

# MINNESOTA'S COMMUNITY AND URBAN FORESTS



## Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee Report to the 1993 Minnesota Legislature

The Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MnSTAC) serves as a forum where concerned people from across the state forge a collective vision for the future of Minnesota's community forests. Over 140 people are now members of MnSTAC with more than forty people participating in each monthly MnSTAC meeting. Individuals from dozens of communities, organizations, and agencies are valued members of MnSTAC. MnSTAC is committed to bring the best information and resources to the public and professionals of Minnesota.

Minnesota's achievements in community forestry are a tribute to the leadership of the state legislature and demonstrate the value of united public and private effort. The economic atmosphere in 1993 threatens an essential element of our state's infrastructure, our community forests. Although cooperative community forestry efforts have proven again and again how much can be achieved through partnerships between state and federal programs, local communities, and the private sector, strong state leadership is essential. It is crucial that programs that provide this leadership continue to receive the support and funding of the state legislature.

In this *Report to the 1993 Minnesota Legislature*, MnSTAC presents an overview of past accomplishments, current threats, and opportunities for future legislative action to preserve our living legacy, Minnesota's community forests.



# GROWING GREENER COMMUNITIES

## *Accomplishments in 1992*

The quality of state and local community forest programs has helped Minnesota receive funding from several federal programs. This funding along with continued funding from state sources for community forest programs has resulted in some impressive accomplishments in 1992.

**Federal Grants** America the Beautiful provided 30 grants to communities and non-profit groups for innovative demonstration projects, tree planting, community forestry program development, information and education projects, and non-profit program development and training.

The Small Business Administration Natural Resources Development Program provided 32 grants to communities for planting 2,455 total trees on public property by small businesses.

**Minnesota ReLeaf** The Minnesota ReLeaf Community Forest Grant Program approved 125 projects statewide totalling \$999,250 in grants to local units of government and non-profit organizations. Total project costs, including local cash and in-kind contributions were nearly \$3 million. These grants will be used for energy conservation planting, public education and tree maintenance. The majority of these projects will be completed during the spring of 1993. Funding for Minnesota ReLeaf comes from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources and Federal Focus Funding.

**Arbor Day** For the past 18 years, the Arbor Month Partnership has educated Minnesota's youth through development and distribution of education packets to over 5000 Minnesota elementary schools and libraries. Public awareness of the importance of trees has been fostered through distribution of the *Planning Guide for Arbor Month* to over 3500 communities and volunteer groups to assist with more than 200 Arbor Day ceremonies held throughout the state. The partnership also provided assistance to six communities and volunteer groups in organizing and publicizing state-sponsored regional arbor ceremonies. Of special note is the ceremony held at St. Paul Central High in April, 1992, involving tree planting by students and community volunteers with bipartisan support from federal, state and local officials.

**Tree City USA** An indicator of growth and support for urban and community forestry is the Tree City USA program. This national program recognizes cities that have taken a vested interest in their urban environment. In the past two years the number of Tree City USA's in Minnesota has increased by over 50% to nearly 100 communities.

**Recycling the Urban Forest** Over 325,000 tons of tree material are removed from Twin Cities communities annually. Half of this material is used, half of it is a disposal problem. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has assisted MnSTAC with a project to assess the extent of this problem and find uses for the material. This project is being used by the USDA Forest Service as a national model. In 1992 the extent of the problem was determined and work began to find uses for this material. This work included:

- a public information campaign,
- development of a computerized seller/buyer referral system,
- the forming of at least three new businesses to use the material,
- legislation prohibiting land-filling of this material,
- a commitment to utilize much of this material in chipped form as landscaping mulch along state highways.

**Continuing Education** The Shade Tree Short Course and Tree Inspector Workshops resulted in renewed training of over 700 urban foresters in 1992. This education effort keeps field people informed of the latest developments in urban forestry, from landscaping for energy conservation to new insect infestations and controls.

Approximately 150 volunteers, tree board members and various professionals from across the state attended the *1st Minnesota Urban Forest Workshop* sponsored by MnSTAC entitled "Building Partnerships with Community Trees." Participants shared success stories and interacted with keynote speakers on a wide range of community forestry topics from forming partnerships to working with the media.

**Oak Wilt Suppression** Beginning in July of 1992, the DNR began to distribute federal cooperative oak wilt suppression funds to communities in the Anoka Sand Plain. A total of \$250,000 was distributed during 1992 as cost share funds requiring a 50:50 match by the local community. The match included any combination of community funds, private homeowner contributions, and "in-kind" time by community employees and citizen volunteers. Under this program, nearly 400 infection centers were treated in 1992 involving the installation of over 50 miles of vibratory plow control line.

**Community Roadside Enhancement** The Minnesota Department of Transportation's Partnership Program assisted thirteen communities and organizations in 1992 with roadside beautification projects. Since its inception, this program has fostered over \$1 million of roadside landscape enhancement, while spending less than half that amount in MnDOT funds.



## THREATS TO COMMUNITY FORESTS

Trees, living in harsh urban environments, are typically under stress, making them prime targets for pest invasion. Aggressive organisms such as Dutch elm disease, oak wilt and gypsy moth are poised for attack. In 1992, the Department of Agriculture captured over 300 Japanese beetles, over 80 gypsy moths and confirmed the organism associated with ash yellows in locations throughout the state. Minnesota remains free of gypsy moth due to extensive trapping and eradication.

Oak wilt continues to be a major threat to growing communities, especially in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Oak wilt has been controlled in several communities in the northern counties of the Twin Cities with the help of federal, county and community funds. Growing communities to the south, such as Burnsville and Eden Prairie are a major concern. The federal suppression funds are not available for those communities, and state funding has not been appropriated. These communities cannot control oak wilt on their own.

