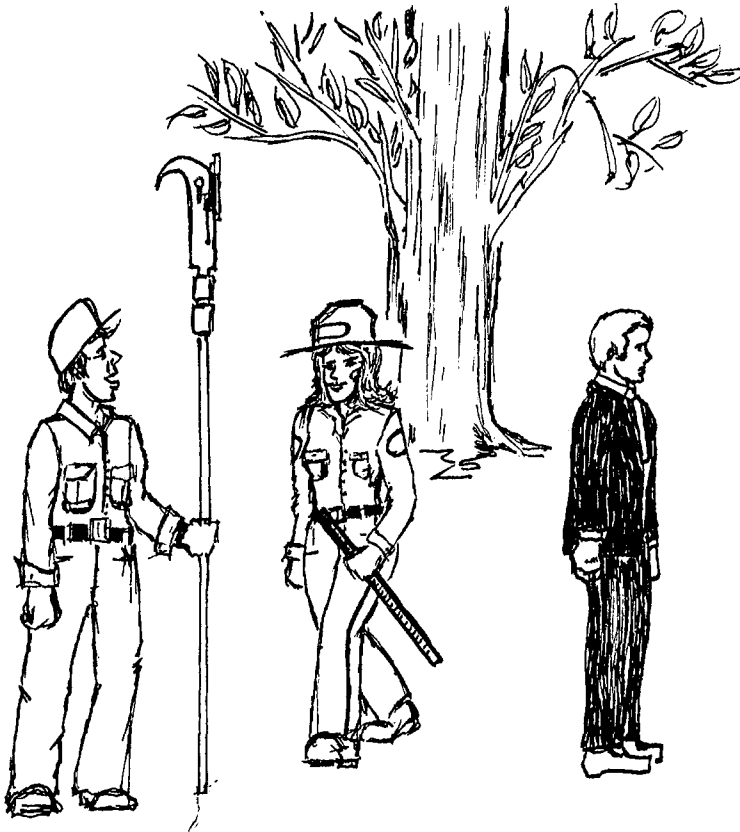


Figure 1

1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in Milwaukee in August 1985.

The methodology created is designed to fit the complexity of the resource it dissects. Technology is not designed for the convenience of the layman and never will be. Some technocrats go to great lengths to make their technology seem more complex than it is. These scientific tar pits are dangerous to the health of a profession that needs people. Experts from our tar pit are taking a beating over the use of pesticides. We can't understand how the public could be so ignorant. We felt differently when we were the public and President Nixon said "trust me."

### **Where is Urban Forestry Today?**

Urban Forestry continues to develop as a concept and is helping foresters and arborists bring the essence of the science they practice to urban people in an organized fashion. There have not been substantial increases in the number or intensity of formalized programs for Urban Forestry.

The U.S. Forest Service continues its effort through the State and Private branch of its service. This program is small in terms of funding but continues to be an important program for supplying the technical assistance communities need to get started with programs. The Federal money is combined with State and local funds to increase its effectiveness. The States have taken a variety of approaches with their programs. The Federal monies pass through the State Forester's office. Developing programs that really make a difference with the small amount of funds available is a significant job and about ten State operations deserve praise for their success.

The practice of Urban Forestry also has its ups and downs. There is a small group of large cities that have maintained excellent programs, like Milwaukee and Minneapolis. There is a larger group of the small or moderate size municipalities maintaining excellent programs. Budget problems have hit many of the larger city programs and they have been sliding backwards at an alarming pace. This problem causes the Directors of Parks and Recreation to list trees as their number one problem at their annual meeting last year.

The successful efforts at all levels of government and in the private sector deserve compliments. We need to build on those successes and work very hard to turn around programs that

are faltering. Let's look at the basics of what makes programs work. Progress can be measured in three areas: technical, organizational, and public awareness. We will have to be successful in all three areas to turn around faltering programs.

Steady progress is being made in the technical areas; these include how to trim a branch, select the best tree for a particular location, or perk up a tree's health with maintenance practices. Measuring the success of organizations requires us to look at a wide variety of organizations. It includes the management of our own operations as well as the cooperation between groups like ISA, NAA, and SAF. Successful organization requires strong cooperation that avoids damaging your profession while battling over organizational turf.

We are probably more successful in managing our own organization than in effectively working with others to advance the status of our science. Public awareness is the art of communication with the public so they hear the message frequently and understand the information you send. The public's perception of what your programs are about is the measuring stick that counts. Effective public awareness programs are the weakest element of our profession. Our failure here is the reason programs decline and we sweat out threats of regulation on pesticides that would bring drastic changes to our technical operations.

### **New Energy and Support for Urban Forestry and Arboriculture**

The American Forestry Association supports the Urban Forestry concept completely and that support offers urban foresters and arborists alike a new opportunity to advance their science. AFA is a citizens conservation group and therefore specializes in the area our profession needs the most—communicating with the public. AFA has an impressive history that stretches back 110 years. It was the source of public concern that produced the U.S. Forest Service, state forestry agencies, and the national forests of the country. The founder of the Association was a nurseryman and an ecologist, John Aston Warder. Throughout its history, trees on streets and in yards or parks have been part of the concerns of the members but during the last fifty years arborists and

nurserymen have not been a dominant voice in our membership. Now is a good time to rekindle that flame!

