

2004 State of the Trees Report

Department of Public Works
Division of Urban Forestry



2004 – A Forester's Perspective

Year 2003 was a stormy and turbulent year. By contrast Year 2004 has been relatively sedate. Most of the bugs in the 311 System have been eliminated and this has resulted in a system that, while not perfect, functions much more smoothly. This was a big year for staff turnover but the new employees entering the program are well qualified and enthusiastic about their new positions. During this time we saw a new crop of Tree Commission members and they are also enthusiastic about their roles. This year we did battle



Gene Hyde is the editor of this publication.

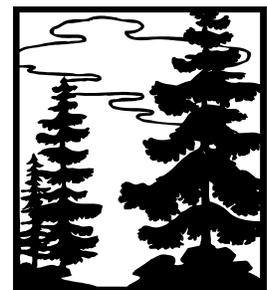
with our old enemies: fire ants, kudzu, and privet. I wish that I could report some success in this war but unfortunately I can't. However we had no encounters with either the

Emerald Ash Borer nor the Gypsy Moth both of which threaten urban forests to the north. This year we learned that the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid poses a serious threat to hemlock trees from Maine to Georgia and is reportedly doing great harm in the nearby Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Will we be next? In March The Southeast Natural Resources Leadership Institute thought enough of Chattanooga to choose us as its site for a training session for forestry leaders from the Southeast United States.

The 15-person Tree Protection and Resource Management Committee made recommendations to the City Council in May and Council responded by passing a Tree Harvesting Ordinance in November. While this was happening Chattanooga was going to the birds! Large flocks of native starlings decided in mid summer to roost in our downtown trees. Both of these stories are covered in depth on the inside of this report.

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A Rejuvenated Tree Commission Goes to Work

In March, Mayor Corker appointed three new Tree Commission members: June Copinger, Adele Glascock, and John Sweet. Since their appointment these individuals have been exposed to a wide range of issues from developing a timber harvesting ordinance to determining a course of action to deal with health issues caused by starlings that roost in city trees adjacent to residences and businesses in the downtown area.

In addition, the Tree Commission has endeavored to initiate an awards program for 2005 that recognizes an array of individuals and businesses that have appreciated and shown respect for trees. Also the Forester was asked to produce a brochure that explains to developers, builders, and engineers the best management practices for preserving and protecting trees during development.

Special points of interest:

- Chattanooga was a "Tree City" for the 14th year.
- Arbor Day was held at Lookout Valley Elementary School.
- The backlog of Service Requests is approximately 12.

Tree Planting in 2004

A total of 15 species were planted by in-house and contract crews in 2004. They are:

1. Willow Oak	23 ea.
2. Goldenrain Tree	6 ea.
3. 'Village Green' Zelkova	8 ea.
4. Yoshino Cherry	5 ea.
5. Pin Oak	3 ea.
6. 'Muskogee' Crape Myrtle	3 ea.
7. "Tuskegee" Crape Myrtle	15 ea.
8. 'Red Sunset' Maple	1 ea.
9. 'Autumn Gold' Ginkgo	11 ea.
10. Yellowwood	1 ea.
11. Seedless Sweetgum	1 ea.
12. 'Dynasty' Elm	6 ea.



13. Tulip Poplar	2 ea.
14. 'Aristocrat' Pear	3 ea.
TOTAL	88

Streetscapes trees were planted as follows:

1. 13th Street Replacement of Goldenrain trees with Natchez Crape Myrtle	4 ea.
2. 4th Street Streetscapes Kwanzan Cherry	50 ea.
'Allee' Elm	159 ea.
3. 5th Street Renovation 'Winter King' Hawthorn	14 ea.
4. Heritage Landing Drive Yellow-Poplar	41 ea.
5. Greenway View Drive Willow Oak	37 ea.
'Autumn Blaze' Maple	36 ea.
'Bosque' Elm	33 ea.
TOTAL	374

Storms in 2004

This year was relatively quiet compared to the monsoon rains of May, 2003 and the "gustnado" in June. As is always the case we had numerous spring thunderstorms this year which resulted in a number of trees that were blown over. The photograph to the right shows a large oak tree that was uprooted in June in the Alton Park area. The



enormous root plate was almost 10 feet in diameter which attested to the strong winds that blew through the Tennessee Valley. Luckily there were no personal injuries. In September we tackled storm damage in the aftermath of several hurricanes. These storms had weakened by the time they arrived in Chattanooga and we received only a glancing blow. The total amount of damage was comparatively light and required only six or seven days to remove all of the downed trees, branches, and related debris. During these cleanup times we were able to use many crews from the various divisions within City Wide Services to help clear streets and pick up brush.

Status of Service Requests

Responding to service requests is the single most time consuming and expensive aspect of our urban forestry operations. These requests pour in from a variety of sources including the 311 center, Fire and Police Departments, the Hamilton County School Department, sister divisions within City Wide Services, and other City departments. Currently we are using the Tree Manager software program as well as the 311 system to track our requests. In 2004 the Tree Manager system logged in 564 requests and we have solved all except 12. The 311 Call center records indicate that we received 741 calls as

shown below and that we solved them all!

General Tree Problems	61	
Fallen Trees and Branches	340	
Tree Removal	174	
Tree Trimming	<u>166</u>	Total: 741

We eagerly anticipate in early 2005 the arrival of the new City Works system which will allow us to eliminate the dual set of records which we are now keeping.