The impact of such diseases as ash yellows and verticillium wilt are uncertain, and must be carefully monitored. Similarly, the recently introduced Pine shoot beetle, which affects the value of ornamental pine and Christmas trees requires careful monitoring. The impact of Japanese beetles is all too well known, they ravage turf, trees and ornamentals from golf courses to backyards. Trap grids must be greatly expanded in 1993 to isolate and eradicate any establishing populations and preventing introduction of new ones. Now is the time to act.

The greatest threat of all to the urban forest is the loss of funding for those programs that keep our trees healthy. A combined effort of critical research by the University of Minnesota, management direction by the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Forestry, pest monitoring and eradication by the Department of Agriculture, and education by the Minnesota Extension Service are critical to the continued health and welfare of this state's urban tree resource.

### National Urban Forest Conference

Minnesota has been recognized as a leader in urban forest initiatives, programs and technology. It is this recognition that has earned Minnesota the honor of hosting The Sixth National Urban Forest Conference "Growing Greener Communities." Over 1000 tree enthusiasts from across the country and around the world will gather in Minneapolis on September 14-18, 1993. This conference is sponsored by American Forests in cooperation with their international Global ReLeaf program and local support from MnSTAC. Conference workshops, exhibits, award programs, and tours are aimed at citizen advocates, policy-makers, and educators as well as urban forestry practitioners and scholars.



## LEGISLATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

The health of our community forests depends on an integrated program of forest management planning, tree preservation ordinances, research, public and professional education, tree pest management, and tree planting and maintenance programs. Specific legislative action is essential to provide the direction, support and funding for such an integrated program.

The membership of MnSTAC recommends that the following actions be taken by the Minnesota State Legislature:

- ✓ Support continued funding of the Minnesota ReLeaf Program.
- ✓ Fund the research, education and technical assistance programs necessary to implement the Urban and Community Forestry Act adopted by the 1990 Minnesota Legislature. Specifically fund:
  - research to develop a greater diversity and adequate supply of insect and disease resistant tree varieties suited for use in Minnesota communities;
  - preparation of model guidelines specifying appropriate tree planting for subdivisions, new developments, and public lands to achieve energy conservation, wildlife habitat, erosion control, and other functions;
  - implementation of community forest inventories as management tools for local governments;
  - state Arbor Month activities to ensure adequate production and distribution of educational materials for schools and communities.
- ✓ Fund expanded oak wilt control efforts including:
  - research, education, and technical assistance
  - oak wilt suppression assistance to communities
  - matches for federal funding for oak wilt control
- ✓ Encourage local units of government to include a community forestry management plan as part of any comprehensive community development plan.
- ✓ Authorize communities to levy funds, outside their current levy limits, to support community forestry management programs.
- ✓ Support the creation of state guidelines and incentives for communities to implement tree preservation ordinances which:
  - identify critical community forest lands and habitats, and
  - enact policies on protection and replacement of trees within their jurisdiction.
- ✓ Enact statewide licensing of tree care services requiring certificates of insurance (liability and worker's compensation).
- ✓ Support continued funding of the urban and community forestry programs in the following state agencies:
  - Department of Agriculture
  - Department of Natural Resources
  - Minnesota Extension Service
  - University of Minnesota



## MnSTAC Member Affiliations

Anoka County Extension  
Anoka County Tree Board  
Association of Metropolitan Municipalities  
Bachman's Nurseries  
Bachman's Wholesale Center  
Bailey Nurseries, Inc.  
Builder's Association of Minnesota  
City of Apple Valley  
City of Bloomington  
City of Brooklyn Center  
City of Burnsville  
City of Coon Rapids  
City of Duluth, Parks Department  
City of Eden Prairie  
City of Edina  
City of Golden Valley  
City of Hutchinson  
City of Lino Lakes  
City of Mankato  
City of Mounds View  
City of New Brighton  
City of Plymouth  
City of Ramsey  
City of Robbinsdale  
City of St. Louis Park  
City of St. Paul  
Cook Company  
Crown Jewel Foundation  
Dakota County Parks Department  
Dahlgren, Shardlow, and Uban, Inc.  
Dougherty, Dawkins, Strand, and Bigelow, Inc.  
Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board,  
    Mineland Reclamation Division  
Heartwood Forestry  
Hennepin County,  
    Department of Environment and Energy  
Hennepin Parks  
Kunde Company Inc.  
Lasting Woodlands  
Midwest Tree Technology  
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board  
Minneapolis Star and Tribune  
Minnesota Association of SWCD's  
Minnesota Department of Agriculture,  
    Division of Plant Industry  
Minnesota Department of Education  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources,  
    Division of Forestry  
Minnesota Department of Public Service  
Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Minnesota Forestry Association

Minnesota House of Representatives  
Minnesota Office of Tourism  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
Minnesota Power  
Minnesota Senate  
Minnesota State Horticultural Society  
Minnesota State Planning Agency  
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
National Urban Forest Council  
Northern States Power  
Plant Health Associates, Inc.  
Rainbow Tree Care  
Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department  
Rochester Parks and Recreation  
Sherburne County Tree Board  
St. John's University  
St. Paul Public Schools  
TAIGA  
Twin Cities Tree Trust  
University of Minnesota  
    Department of Entomology  
    Department of Forest Resources  
    Department of Horticultural Science  
    Department of Landscape Architecture  
    Department of Plant Pathology  
Minnesota Extension Service  
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum  
North Central Forest Experiment Station  
United States Department of Agriculture,  
    Forest Service  
Washington County Health Department

*For more information:*  
Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee  
Room 226  
90 West Plato Boulevard  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55107-2094

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