Back as early as 1910 *American Forests* magazine ran a story called "A Forester Whose Field is the City" and by 1929 a feature story read, "Community Forestry Comes of Age." Throughout the early years, tree care, arbor day plantings, and information about community trees was in almost every issue. The Association, devoting some of its program personnel to Urban Forestry in the late seventies, started the National Urban Forest Council in 1981.

Recent changes in AFA's direction are opening new opportunities for ISA members to reach out to the public through AFA. The new image statement says the objective of the members of the Association is to improve and maintain the health and value of trees and forests; to attract and cultivate the interests of citizens, industry, and government in trees and forests; and to bring Americans closer to forest resources through action-oriented programs, information, and communication. I hope ISA members will take this opportunity to advance their educational responsibilities and join with AFA in reaching citizens.

### The National Urban Forest Council

The National Urban Forest Council or NU-Forest Council, is a network of about two hundred Urban Forestry enthusiasts from around the country. ISA members that are interested in promoting Urban Forestry are welcome to join the Council. There is no cost for joining but we do ask that you take an active role in committee work. Here is an overview of some of the Council activities.

A Third National Urban Forestry Conference is scheduled for December 6-10, 1986. It will be held at the Sheraton Twin Towers in Orlando, Florida. Put this date on your calendar and ask your community leaders and citizen activists to attend too. We are trying to target non-professional groups since they are often the moving force behind community tree programs.

**Committee activities.** The Council has divided its workload into six committees. Working by committee spreads the workload and avoids duplication of jobs. The six committees are:

Funding

Legislation

Public Awareness

Training and Education

Research and Technology Transfer

Networks and Coalitions

The most active committees have been legislation, public awareness, and research and technology transfer, in that order. Also note that the funding committee has combined many of its duties with legislation. In part, the level of activity is telling us how important the group feels the committee is, as well as how energetic the chairmen. Unfortunately, the networking and coalitions group has not been active and if it were we might be advancing the goals of Urban Forestry and arboriculture much more rapidly.

The legislative committee has been active on both the State and Federal levels. Three states worked on Urban Forestry legislation this year: Maryland, Illinois, and New York. Maryland and Illinois were successful and New York made a lot of progress; I think they will try again this year. The Illinois bill was the best or at least the most complete I have seen yet and this year they are working on a funding package to supply the money for the program.

The Federal legislation funds Urban Forestry through the State and Private branch of the U.S. Forest Service. Last year's efforts were very successful and brought the funding level up close to two million dollars. It's true, that is not much money for a National program that services over 3,000 communities, but the results from those few dollars have been substantial since the dollars have been spent wisely. Funds have been contributed by States, towns, and cities in this effort and many citizens have volunteered their time. The Federal funds have been a catalyst to help communities get off on the right foot.

In these days of tight budgets, some people will be skeptical of Federal programs like these. But if you will take a minute to look at the Federal spending you will see that programs like these and natural resources programs in general are not the cause of the increasing spending, in fact, the State and Private Forestry budget is about one third the size it was five years ago. If you put things into perspective you will see that the entire S&PF budget is about 2% of the Forest Service

budget and that the increase in the Defense Department budget in 1984 was larger than the entire budgets of the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Services budgets combined.

**Other ways to get involved.** AFA has been sponsoring two or three Regional Conferences a year. They have been very interesting because they are tailored to the interests of the region and local people do most of the selection of theme and speakers. We have learned the most when we have gathered a non-traditional audience and worked with people we don't usually see at our meetings. Most of us realize we "preach to the choir" too much and it's good to know we can do something about it.

The Nation Urban and Community Newsletter is going strong. It is now mailed to about 7,000 people around the country. We are still sending it free of charge, thanks to the assistance of the U.S. Forest Service. Send us names of community activists or names of your clients that may be interested in the Forum. If you are not on our mailing

list, please send us your name.

Spunky, the Urban Forestry Squirrel, is available to visit your town to promote the message "care about trees." Spunky has appeared in public service announcements on television, radio, and in print. If you know of a station that would use Spunky for a public service announcement let us know and we will send them film or tape.

Many opportunities exist for us to advance the science of arboriculture and Urban Forestry. To be successful we must work together sincerely and vigorously. Scientists and practitioners alike are learning new things every day which can make this country a better place to live. If we can catch the ear of the public we will pass an important mile marker on our way to improving the health and value of our trees and profession.

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## Abstract

SYDNOR, T. D. 1984. **Ohio's shade tree evaluation project.** *Arboric. J.* 8: 115-122.

The Shade Tree Evaluation Project of the Ohio State University was first begun in 1965 when a 12-acre site at the Secrest Arboretum at Wooster, Ohio was planted under the leadership of Drs. L. C. Chapwick and K. W. Reisch. From 1972 the author worked with Dr. P. C. Kozel who was in charge of the project until his death in 1978 on which date the author assumed the leadership role. Whereas in the early years of the project, the trees were assessed for their visual characteristics and their growth, the trees are now evaluated for specific and individual characteristics, in preference to general conclusions which tend to be applicable to one site and therefore of limited application. Individual characteristics of one or of a number of related species or cultivars are studied and the results of which are published. The evaluation studies described have been in most cases carried out by post-graduate students as part of the curriculum, and illustrate the extent of the information which can be obtained from the project.