

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
TREE COMMISSION MEETING
RALPH GRATHOFF, CHAIRMAN
July 13, 2017**

Members Present: Chair. Ralph Grathoff, Kathy Brens, Jon Duerr, Suzi Myers, Pam Otto, Caroline Wilfong, Ron Ziegler

Members Absent: Valerie Blaine, Raymond Hauser

Others Present: Chris Adesso, Jeremy Craft, Marcelline D'Argento, Yvette Policastro

Visitors Present: Loren Nagy

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was convened by Chair. Grathoff at 7:05 p.m.

2. Introduction of Visitors, Comments and Concerns

Mr. Nagy expressed concern regarding mulch needed around City parkway trees and provided example photos of the trees. Mr. Craft explained that in accordance with the City's Urban Forestry Management Plan ("UFMP") City crews are currently mulching all parkway trees [*see* 4.A. below].

Comm. Brens expressed her appreciation for the City's prompt response for the removal of a large tree branch that fell in a recent storm. Comm. Brens also reported there is a private planting/bush obstructing the traffic view on the southwest corner of 3rd Avenue and Illinois Avenue. Mr. Craft will address this issue.

3. Minutes Review and Approval

Motion to approve and place into the public record the minutes of the May 11, 2017 Tree Commission meeting. Motion by Comm. Brens, second by Comm. Duerr to approve the minutes. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:13 p.m.

4. Old Business

A. Mr. Craft updated the Commission regarding placement of mulch around all City parkway trees pursuant to the UFMP. The goal is to have mulching completed within three to five years.

B. Mr. Craft reported the arbor team had been focusing on downtown beautification and landscape work in preparation for the visit by the America in Bloom ("AIB") judges. On Friday, July 14, 2017, their focus will return to trees.

C. Mr. Craft informed the Commission that contracted services for tree removals had been awarded to Skyline Tree Service, Inc. and DeMar Tree Service. With the reduction of the Ash tree population due to the Emerald Ash Borer ("EAB") infestation, Chair. Grathoff asked if the City was still removing many trees. Mr. Craft explained there are a number of old Norway Maples and Crimson King Maples that require removal.

D. Mr. Craft reported on 2017 fall planting. The City is selecting fifteen different species for planting, and approximately two hundred (200) trees will be planted this fall. Chair. Grathoff verified that the City does not intend to plant many Maple trees due to an over-population of these trees already in the parkways. Mr. Craft confirmed.

5. New Business

Comm. Duerr requested the status of the Tree Commission's transition to a Natural Resources Commission ("NRC"). Mr. Adesso reported there is no change in the status of this transition as staff will need additional time to work on revisions to City Code. Chair. Grathoff reiterated the NRC will have eleven members with

its primary focus continuing to be maintaining the City's designation as a Tree City USA community and other tree-related activities. Mr. Adesso added the NRC will continue the Tree Commission's role as an advisory body to the City's Public Works Department, unless the NRC is requested by the City's Government Services Committee to expand its role with regard to a specific topic or action. Chair. Grathoff requested input from the Commissioners regarding key initiatives and possibly increasing the frequency of meetings. Comm. Otto suggested more frequent meetings might be necessary because the NRC would be addressing a greater number of topics. Comm. Myers agreed monthly meetings would be best. Mr. Nagy commented more frequent meetings would facilitate progress, for example, if a topic was introduced, then researched, then reported the next month. Mr. Adesso noted the AIB judges asked if the Tree Commission's transition to a NRC was still under consideration. Comm. Myers commented the City of Geneva has a NRC that conducts open meetings. Mr. Adesso explained the Geneva NRC is not sanctioned by the City of Geneva, and is one hundred percent volunteer based and self-sustaining.

Chair. Grathoff asked if AIB has a sustainability focus. Comm. Otto explained AIB has different award evaluation criteria including "environmental efforts." Comm. Otto noted that some businesses have become involved with AIB including Clarke on South Tyler Road. Clarke has completed several environmental related initiatives including the installation of a solar array, an electric car charging station and employee gardens where produce is grown to share and to take home; cooking classes are also offered. Additionally, Clarke's facility produces almost zero waste.

Chair. Grathoff inquired about the native species planted around the pond / basin by the Jewel store on the east side of the City. Mr. Adesso explained all the plantings are native, and this was the City's first conversion from landscape to native plantings. Kane County now requires native species are planted for all future projects. Mr. Adesso explained the basin was severely eroded, and turf was replaced with native plantings, some rock and a vegetative log system.

