
ARBOR VITAE

NEWSLETTER OF TREES FOR CAPITOL HILL, INC. ----2016



2015 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, ddot.dc.gov/page/ddot-urban-forestry.

This year's selections include a London Plane (*Platanus × acerifolia* var. *Exclamation*) on 17th Street, SE outside Congressional Cemetery. The triangle park on the 1300 block of Constitution Avenue, NE received a new Sophora (*Sophora japonica*). We planted a Chinese Pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*) at Maury Elementary School. We also worked with neighbors to plant trees in their yards: a Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) at 17th and Constitution Avenue, NE, another *Ulmus parvifolia* "alee" on the 1500 block of Constitution, a Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) on the 1300 block of North Carolina Avenue, NE and a pink crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica* var. *Sioux*) on the 300 block of D Street, NE.

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 19, the traditional Saturday-before-Thanksgiving date. We're grateful also to Mother Nature who gave us perfect weather. We were "owed" – the year before was the coldest planting day in memory.



Delivering a Chinese elm



"Friends & Family" tree on 17th Street NE



Sophora in triangle park on North Carolina Ave NE



Rich Cottrell Memorial Tree

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

We lost our guru, Rich Cottrell, in February 2015. So it seemed particularly fitting to plant a tree in his memory on 18th Street SE, bordering the Congressional Cemetery. We chose a London Plane (*Platanus × acerifolia* var. *Exclamation*), a close relative of the sycamore, as a sort of “inside joke”. I love all trees, but sycamores are pretty low on my list. Not so with longtime Vice-president/Treasurer Margaret Missiaen; they are tops with her and she suggested them often. I would sigh and Rich would tell me that if I had grown up in Indiana as he and Margaret had, I would better appreciate them. No doubt. On our annual pilgrimage to Merrifield Garden Center, Beth Purcell and I picked out a fine specimen, well decorated with seed balls, just the sort of tree Rich would like. On the Saturday before Thanksgiving, our long time driver, Tony Lopez, made the delivery. Rich’s wife, Carolyn, and son, Noel, joined us to tuck the tree into the ground and give it its first drink. Beth visits often to water and I walk my dogs and we all smile and remember Rich each time we pass.



TFCH Supporting Schools

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

TFCH got its start in response to the District's failure to replace the street trees on Capitol Hill back in the dark days of the 1990's. Since then, the Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) has stepped up to the plate and, in recent years, we've explored planting opportunities, in parks, school yards and other places not benefitting from UFA's attentions.

In spring of 2015, we facilitated a tree planting at Eliot-Hine MS and in 2014 contributed five trees to Tyler ES. I'm happy to report that nearly all but two of the fifty Eliot-Hine trees made it through their first two summers and all of the Tyler trees leafed out this year.

This past fall we turned our attention to Maury ES. Maury has been the site of prior TFCH and Casey Trees plantings and was in pretty good shape, but there was still room for a Chinese pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*) in front of the playground on the 13th Street side. Several members of the Maury family joined in the effort.



Maury Student – backfilling the soil



Ta-dah! A new tree in front of the Maury playground



Margaret Missiaen

Beth Purcell, President, TFCH

The November 2015 tree planting was bittersweet -- it was Margaret Missiaen's last with TFCH. She and her husband, Ed, are charter members of Trees for Capitol Hill, visionary urban foresters who formed the organization in the early 1990's. Until their recent departure for San Francisco, Margaret served as Vice-President and Treasurer. She was recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Capitol Hill Community Foundation in 2009 for her work in pruning the Hill's street trees. We will miss her energy, help, and advice and wish both of them much happiness in their new home and neighborhood.

Margaret "on duty" caring for trees: weeding, watering and pruning



But Wait, There's More!

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

One of my favorite trees is the *Catalpa*, our 2011 tree-of-the-year. What's not to love? It's a native species, has a lovely, graceful branching habit and delightful clusters of lilac flowers. But it also has long pods, possibly the reason I've been unable to find them at the nursery. I confessed my unfulfilled longing to Margaret Missiaen and she presented me with seedlings, the offspring of one in her own yard. I've been tending to them "out back" for many seasons, waiting for them to grow big enough to survive on the street - but not so heavy that I can't move them.

The perfect opportunity presented itself this spring when a spot opened up unexpectedly on the 1300 block of North Carolina Ave NE. With UFA approval, Mark Grace and I popped it in. It's been a long time since TFCH has done a spring tree planting. It's a risky business for a new tree to face summer drought without having a wet winter to get its roots established. But a neighbor has been watering, and we are well on our way to *Catalpa* Nirvana.



Tree of the Year - Tulip Poplar

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

Our 2016 tree of the year, *Liriodendron tulipifera* is also known as the tulip tree or tulip poplar due to the shape and color of its flowers. They are large and tulip-shaped, pale green or yellow striped with orange. The flowers yield to attractive seed pods that are set off nicely by leaves that turn to gold in the fall. The tulip poplar is native to this area and can grow to more than 160 feet, making it the tallest eastern hardwood. It is fast-growing, without the common problems of weak wood strength and short lifespan often seen in fast-growing species. It is also highly resistant to disease and insect infestation.

