
ARBOR VITAE

NEWSLETTER OF TREES FOR CAPITOL HILL, INC. ----2018



2017 Fall Tree Planting

Beth Purcell, President, TFCH

Trees for Capitol Hill (TFCH) continues to augment Capitol Hill's tree canopy in cooperation with the Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) and Casey Trees. Our volunteers are working toward the shared goal of adding diversity to our urban forest. Planting a wide range of tree species along our streets ensures that some trees will survive if a species-specific disease appears (e.g., Dutch elm disease). This diversity also serves an educational purpose -- the UFA is educating residents by leaving the ID tags on newly planted trees. Photos and detailed descriptions are available on-line at ddot.dc.gov/page/ddot-urban-forestry.

This past year's selections included a yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentuckea*), a hackberry (*Celtis*), a Carolina silverbell (*Halesia carolina*), and a crabapple (*Malus*) -- all planted in or near the triangle at the 1300 blocks of A Street and North Carolina Avenue, NE. Plus another yellowwood just down the street on the 1400 block of North Carolina Avenue; a sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) and a pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*) on 14th Place, NE; and a black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) on the 500 block of Tennessee Avenue, NE. We also planted a scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*) and an Edgeworthia (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*) in private yards.

We had a wonderful contingent of volunteers -- many thanks to each and every one of them. We couldn't have managed without them and we're hoping to see many of them again this year on November 17, 2018, the traditional Saturday-before-Thanksgiving date.



The family that plants together stays together -- on Tennessee Avenue, NE

New volunteers on 14th Place, NE





Norman, Sarah, and Henry "Hank" Tenenbaum



Sarah Tenenbaum Memorial Tree

Norman Tenenbaum

Sarah Tenenbaum (nee Wasserman) was born at home at 103 14th St. NE on January 25, 1920. She lived in that same house until 2016, except for a few years when she and her husband Albert lived above a small store they operated at Kentucky Avenue and 15th Street, SE. Our family moved back to the house in 1953. Henry and I both spent our childhoods and teens in the neighborhood. Sarah enjoyed the neighborhood all her life but was especially happy with its revival in recent years. In her last year at home, she enjoyed walking to the mailbox on East Capitol Street and sitting on the bench in the triangle park.

In November 2017, Hank and I joined volunteers of Trees for Capitol Hill in planting a yellowwood tree (*Cladrastis kentukea*) in Sarah's memory. We are grateful to neighbor Delancey Gustin for caring for the tree and helping it bloom.





Photo 1: Poke holes with spading fork



Photo 2: Remove weeds



Photo 3: Extensive Bermuda grass root system

Channeling Rain Water to New Street Trees

Margaret Missiaen

Care instructions for newly planted trees begin with “Water weekly during the first two growing seasons.” TFCH volunteers have spent many hours watering trees, especially since watering bags and basins came on the market. However, there are street trees planted so far from any water source that isn’t practical to haul water. In these cases, the following procedure will help many of these to survive.

This process of soil aeration and weeding channels rain water to the tree roots and offsets the effects of heavy foot traffic:

The first step is to aerate the soil by using a 4-pronged spading fork to poke holes around the perimeter of the tree box. [Photo 1] Working the fork back and forth enlarges the holes to capture storm water as it runs toward the gutter.

Pulling the weeds also aerates the soil and loosens the much that may have caked during the winter. [Photo 2] A weeder used carefully near the trunk will not disturb the roots. Bermuda grass has invaded many tree boxes with its extensive root system. [Photo 3]

A thin layer of mulch, kept away from the trunk, will help retain soil moisture. These steps may need to be repeated during the growing season. [Photo 4]



Photo 4: Apply fresh mulch

Please Water Trees

Beth Purcell, President

We are fortunate to have received so many new street trees this year, both through our own efforts and those of the Urban Forestry Administration (UFA). A good tip for spotting the “newbies” is to look for stakes with wires attached to them; they should be sporting a green “tree-gator” tree-watering bag.