Comm. Otto reported a honeybee ordinance was passed by the City Council. The ordinance imposes a two hive limit per residence, and provides protection for beekeepers.

6. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee

Comm. Myers shared several newspaper articles and materials regarding tree-related topics including "Local activists discuss methods of saving trees" and "Sound off" [copies of the articles/materials are included with these minutes].

B. Langum Park Clean-Up

Comm. Otto stated she will have a report on the clean-up of Langum Park in October or November. Comm. Brens suggested the possibility of involving community service persons in the clean-up effort. Comm. Wilfong asked about the best time for woods clean up. Comm. Otto responded that late fall or early winter is best because herbaceous plants are dormant, trees are not actively growing. Also poison ivy is currently growing in Langum Park woods. Comm. Otto explained the clean-up work needed includes trail chipping and removal of black cherry to free up century Oak trees; plant rescue could be done in the spring.

- 7. Communications - Approval of Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports May and June 2017**
Motion by Comm. Myers to approve the above-referenced reports and place into the public record, second by Comm. Brens. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:45 p.m.
- 8. Additional Items**

 - A. Commissioners**
Mr. Nagy informed the Commission about an Illinois Landscape Contractors Association event at the Chicago Botanic Garden in October regarding Building Sustainable Landscapes.

Comm. Wilfong suggested AIB could be promoted during the City’s annual Arbor Day celebration with the goal of participation by school children, boy/girl scouts and parent teacher organizations (PTOs). Comm. Otto noted AIB promotes community engagement. This is the City’s third year participating in AIB, and each year there is increased participation. Comm. Myers suggested getting garden shops involved early in the season to promote AIB and the types of flowers/plants chosen by AIB for the year. The stores could order more of the featured flowers and post signs to support AIB. Comm. Brens suggested using the Arcada marquee to announce and display AIB information. Mr. Nagy suggested that both sun and shade flower varieties be offered.
 - B. City Staff**
Mr. Adesso noted the community’s support of AIB and thought some of the ideas could also be implemented for Arbor Day. For example, children from St. Charles’ schools created many red geranium pictures that were displayed in storefront windows on Main Street; perhaps artwork/pictures for Arbor Day 2018 could be similarly displayed in the windows; and possibly the Arcada theater marquee could announce Arbor Day.
 - C. Visitors**
None
- 9. Adjournment**
Motion by Comm. Myers to adjourn the meeting, second by Comm. Ziegler. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:57 p.m.

Opinion

Donald J. Lyons *Managing Editor*
Mark C. Foster *News Editor*

R. Michael Sheppard
Publisher

*"Let the people know the facts, and the country will be safe."
—A. Lincoln*

Monday, October 22, 2001

Guided for 'tree police' when common sense is guide

On those few occasions in which we are literally "above the fray," we marvel at what we see. And we suspect others would do the same.

This time, in being above the fray, we simply mean being at a high point somewhere in the tri-cities area, be it Johnson's Mound or Settler's Hill. Or it could be on the top floor of a tall building, or in a plane going overhead.

Sometimes it may be as simple as being on the top of the Ferris Wheel when it stops. From those lofty points, we marvel at what we see. And what we see is trees. Lots of them.

At ground level, we don't always get an appreciation for how heavily wooded this part of the state is. We know we rake a lot of leaves in late fall, and we know that the older portions of our communities have the more established trees.

What we don't always grasp is how many trees remain, even in our most developed areas. But it doesn't take long to realize that if we

weren't inclined to take care of those trees, they could soon disappear.

The most volatile battles between developers and residents take place with projects that call for the removal of several trees. There was much squawking when St. Charles residents watched trees go down in the Royal Fox area, in the Viewpointe development at the former Mount St. Mary High School location, and during the widening of Main Street from downtown to west of Thompson Middle School.

So it is wise for our cities to establish tree ordinances through the city government process, as well as having tree commissions in place.

The St. Charles Tree Commission, for example, this week revealed it would like to hire a full-time arborist, and possibly share such a person with Geneva and Batavia.

Commission member Jim Driessen recently told city officials that the city has some 14,000 trees on city property, and it would be wise to have someone who knows and understands trees to help watch over them.

