

# THE SHADE TREE

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

**Volume 95 – January - February 2022 – Issue 1 & 2**

## *This Issue Presents...*

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250-Year-Old Black Walnut Removed  
William J Porter Scholarship Announced  
Community Tree Project Award Announced  
Trees Are Important for Cleaner Air in Cities  
Trees on the Move: Researchers Reveal How Wildfire  
Accelerates Forest Changes

## **INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS IN TREE PLANTING**

By Jim Nichnadowicz\*

Each year the Union County 4-H Program involves our 4-H Members with planting trees at a Union County park. The children and their parents greatly enjoy digging the holes, setting the trees and spreading mulch; for them it is a new and exciting experience. Their enthusiasm is very refreshing. Below are some helpful hints I have gleaned from planting trees with youth and adult volunteers over the past 30 years.

### **Plant Away from Traffic for Safety**

Choose planting sites away from streets and parking lots. In addition to the dangers of nearby traffic, car noise can be distracting to your planters. Also, planting near private property can cause conflict with soil on sidewalks, and residents. The best place to plant for youth and adult volunteers are in park lands. Sites close to busy roads and on private property are best left to professionals.

### **Best Weather for Planting**

Trees establish better in cool weather; volunteers enjoy it too. Very few people want to dig on a ninety-degree day. Aim to have your volunteer planting day in November or April. Weekends are usually the best time. If you need help from municipal workers, they may have to prepare the site during the week because of overtime restrictions for weekend work.

### **Pre-Planting Site Preparation is Helpful**

Tree planting can be hard work. Especially difficult are compacted soils. Before inviting your guest planters check for compaction by pushing a

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

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### **INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS**

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piece of wire into the ground (you can use a metal coat hanger). If it is very hard you may need strong volunteers with sturdy shovels, garden forks and picks to loosen it up prior to planting. Also, areas with very fertile soils can have a thick layer of grass on them. A mattock works well at removing thick grass or weeds.

If you cannot prepare the site by hand, use a backhoe to pre-dig the holes. First, scrape the sod off and then use the bucket of the backhoe to loosen the soil down a foot or so. The last step is to refill the hole with the softened soil. The volunteers then remove the fluffed, soil right before planting. For more information about soil compaction and soil preparation please see the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Publication, *Assessing and Addressing Soil Compaction in Your Yard*. It can be found online at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1313/>.

Lastly, do not dig when the soil is extremely wet or extremely dry. Overly wet soil can form hard clumps when it dries. Extremely dry soil can be so hard it is nearly impossible to dig. While dry soil can be easily determined, your shovel will not penetrate the ground easily, how wet your soil is takes more examination. Purdue Cooperative Extension suggests the following test, “Dig a trowel full of soil and squeeze it in your hand. Soil that crumbles through your fingers when squeezed is ready to garden. If, however, the soil forms a muddy ball, give the soil another few days to dry, and sample again later.”

### **Tree Selection and Tree Size**

For deciding which species of tree to plant contact your local Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience with how to match the tree species with the site conditions. You can find your local Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/extension/>. Also, be sure to work closely with your towns' parks department and public works. You will need their help in picking sites in the park for the trees. If you can meet with the Parks Department and your extension professional at the same time this can be very productive.

In addition to the species you plant only purchase trees that are small enough for you to move easily. Trees in 3-to-5-gallon pots usually weigh 15 to 25 pounds and are 4 to 6 feet tall. While it may be tempting to purchase larger

trees... often sold as balled and burlapped, they can weigh well over 100 pounds. Your extension service can also provide information about where to purchase trees in your area.

**Involving Elected Officials**

Invite elected officials to your planting day. They enjoy thanking the volunteers for their efforts. Also, if you cannot get assistance from your local public works department or parks department you may want to start your project by first contacting an elected official. If they support the idea of a community tree planting it can open many doors.

**Get Extra Volunteers / Register in Advance**

A final note, while volunteers greatly enjoy planting trees last minute difficulties, (personal obligations, weather conditions and transportation issues) may often stop their participation. Thus, it is a good idea to have a few more than not enough volunteers. Ask everyone who wants to help to register in advance and limit how many people can attend.

**Have Fun...**

Don't try to plant too many trees. Start with one or two trees and a few volunteers. For more Information Please contact me at [nichnadowicz@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:nichnadowicz@njaes.rutgers.edu)

*\*4-H Youth Development Agent for Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Union County*

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**A 250-YEAR-OLD WALNUT TREE WAS  
CHOPPED DOWN IN OHIO. A BROTHER AND  
SISTER WERE HIT WITH FELONY CHARGES**

The Washington Post • January 14, 2022

For over 250 years, a black walnut tree lived in what is now a nature preserve in northeast Ohio, growing alongside wildflowers and ferns and the snaking east branch of the Rocky River. Its trunk grew unusually wide — 5½ feet — making it a rare specimen in the Cleveland suburbs.