- These trees will need supplemental water for at least their first three summers if they are to survive.
- The District government plans to water twice a month. Even if they follow this schedule, it may not be enough water so we all need to help. We estimate that it costs less than \$10 to water a tree for an entire summer

A quick blast from a hose encourages poor root development. Instead, let the water trickle for 20 to 30 minutes – or better still, use a watering bag or basin. A garden hose connected to a nearby water source makes this job easy and it provides a useful way to measure the amount of water you are delivering.

- Fill the green tree-gator bag once a week.
- The hole for the hose is a slit under the paper tag at the top of the bag. See how-to water video on www.caseytrees.org
- The water will gradually drip out over 24-48 hours.

The trees will need an absolute minimum of 10 gallons each week from spring bloom until winter freeze - but as much as 20-30 gallons may be needed in very hot, dry weather. Even if you think that Mother Nature has been providing enough rain, it doesn’t pay to be over-confident. By the time a tree looks like it needs water (is shriveled or drops leaves), it has already been damaged. Don’t wait. Be proactive!

- If there has been less than 1.5 inches of rain in the last week, new trees need water.
- Check the “Watering Alerts” on www.caseytrees.org.
- Casey Trees offers a free rain gauge to people who take the “25 to stay alive” pledge to water new street trees.
- A note of caution: watering bags must be removed as soon as they are no longer needed. If left on over the winter, they prevent proper bark development and can cause permanent damage.

Watering basins are a good alternative but can be difficult to find. The advantages are that they are easier to fill with a bucket, where hoses won’t reach, and they aren’t easily damaged by mowers. The disadvantage is that the holes may become clogged, preventing the water from draining into the ground. In very light rain, they can block water from reaching the tree.

Mulch is also important in keeping a tree hydrated. A 2-4 inch layer is sufficient but the mulch must be kept away from the trunk. Cleaning weeds and debris from the planting space helps in two ways. First, the tree will not have to compete with the weeds for precious water. Second, water bags are far less likely to be punctured by mowers if there is no vegetation to mow.

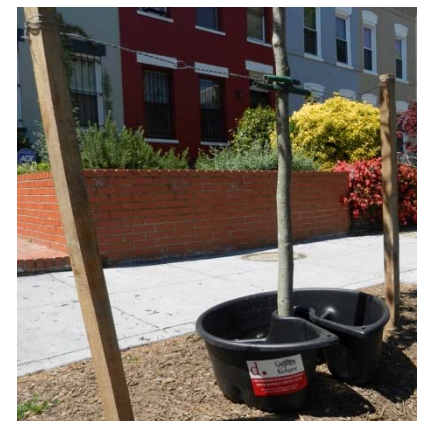
Trees for Capitol Hill has a few bags and basins that can be borrowed for the season. If you want one, contact Elizabeth Nelson, Elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com. Service requests can be made on dc.gov or by calling 311. The UFA (part of the District Department of Transportation) can be reached at 202 673-6813 or www.ddot.dc.gov > Tree Services.



Treegators are easiest to fill by hose



Jack Montgomery and Margaret Missiaen filling Treegator with bucket



No hose? Basins may be easier to fill

Preventing Mower Damage

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

It's Biology 101; damage to the bark is harmful, if not fatal, to the tree. The tree's "circulatory system" is located in the cambium layer between the wood and the outer bark. But the contractors hired by the City to mow public greenspaces, especially pocket parks, don't seem to know this. All too often they run the blades of the mowers into the trunk of the tree a few inches above the ground. If the tree is lucky, it may be just a nick; all too often, a chunk of bark is torn off or the tree may be completely girdled. In most cases, the wound will not heal over. The tree may survive the initial attack but will not thrive as it would have with intact bark. Trees in areas that are maintained by residents are at less risk partly because their neighbors are looking out for them but also because lawn mowers designed for home use, have the blades recessed. But even these trees can be damaged through inattention.