Creating tree ordinances and tree commissions quite simply helps assure that trees won't be neglected or thought of as easy prey for the development bulldozer.

It also, however, means that city residents can learn more about caring for the trees on their property and maybe, just maybe, not being so quick to just yank one out.

No one wants "tree police" patrolling the neighborhoods, and residents shouldn't think that rules about what they can or can't do with their trees is somehow restrictive.

Common sense is the rule regarding trees more often than not, and most officials realize, as Driessen said, that "99.9 percent of our citizens exercise good judgment about trees."

In the next breath, he says that city workers are probably the worst offenders when cutting away limbs for telephone and power lines.

If we all show we care about the beauty around us, the view above the fray will remain a site to behold.



My Little View
of Life
George R. Moskoff

by Christopher Petersen
Staff writer

The move to save Geneva's "urban forest" took another small step forward last weekend with a forum held during the Geneva Forum's Winter Chautauqua at Peck Farm Park.

Theresa Ellis, a member of the group Citizens for Trees, said that since the group began in an effort to save four oak trees on the site of the future Dodson Place development, she has received overwhelming feedback from people who have shared their love of trees with her.

"You understand there is this incredible connection between cit-

izens and their trees," Ellis said. She pointed to an effort by the Geneva Garden Club in 1932 to preserve trees near the Chicago Northwestern train station, saying trees are an important part of the life of a town.

"If we destroy the past, in a sense we do destroy the future of this little town," Ellis said. "If that doesn't appeal to commerce, I don't know what does."

Ellis said that these days, the issue has grown from one that could be addressed by a small group into one that needs a regulatory body to monitor it and all the disparate interests involved.

"It's a political issue now, and it should be handled that way," she

said, referring to the efforts of the Strategic Plan Advisory Committee, which is in the process of creating a new tree ordinance.

If and when Geneva does get a new tree ordinance established, they might take a page from St. Charles. St. Charles 5th Ward Alderman and owner of Thornapple Landscapes Peter Grathoff took part in the panel discussion, sharing his experiences and insight as a member of St. Charles' Tree Commission. As a resident of the Fox Valley since 1961, Grathoff said there has been a noticeable change in the landscape of the area.

See Trees Page 6

Trees

Continued from Page 3

"Over the years, I've noticed the town appear, where 25 years ago all you could see except for maybe a church steeple was foliage," Grathoff said. "It's one of those things that sneaks up on you."

Grathoff explained the efforts St. Charles took to be certified as a "Tree City" by the National Arbor Day Foundation, which involved setting up the city's Tree Commission and taking a survey of all trees on public property.

Grathoff said the commission has had success in deciding what kinds of trees are planted in St. Charles. Grathoff said the commission has made some developers refrain from planting short-lived trees in favor of slower-growing, longer-lasting specimens. A list of which trees are prohibited from being planted in the city was easier to draft than a list of trees the city wants planted, Grathoff said.

The St. Charles Tree Commission has also held some successful fund-raisers for the care of the city's trees, raising \$1,400 last year with a "Pennies for Trees" program where schoolchildren donate