There are several very large tulip poplars at the National Arboretum, but they can be hard to fully appreciate in a forest. The trees grow so tall and branch so high that the crown can be difficult to see. A good place to view one is the Congressional Cemetery, where a youngster is coming along nicely at the eastern end. The cemetery's hard-working, resident bee colony surely appreciates the copious nectar the species is known for.



Already quite large, this specimen is nowhere near maturity



Don't Smother those Roots!

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

One unwished-for by-product of the recent increase in landscaping, hard-scaping and basement-digging is the generation of extra dirt. All too often, homeowners and contractors attempt to get rid of it by dumping it in the nearest tree box. They may think that it will do no harm, but they are sadly mistaken. Changing the soil level, even near a mature tree, will prevent adequate oxygen from reaching the roots and will kill the tree. This can happen more quickly than you might suppose.

If you can't persuade the perpetrator to dispose of dirt properly, notify the UFA. They'll step in and insist that the situation be corrected before the tree is damaged.

Soil piled in this tree box will kill the tree



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.

A Tree of One's Own

"Friends & Family" Program

Elizabeth Nelson, Vice-President/Treasurer, TFCH

TFCH can support 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 and purchases the tree, arranges delivery and assists in planting. These trees are quite large, typically 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 from a nursery. If you are interested in participating in this program, email elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com.

Resurrecting the American Chestnut - a Heritage Tree - at Congressional Cemetery

Mark Grace, Secretary, TFCH

On April 29 Arbor Day, Trees for Capitol Hill received a generous donation of six young saplings from The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF). The American chestnut tree (*Castanea dentate*) once ruled the North American landscape. It is estimated that between 3 to 4 billion chestnut trees were felled by a blight in the early 20th Century.

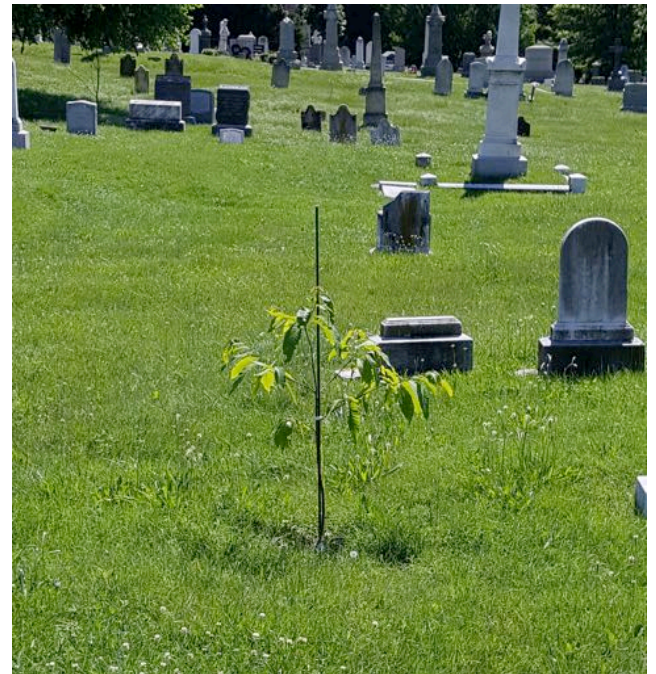
Working with Trees for Capitol Hill, mid-Atlantic Director for The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) Matt Brinckman, carefully selected the six trees as better specimens of TACF's cross-breeding efforts. Cross breeding means to incrementally inoculate against the diseased DNA of a young chestnut tree with the DNA of a healthy, blight resistant chestnut tree; in this case the healthy tree is the Chinese chestnut tree. Over generations of continual cross breeding the characteristics of the American chestnut (being larger and growing straighter and stronger) begin to dominate. The goal of TACF's breeding program is two-fold: to introduce into the American chestnut the genetic material responsible for the blight resistance of the Chinese tree, and at the same time, preserve in every other way the genetic heritage of the American species. Although the Chinese genes for resistance are only incompletely dominant, they usually express themselves clearly when present in seedlings purposely inoculated with a virulent form of the blight fungus. And that is how each backcross generation is tested - by inoculation with blight. Only those seedlings that show the greatest resistance are used for further backcrossing to an American parent.

With the enthusiastic participation from Congressional Cemetery's Executive Director Paul Williams, the cluster of saplings were planted on the grounds of the cemetery and are located just behind the cenotaphs off the main alley leading to the chapel. If you are walking your dog or

enjoying one of the cemetery's events, look for them but be careful! They are still struggling to gain a foothold.

There is no better place to situate these fragile survivors. I know that many of the "residents" of Congressional Cemetery would find them quite familiar. It is too early to tell whether these six trees will last more than a few dozen years as the bark fungus that overwhelmed the species usually hits when the tree is in early maturity. Still a few dozen years is a good run but let's hope they last well into the next century.

For more information of TACF, visit www.acf.org/mission_history.php.



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



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

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Pomegranate at 15th and East Capitol St. SE