Plastic trunk-protectors are very helpful and inexpensive, and they should be used whenever possible. But they are not fool-proof; they are easily shredded by high powered mowers. Keeping weeds and tall grass away from tree trunks reduces the temptation to mow too close. A wide circle of mulch discourages unwanted vegetation and preserves moisture. Best of all, it keeps those mowers away from the trees.



Plastic bark protector



Nick Alberti and Mark Grace create a mulch moat



A Tree of One's Own - "Friends & Family" Program

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

TFCH assists neighbors wanting trees for their own yards. They are required to prepare a hole on their property and pay the cost of the tree (at our discounted price) plus a pro-rated share of the shipping costs. TFCH selects a specimen of the preferred species at the nursery, purchases the tree, arranges delivery and assists in planting. These trees are quite large, usually 1-2" caliper, and not inexpensive. Still, they are typically a more mature tree than what you could bring home and plant by yourself; the discount makes them much more affordable; and you pay much less in shipping and installation costs than if you purchased those services directly from a nursery. If you are interested in this program, email elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com.

Tree Space Beautification Best Practices

Steve Kehoe, reprinted courtesy of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society

Residents are encouraged to adhere to these best practices, which will contribute to the robust growth and general health of Capitol Hill's public space trees.

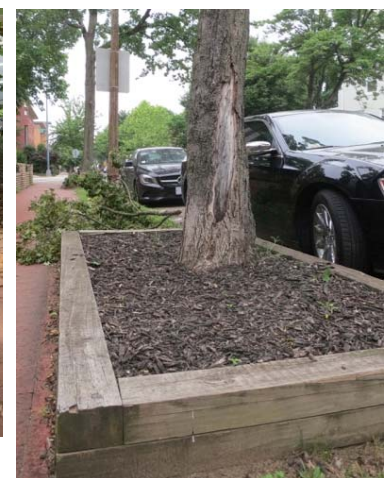
DO	DON'T
If adding soil amendments or replacing some soil in a tree space, work must be done prior to tree planting. After planting, only periodic light cultivation is advised.	Never try to replace soil around a tree after it has been planted. Trying to replace soil around a tree usually results in a dead tree within 1 or 2 years—particularly for trees that are just becoming established.
Mulching around a tree is encouraged, as is watering new trees when rainfall is less than 1 inch per week. New trees need 10 - 20 gallons of water once a week from spring bloom until winter freeze. Second- and third-year trees need 20 - 40 gallons per week.	Using gravel as a groundcover or depositing soil to increase the grade of a tree space is prohibited (24 DCMR 109.10). Piling on additional soil exposes the tree bark to soil borne diseases and robs the roots of oxygen.
Any temporary barrier or fencing must allow the free flow of rainwater from the sidewalk into the tree space. This applies to permanent tree fences too. DC Dept. of Transportation (DDOT) requires a \$50 permit for a permanent tree fence (24 DCMR 225.1(h)).	Don't install any solid border or edging around a tree space. This practice prevents or impedes the flow of rainwater from the sidewalk into the tree space. DDOT has been enlarging tree spaces in an effort to increase the amount of rainwater runoff available to trees.
Limit plantings to annual or perennial plants having a shallow root system and a mature height of no more than 18 inches tall.	Don't use plants that grow via a deep root system, that spread by underground shoots or runners, that climb or intertwine, or that are invasive.
Acceptable plants include perennials such as <u>variegated</u> Liriope, Ferns, Hostas, Dusty Miller, Yarrow, Sedums, Black-Eyed Susan, and flowering annuals that grow no more than 18 inches tall. Plants should be at least 2 feet from the tree trunk.	Don't plant bamboos and <u>dark green</u> Liriope, which spread by underground shoots to form an impenetrable root layer, or English Ivy, which climbs. Vegetable plants are not flowers and are prohibited (24 DCMR 109.11).