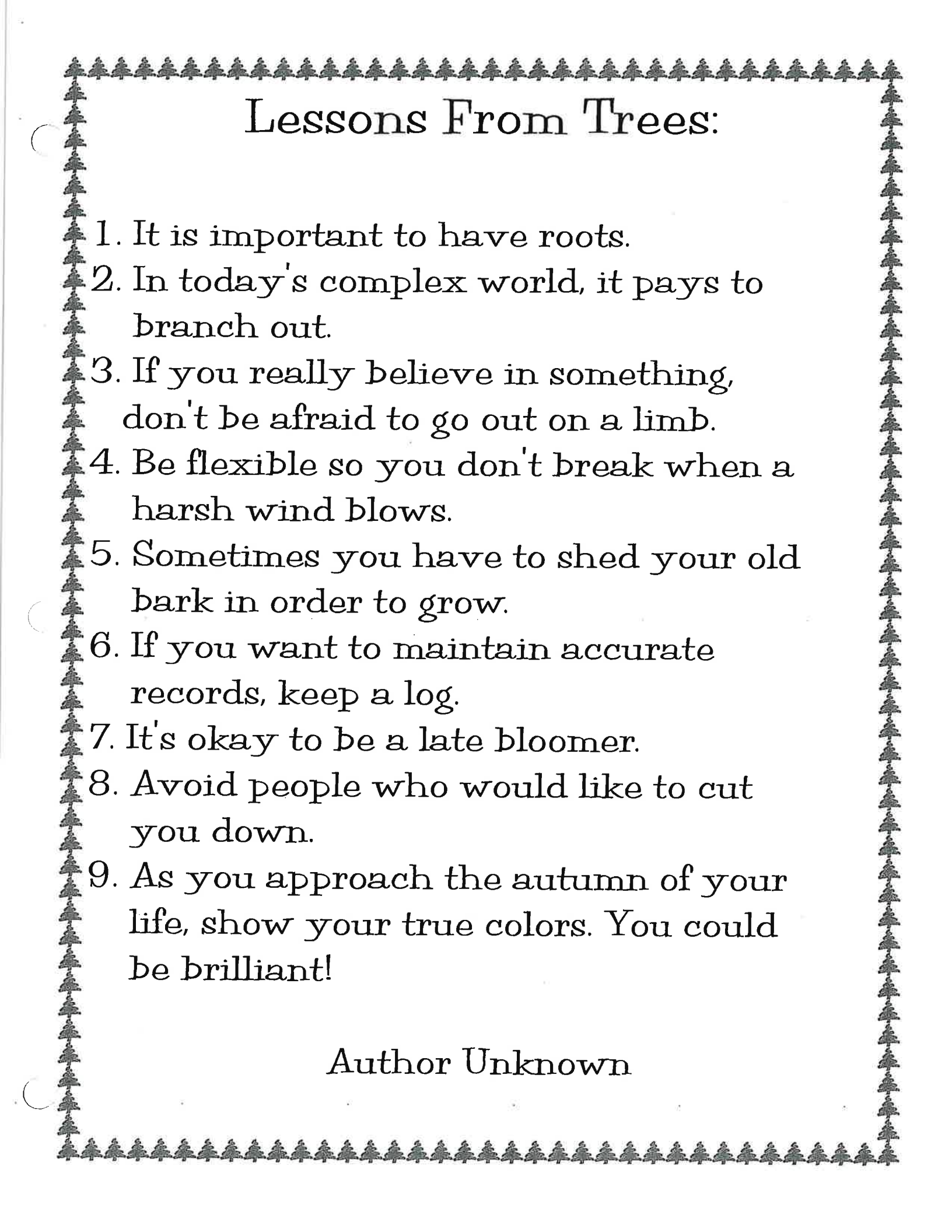
loose change that goes to planting new trees.

Karla Lynch, a member of SPAC's tree subcommittee, said they were following St. Charles' lead in one way. "They established a tree committee first before writing the ordinance," Lynch said.

The SPAC group includes representatives of local business, city staff and concerned citizens. Lynch said she would like to see a tree committee in Geneva serve in more of an advisory capacity to existing city departments, rather than set policy itself.

"They could have several roles without regulating," Lynch said.

St. Charles is in the midst of drafting its own tree ordinance, Grathoff said, that would likely be modeled after the tree ordinance in Lake Forest. The issue of protecting trees on private property became an issue when former TV star Mr. T cut down a number of trees on his Lake Forest property. However, Grathoff admitted that prohibiting people from cutting down trees on their private property is a delicate subject. "Do I have a right as a citizen to protect my environment?" Grathoff said. "It's a balancing act."