Yet in just two days in September, that tree was cut down with chain saws, turned into logs and hauled away, according to witnesses interviewed by police. The lumber ultimately sold for just over \$10,000.

Now, two suspects — a brother and sister, Todd Jones, 56, and Laurel Hoffman, 54 — have been indicted in the felling of the tree that prosecutors say



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sat on Cleveland Metroparks property, just feet away from Jones's land in Strongsville, about 20 miles south of Cleveland. The siblings face charges of grand theft and falsification — both felonies.

Neither Jones nor Hoffman responded to requests for comment from The Washington Post late Thursday. In interviews with the Plain Dealer, the duo said the tree was on their property and that they disagreed with the charges.

“This is so ridiculous that they're doing this,” Jones told the Plain Dealer. “This is insane. There was no ill intent.”

The case is the latest recent example of people facing criminal charges after being accused of illegally removing trees from public land. In July, a California couple was fined \$18,000 for bulldozing Joshua trees to make way for home construction. In November, a man was sentenced to 20 months in prison for harvesting maple trees in Washington's Olympic National Forest, which led to a massive 2018 fire.

They stole prized lumber from a national forest. The trees' DNA proved it, feds say.

Black walnut trees are treasured for their high-quality lumber — a fine-grained hardwood used for furniture and gunstocks, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Jennifer Grieser, the natural resources director at Cleveland Metroparks who discovered the tree had been chopped down, told police the trunk's 207-inch circumference placed it among Ohio's largest black walnuts.

The tree could be over 250 years old, Jacqueline Gerling, a Cleveland Metroparks spokeswoman, said in an email to The Post.

“Given our urban setting and the threats to healthy tree growth, it is very uncommon to find a black walnut of this size,” Gerling said.

Grieser estimated the tree was worth more than \$28,000 — a figure she considered “conservative,” the police report states.

According to police, the tree stood on land owned by Cleveland Metroparks, a state agency that manages some 24,000 acres of parkland, trails and recreation space across northeast Ohio, including the Mill Stream Run Reservation near Jones's property. The black walnut tree sat 7½ feet from his property line, according to police.

Jones took ownership of the property in June from his father's widow, Debra Jones. Her home was on the property for decades, Debra Jones told

## **A 250-YEAR-OLD WALNUT TREE** *Continued from page 5*

police, but she was having trouble paying the taxes. She thought the transfer would relieve the financial burden, she added, which included \$15,000 in tax liens.

Todd Jones put the house up for sale in 2021, six years after his father, Robert, died.

The black walnut tree stood so close to the house that Robert Jones “assumed that tree was his,” Debra Jones told police, “and he blabbed about it.”

After his son took ownership of the property, Todd Jones decided he wanted to cut the tree down and sell it, which would “help pay for some of the taxes,” Debra Jones told police.

According to police, a logging company paid Todd Jones and his sister, Hoffman, \$2,000 for the lumber it hauled away. The company owner told police Hoffman had assured him the property had been surveyed and the tree was theirs.

Hoffman supervised the tree removal in late September, a job that took about two days, the logging company owner said. The logger later sold the wood for \$10,106, and — according to police — was not criminally responsible because he “took reasonable on-site measures to verify” the tree was on Jones’s property.

A couple of days later, Grieser came across the stump while checking on the progress of some saplings that had been planted for a restoration project. She called the police.

At first, Todd Jones allegedly denied knowing about the felled walnut tree when asked by police. “It was always well known” the tree rested on his land, he said, according to the police report — though he added he had never seen a boundary survey. He then told police Hoffman had no involvement in the tree’s removal, according to the report, adding that he did not “want anyone in trouble for this other than” himself.

“It’s not the crime of the century,” Jones told police.

In a statement to the New York Times, Michael O’Malley, the Cuyahoga County prosecutor, called the charges serious.

“We will not ignore people trespassing onto park property and illegally cutting down irreplaceable trees for profit,” he said.

# **DOGGETT . . . Liquid asset for trees and tree care companies.**

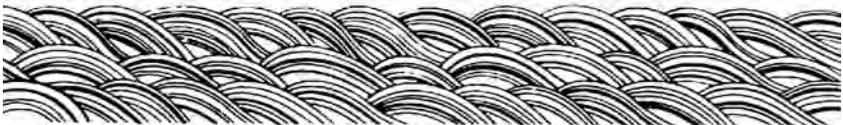
The fastest growing segment of the tree care industry is liquid tree fertilization and Doggett is leading the way. The spectacular growth in this field has come from the fact that the fertilizing method that helps trees the most also helps tree care companies the most.

