

What is Urban Forestry?

What do you think of when you hear the term “Urban Forestry”? These two words seem at odds with each other, but the reality is that the lines between forests and cities can blur together. Trees don't pay attention to our borders, and often are found even in the most sprawling urban areas. Individual trees or groups of tree species are interacting with our cities, towns, and suburbs as a form of “Green” infrastructure. It's not just the huge cities that deal with this, any municipality can have trees that have an effect on their structures, residents, and businesses. When deciding how to care for and manage these trees, it can be just as important as planning for conventional infrastructure.

The benefits of having urban trees are numerous. One that is appreciated in the summer is the shade that broad-leaf trees provide. By reducing temperatures by nearly 10 degrees Fahrenheit, they make walking on the sidewalk more comfortable, but also help reduce the heat absorbed by nearby buildings. A less obvious benefit is the absorption of pollutants in the water runoff and air. Serious air pollutants like ozone, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen oxides are all taken up by the leaves, making trees a cost-efficient tool for improving air quality. Trees also help purify water through slow filtration of water through their roots, as well as physically blocking pollutants in runoff during rainstorms from reaching our precious water sources. A benefit that is very apparent as we approach the autumn months is the natural beauty of the trees. Not only do they provide a wonderful view, they can also boost property value when well-kept.

Having a green infrastructure system like this doesn't come just from planting trees, it takes care and maintenance just like the rest of the urban environment. Trees are living things, and can catch diseases and be harmed by pests and invasive species. A good example of this is Oak Wilt, a fungal disease often found in urban settings that can kill fully grown oak trees very quickly. Taking precautions and planning around these threats is a necessary part of urban forestry. Similarly, it is not enough to just plant a tree and assume it will grow like out in the wild. Poor soil, water, and air conditions that are common in urban areas make it difficult for trees to live full and healthy lives, and often stunts their growth. Trees also provide hazards of their own that we must contend with. The height and reach of large trees can make them a problem when it comes critical infrastructure like power lines, and any dead branches can potentially fall and destroy property. There is also the lesser, but still prevalent nuisance of fallen leaves and fruits that make for plenty of yard-work in the fall. This is all to say that their must be careful planning to weigh the benefits and costs of our community trees.

Contributing to the urban forest can be as close as home! Planting trees, maintaining the ones you have, or seeking help with tree treatments are all great ways to keep your community's woods healthy. The Barry Conservation District has a forester on staff who can help you make these decisions, through forest management advice and referrals to local professionals. If you have got more than just a few trees to look at, site assessments are available at no cost to you. If you would like to learn more, or would like to schedule a visit, please give District Forester Ben Savoie a call at 269-908-4134, or send an email to ben.savoie@macd.org



This Year by the numbers:

Site Visits - 91

Site Visit Acreage - 4050

Private Sector Referrals - 98

Public Sector Referrals - 66

QFP Verifications - 11

QFP Acreage - 818

Outreach Events - 7

Estimated Attendants - 1030

Media Occurrences - 35

Estimated Economic Impact - \$203,200

**Thank you for
another great
year!**