The Problem with Starlings

They came not by the dozens or even the hundreds. But rather, they came by the thousands. So says City Forester Gene Hyde when he was notified in late July that there were an excessive number of starlings roosting in the Japanese Zelkova trees along the 1200 block of Market Street. Hyde soon realized that there was a problem, a serious problem. Previous attempts at pruning to thin the crowns had not been successful in persuading the starlings to seek overnight shelter in another location. Equally unsuccessful attempts were made to frighten the birds away by using inflatable owls and electronic bird squawkers. The problem is that the European Starling is an urban bird. It prefers an urban landscape as the main part of its habitat. Not easily deterred, starlings love to roost in street trees and therein lies the problem. Starlings defecate all over the roosting trees, sidewalks, cars, and all else that happens to be underneath the tree when they cut loose. Adding to the problem was the bird mites which were biting residents causing skin irritation. Because of the health issues that these birds posed by roosting in trees adjacent to restaurants and residences additional attempts were made to

radically thin the crowns of the trees and lastly to remove seven Zelkovas. This too failed and a total of 17 Zelkova trees were eventually taken down. Local business owners and residents have agreed to pay to replace these trees with 'Princeton Sentry'



European Starlings coming in to their evening roost.

Ginkgo. The City has contracted with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to study the problem and to provide a technically sound plan to deal with this nuisance. One aspect of that plan is to harass the birds at dusk over a five to seven day period as they arrive at their intended roosts. The USDA will do this with various noisemakers in an operation scheduled to begin in early 2005. Hopefully this action will force the birds to permanently leave.

The New Tree Removal Ordinance

In May, 2002 a 15.5 acre tract of land was cleared in the 1200 block of North Concord Road. Residents were outraged and voiced their displeasure to City Council. At issue were property rights for developers versus the community's expectations that any land cleared for development be done in a manner that respects both the land being cleared as well as the land of adjacent property owners. Other issues were housing



density, rezoning, property line vegetation, traffic congestion, and degradation of City streets. If that wasn't enough, another tract was clearcut along East Brainerd Road in the fall of 2003. City Council responded by forming a 15-member panel to:



Clearcut on East Brainerd Road

1. conduct a study of the development of ordinances regarding quality control for tree removal practices and development on sensitive sites and their impact on surrounding communities and,

2. Make recommendations back to the City Council based on their findings.

The 15-member panel was composed of individuals representing the development interests, the environmental community, the forestry/forest products industry, and regulators from

both the City and State governments. Many meetings were held between December, 2003, and May 2004. While the committee did not always agree on every issue, they did make great strides in coming to an agreement on some key points. Based on these areas of agreement as expressed to City Council a tree removal ordinance was passed in November, 2003 and contains the following elements:

The ordinance applies to the removal of timber from a site which:

1. Will not be developed within three years after the timber removal.
2. Is one acre in size or larger and 5,000 square feet of canopy is going to be cut or removed within one year.
3. Is having timber cut or removed for the purpose of conducting Forestry Land Management Practices.

Applicants must:

1. File an application and pay appropriate fees.
2. Submit a re-vegetation plan.
3. Post a timber removal sign 21 days in advance of tree removal activities.
4. Leave a 50-foot vegetation buffer around the tract being harvested both during and after the harvest.
5. Follow Tennessee Division of Forestry Best Management Practices Guide.

It is much too early to tell how well this ordinance will meet its objectives, especially since the ordinance has just passed and the first permit has not yet been issued. However both the Urban Forestry and Codes and Inspections Sections are currently preparing to meet the challenges of the new ordinance.

Chattanooga, Department of Public Works

Our Business Address:
Department of Public Works
900 East 11th Street
Chattanooga, TN 37403

Phone: 423-757-7283
Fax: 423-757-5350
Email: hyde_gene@mail.chattanooga.gov

We're on the Web!
WWW.Chattanooga.gov/urbanforestry.gov

Chattanooga Tree Commission Members:

1. Christine Bock
2. June Coppinger
3. Adele Glascock
4. Kim McClurkin
5. Jack McDonald
6. Leroy Parks
7. John Sweet

Administrator of Public Works:
Bill McDonald

Director of City-Wide Services:
Lee Norris

The Urban Forestry program functions as a separate operation within City Wide Services. Its mission is to provide the City with a safe and attractive urban forest, and to educate citizens about the benefits and proper care of trees. It is guided by the seven-member Tree Advisory Commission as appointed by the Mayor. The Forestry Division draws on other elements within both Public Works and Parks and Recreation to assist with tree planting, solving service requests, and other missions. The program's main operating budget for FY '03-'04 of \$511,108 is derived strictly from annual appropriations.

This report is prepared annually at the request of the Tree Advisory Commission.

Staff Happenings

During 2004 the Urban Forestry staff was impacted in many ways. The following is a list of changes that occurred:

Jerry Mauldin was hired as the new Forestry Supervisor.

Jim Willson was hired as a new Trimmer.

Chuck Ashley was hired as a new Crew Worker.

Rick Cooper became the new director of the Emergency Department.

Britt Weise went to work for the National Cemetery.

Chris Crider left the City to pursue an opportunity in the field of electronics.

David Parrott left the City to pursue a career in the pharmaceutical profession.

Mike Richie remains as a Crew Supervisor.

Wayne Pinkerton remains as a Trimmer.

Gene Hyde remains as the Forester and recently passed the Municipal Arborist Specialist exam as a supplement to the Certified Arborist classification.



The Urban Forestry Crew at the end of 2004: Left to Right: Jerry Mauldin, Forestry Supervisor; Chuck Ashley, Crew Worker; Mike Richie, Crew Supervisor; Gene Hyde, Forester; Wayne Pinkerton, Trimmer; Jim Willson, Trimmer.

The Asplundh Contract Crew: Left to Right: Roger Everett, Groundman; Ken Chamberlain, Foreman; Kindell Drost, Trimmer.