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# **WILLIAM J PORTER ARBORICULTURE SCHOLARSHIP**

Each year two scholarships are awarded to encourage studies and careers in arboriculture and Urban Forestry. One award goes to a Rutgers student and the other to a professional or volunteer in the industry meeting the following criteria:

**Recipients:**

**1. A Rutgers Student (up to \$2,500)** – Application submission deadline is March 31st. The recipient must be a full-time student enrolled in a program of studies representing a demonstrated interest in Arboriculture or Urban Forestry. The student must be in at least sophomore standing with a minimum GPA of at least 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.

**2. A Professional/Volunteer (up to \$2,500)** – Application submission deadline is May 31st. The recipient must be a NJ resident employed/active in Arboriculture or Urban Forestry for at least one year, and must use the funds received as reimbursement for educational expenses. Professional/Volunteer scholarship recipients will be required to provide receipts and a brief written summation of how the educational experience provided by the scholarship will benefit/impact their future work.

*Additional information and the application are available at the Federation's website: [www.NJSTF.ORG](http://www.NJSTF.ORG)*

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## **WILLIAM J PORTER COMMUNITY TREE PROJECT AWARD**

In addition to the William J. Porter Arboriculture Scholarship for students and professionals in the industry, the NJ Shade Tree Federation is now offering the opportunity for our NJSTF member communities to apply annually for the William J. Porter Community Tree Project Award. This award is intended to provide up-front funding for a small project to benefit the tree resource in your community. There will be one awardee per year. Application deadline is June 30th.

Details are as follows:

- Up to \$2,500 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 accept funds – no checks to individuals).
- Awardee must be a current member of the NJ Shade Tree Federation.

*Additional information and the application are available at the Federation's website: [www.NJSTF.ORG](http://www.NJSTF.ORG)*

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## **TREES ARE IMPORTANT FOR CLEANER AIR IN CITIES**

Science Daily • December 21, 2021

Air pollution levels vary greatly between different places in Gothenburg. This is the finding of a new study led by researchers at the University of Gothenburg, which concludes that trees contribute to cleaner air in cities.

That green spaces can improve the quality of life and create a better climate in our cities is well known, but how important is vegetation for producing cleaner city air? This question is the focus of an extensive collaborative project led by researchers at University of Gothenburg.

In the project's first study, the researchers measured pollutants in the air and compared them with pollutants on the leaves of deciduous (broadleaf) trees. The study looked at the pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), and sampling was made in June and September 2018. The study was conducted in seven urban settings in Gothenburg. The researchers chose to focus on PAHs, a group of air pollutants not yet studied closely but some of which are believed to be very harmful to human health.

### **The trees' leaves absorb the pollutants**

The results are clear: the pollutants in the leaves increased over time and the researchers could show a clear correlation between the level of air pollutants and the concentration of pollutants in the leaves.

"The study establishes that the leaves collect the air pollutants during the summer, thus reducing human exposure to harmful substances in the air. These types of extensive measurements of pollutants in both vegetation and the air are unusual, and the study confirms that trees play a role in improving air quality in cities," says Håkan Pleijel, professor of environmental sciences at the University of Gothenburg University.

## **Large differences between urban areas**

At the same time, the researchers discovered that pollution levels varied greatly between different measurement sites. At the most polluted site -- Nils Ericsson Terminal, the main bus station -- the levels of PAHs were seven times higher than at Angered City Park on the periphery of the city.

"That the differences in pollution were so great between different parts of the city may seem surprising, and this is important information for the authorities to be aware of," says Pleijel, who added that traffic is the primary source of air pollutants in the settings studied by the project.

## **Conifers important for cleansing the air in the winter**

The researchers also measured pollutants in the needles of black pine (*Pinus nigra*) conifers in urban settings and in the Botanical Garden's arboretum. The measurements showed that levels of pollutants were considerably higher in needles that were three years old compared with one-year-old needles.

"This shows that conifers also are important for cleansing city air. An advantage with conifers is that the needles remain on the trees even in the winter, when pollution levels in cities are often at their highest," says Jenny Klingberg, a researcher in environmental sciences at Gothenburg Botanical Garden.

## **Vegetation needs to be included in city planning**

The researchers hope that the study can be an important piece of the puzzle when planning urban landscapes.

"We need to work with multiple methods to reduce air pollution levels in our increasingly tightly populated cities. Reducing emissions is the most important measure, but we show that vegetation also plays an important role in creating sustainable cities where residents are healthy," says Jenny Klingberg.