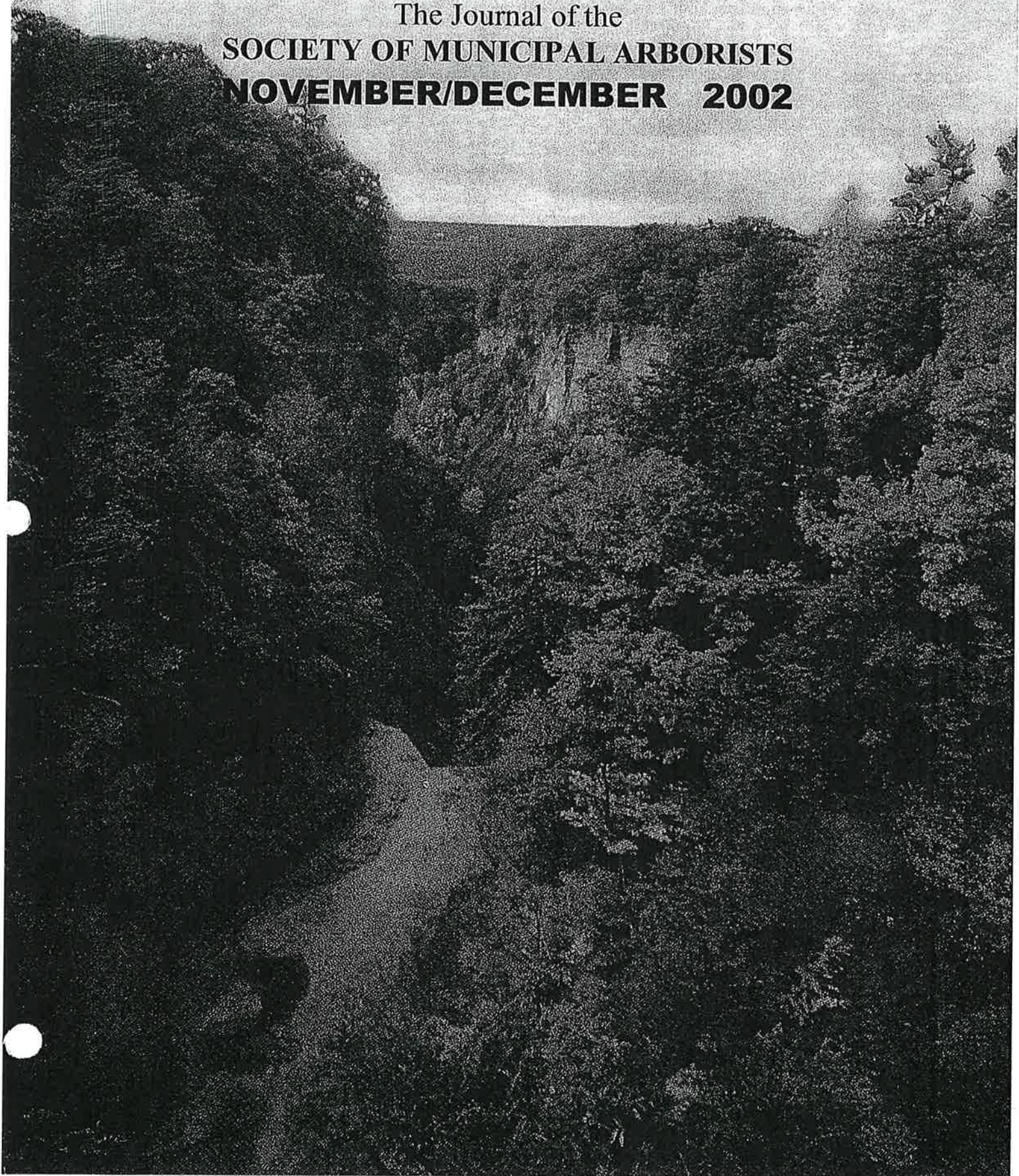
Lessons From Trees:

1. It is important to have roots.
2. In today's complex world, it pays to branch out.
3. If you really believe in something, don't be afraid to go out on a limb.
4. Be flexible so you don't break when a harsh wind blows.
5. Sometimes you have to shed your old bark in order to grow.
6. If you want to maintain accurate records, keep a log.
7. It's okay to be a late bloomer.
8. Avoid people who would like to cut you down.
9. As you approach the autumn of your life, show your true colors. You could be brilliant!

Author Unknown

CITY TREES

The Journal of the
SOCIETY OF MUNICIPAL ARBORISTS
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2002



City of the Month

St. Charles, Illinois

St. Charles is a community of 27,500 people located 45 miles west of Chicago. Their trees are maintained in-house and contractually. An inventory was conducted in the spring of 1998 and again in 2002. The following chart will illustrate the differences between these two years.

Item	1998	2002
inventory	14,084	17,000
planting sites	1,455	1,652
tree genera	40	50
tree species	86	116
% maples	43	36
% ash	29	26
% locust	9	9
trees in good condition	11,134	13,273
trees in fair condition	2,457	3,350
trees in poor condition or dead	493	288
recommendations for removal	208	0
priority pruning required	84	0
recommendations for pruning	583	74

The municipal environment as a whole is in good shape. The biggest drawback the city seems to face is the high rate of clay soil in new subdivisions. St. Charles now tries to inspect all tree sites before planting. In bad areas, the sidewalks are narrowed and ramped sidewalks go up and over the roots to buy time. In narrow parkways, they replace the curbs and have started using root barriers.