Excessive shrubbery crowds the tree stealing nutrients and water



Raising the soil level will smother the roots and kill the tree



This planting box restricts free flow of rainwater, raises the soil level and creates a tripping hazard

Tree of the Year – American Chestnut

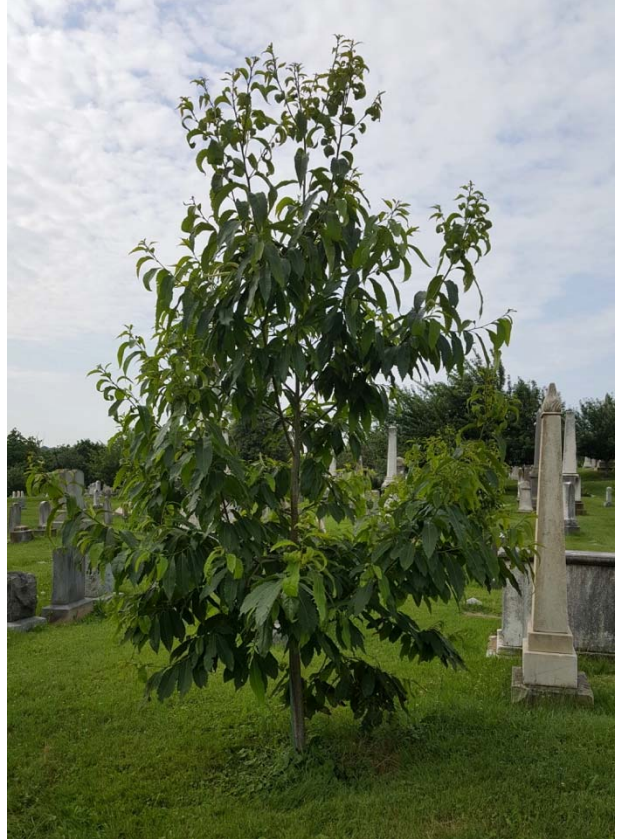
Mark Grace, Secretary, TFCH

Trees for Capitol Hill's Tree of the Year is the American chestnut tree (*Castanea dentata*)! The American Chestnut is a large, monoecious deciduous tree of the beech family native to eastern North America.

Starting in the very early 20th century and by mid-century the species was nearly obliterated by the chestnut blight, a fungal disease. The fungal pathogen responsible for chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*) was accidentally imported into the U.S. from Asia. An ecological catastrophe as it was one of the most important forest trees throughout its range, and it was considered the finest chestnut tree in the world.

For nearly ninety years efforts have been to restore the species through an aggressive backcross breeding program with like species of *Castanea* that are proven to be mostly resistant to blight. To help the re-introduction effort, six of these super-hybridized chestnut trees have been planted in Congressional Cemetery. Working with American Chestnut Foundation (www.acf.org) and Congressional Cemetery Trees For Capitol Hill placed them in a sunny grove where hopefully they thrive. The anticipated life span of these saplings is 80 to 100 years, if lucky. With three major tracks of breeding, bio-control, and biotechnology, The American Chestnut Foundation is committed to supporting all approaches toward the ultimate restoration of the American chestnut tree.

Super-hybridized Chestnut in Congressional Cemetery



Newsletter Editor Needed

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

TFCH is in dire need of a newsletter designer. We are limping along (or you would not be receiving this publication) but we eager to find a more permanent solution. If you have publishing skills and can help with this annual effort, please let us know

Trees For Capitol Hill, Inc.
1330 North Carolina Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20002



Garden on the 1300 Block of Massachusetts Avenue SE

Trees For Capitol Hill



Who we are:

Trees for Capitol, Inc., a DC nonprofit corporation founded in 1991, is dedicated to enhancing our neighborhood by planting and caring for trees in public spaces. Our funding comes from generous grants from the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, the National Capital Bank and individual donors. We are a 501(c)(3) corporation.

To make a contribution, send a check made out to "Trees for Capitol Hill" to 1330 North Carolina Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002

Officers:

President: Beth Purcell (544-0178)

Vice President/Treasurer: Elizabeth Nelson (543-3512)
(elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com)

Secretary: Mark Grace

Newsletter: Elizabeth Nelson

Web address: Treesforcapitolhill.org