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# **TREES ON THE MOVE: RESEARCHERS REVEAL HOW WILDFIRE ACCELERATES FOREST CHANGES**

Science Daily • November 15, 2021 • Source: Stanford University

Refugees are on the move in forests across the western U.S. As climate conditions change, the ranges of tree species are shifting, especially toward cooler or wetter sites. A new Stanford analysis provides some of the first empirical evidence that wildfire is accelerating this process, likely by reducing competition from established species. The study, published Nov. 15 in Nature Communications, raises questions about how to manage land in an era of shifting ecosystems -- a key issue as President Biden prepares to sign into law



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an infrastructure bill that allocates more than \$5 billion for forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction.

"Complex, interdependent forces are shaping the future of our forests," said study lead author Avery Hill, a graduate student in biology at Stanford's School of Humanities & Sciences. "We leveraged an immense amount of ecological data in the hopes of contributing to a growing body of work aimed at managing these ecosystem transitions."

As the climate changes, animal and plant species are shifting their ranges toward conditions suitable for their growth and reproduction. Past research has shown that plant ranges are shifting to higher, cooler elevations at an average rate of almost five feet per year. In many studies, these range shifts lag behind the rate of climate change, suggesting that some species may become stranded in unsuitable habitats. The factors that impact plant species' ability to keep up with climate change are key to maintaining healthy populations of the dominant trees in western forests, yet have remained largely mysterious.

To better understand the distance, direction and rate at which tree ranges are shifting, Hill and study co-author Chris Field, the Perry L. McCarty Director of the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, looked at how the phenomenon is affected by wildfire, a potent and widespread driver of ecosystem structure and composition in the western United States.

Using U.S. Forest Service data collected from over 74,000 plots across nine Western states, the researchers identified tree species that are shifting their ranges toward cooler, wetter sites -- an expected response to the recent warming and drying. Then, they compared the rate of these range shifts between places that were burned by wildfire and places that were not.

Of eight species that had seedlings growing in climates significantly different from mature trees of the same species, Hill and Field found strong evidence that two -- Douglas fir and canyon live oak -- had larger range shifts in areas that burned than in areas that did not.

Although the analysis did not reveal the mechanism for how wildfire accelerates range shifts for certain trees, the researchers hypothesized that burned areas with their open canopies and scorched understory present less competition from other plant species.

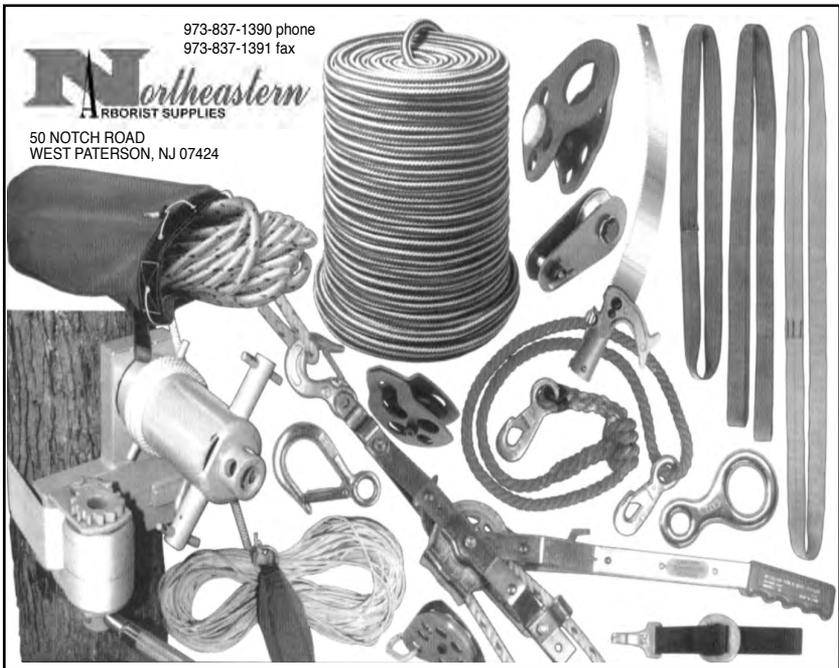
The findings demonstrate not only that fire can accelerate tree migration, but that some species may be slowing the range shifts of others through competition. This, in turn, raises questions about the impact of fire management on trees' ability to keep up with climate change, and points to the importance of low-intensity prescribed and natural fires.

"This study highlights a natural mechanism that can help forests remain healthy, even in the face of small amounts of climate change," said Field. "It also illustrates the way that ecosystem processes often have several layers of controls, a feature that emphasizes the value of detailed understanding for effective management."

Field is also the Melvin and Joan Lane Professor for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies, a professor of Earth system science and biology, and a senior fellow at the Precourt Institute for Energy.

*The research was funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.*

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**2022 NJ Shade Tree Federation**  
**Annual Meeting Scheduled For**  
**October 13 & 14th. Details To Follow**





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