St. Charles has started an intensive program of mulching all trees on city owned property and trying to educate residents on proper mulching. All new trees are required to be mulched. Parkways vary from 4' to 25' in width. Some areas of St. Charles have electric lines above ground. Many of these areas had the lines put up after the trees and the wrong species are now under the power lines. This practice has been changed.

The St. Charles forestry program is still relatively young. Up until a few years ago, requests came in for trimming or inspections, the contractor was notified and they would take care of it about 80% of the time. In 1998, the city conducted its tree inventory, established a tree commission, and became a "Tree City USA".

In the following year, the contractor started trimming all streets due to have construction during that year. Besides the start of getting on a scheduled cycle, it also cut down on the damage that was incurred due to construction. The

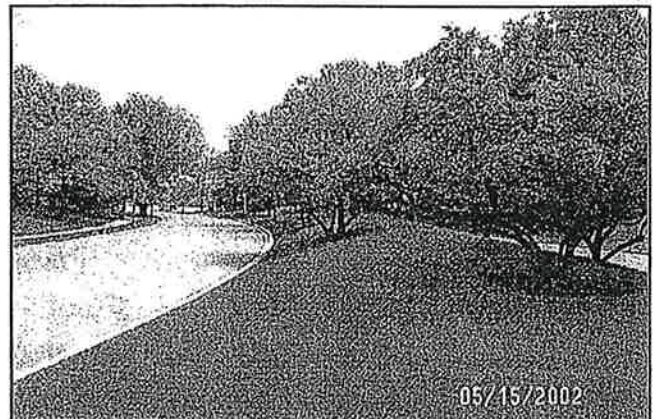
in-house crew of four people began a program of proactive trimming of all small trees. One full time individual was hired to enter all updates and inspections of new subdivisions in an effort to keep the inventory up to date.

During the winter months, all the employees trim when weather permits. The contractor now trims year-round. The goal is to be able to put the entire town on a seven-year pruning cycle within the next 3 to 5 years. By that time the entire town will have pruned once. Keeping the pruning on a cycle will reduce the amount of sucker growth and will also reduce the trimming costs.

Tree planting in St. Charles has completed two years of a long term tree-planting program. Last year the city planted 200 new trees plus replaced removals. The forestry program is studying the species that are being planted with efforts focused on using species that are salt tolerant along the main salt routes in St. Charles. Other efforts are focused on finding trees that are suitable for the downtown area along with working with developers to make sure they are using more diversification than they have in the past. A developer must also replace any dead or dying trees before they become the city's responsibility. Besides a concerted effort to diversify, the city has taken a small parcel of city land and is working to convert it into an arboretum.

St. Charles' urban forest is in relatively good condition with room for new planting. The maintenance of trees is an important consideration, both in addressing the immediate priority requirements as well as establishing an on-going maintenance program. There are indications that many of the trees have not had much maintenance for some time. Routine pruning should address this. Scheduled maintenance for structural characteristics is best done when the trees are young and when the trees are healthy and this allows for the tree conditions to be monitored so that risks of hazard situations do not develop.

*This article was prepared from the
Forestry Department Accreditation application
presented by the Forestry Department of St. Charles*



Sound Off

Saturday, October 28, 2000

More leaves

I can't believe they're planting trees on the tree banks. Seems there's always a piece in the paper about how much it's costing the city to pick up leaves. And more trees? Hah.

Saturday, November 4, 2000

Stop intruding

This message is directed to the St. Charles Tree Commission. I've lived in my house over 30 years and if I would have wanted a tree in my parkway, trust me, I would have planted one there, just as I've planted other trees in my yard. Now you tell me I have to go out and buy a hose to replace the one that rotted a few years ago so that I can water once a week over the next few years the tree I didn't want. You also tell me I'm supposed to drive to the city public works garage and get wood chips next spring to put around the tree I didn't want, to hold in the moisture I'm supposed to be putting them there with the hose I have to go out and buy. And we haven't even addressed the leaves that will be generated that you're going to need

me to go out and rake once the tree starts growing leaves. I'm a senior citizen and I don't think I should have to. I always thought it was the Republicans who believed that government should not intrude in other people's lives.