

Spring 2025

# Cityscape

Promoting Stewardship for Missouri's Community Forests



## MCFC Annual Conference Coming To ST. Louis September 24-26, 2025

Join us for an in-depth exploration of the latest scientific advancements shaping community forestry. This year's Missouri Community Forestry Council Conference is dedicated to the science that drives tree care, management, and preservation. Our technical, science-heavy agenda will equip professionals with modern tools and knowledge to strengthen community forests.

Attendees will gain insights into innovative research, practical applications, and emerging best practices that enhance how we assess, manage, and sustain our urban and community forests. Local experts will showcase real-world projects, demonstrating how research and practice come together to create healthier, more resilient urban forests.

Dr. Frank Rinn with Rinntech and Dr. Chris Luley with Urban Forest Diagnostics will kick off the Conference on Wednesday, September 24. "Am I Rotten?" and "Modern and Efficient Tree Safety Evaluation" will be our inaugural sessions. Other featured Speakers include Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott, *Professor Emerita, WSU*, Chelsi Abbott, *Davey Tree Expert Company*, and Erik Sveum, *Wright Tree Service*. Information on full agenda, as well as registration and hotel information, will be coming soon!

Whether you're an arborist, urban forester, researcher, or advocate, this conference offers a unique opportunity to connect with experts, discover practical applications of the latest science, and enhance your ability to care for the landscapes that define our communities.

In addition, The St. Louis region of MCFC will be holding a special Pre-Conference Workshop on Monday, September 22 and Tuesday, September 23. We are bringing in Frank and Chris early for another round of their Tree Decay Workshop. This will be a highly technical educational opportunity involving wood decay and assessing tree risk. This unique opportunity will be held at Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center in Kirkwood (just minutes from the Conference hotel). More details to follow shortly.



# Prairie and Woodlands On Vacant Lots, A Look At Beyond Housing's Forestry and Community Conservation Program

*Author: Jack McDonnell, Forestry and Community Conservation Program Manager at Beyond Housing*

## Vacant Lot Remediation Program

Through our green workforce development program, Beyond Housing transforms vacant lots into ecological assets for municipalities and organizations in the 24:1, a collaborative of 22 municipalities within the Normandy Schools Collaborative footprint in North St. Louis County. This initiative has led to the adoption of 12 acres to be converted into prairie reconstructions and woodland restoration sites.

We work closely with municipal partners to convert underutilized, high maintenance turfgrass areas and neglected woodlands into native landscapes. By removing invasive species and establishing native plant communities, we help restore these sites to conditions that support biodiversity, improve stormwater management, and require fewer municipal resources.

Beyond Housing also trains public works departments and partner organizations on sustainable vegetation management practices, including invasive species control and solutions that utilize native plants. This program emerged in direct response to municipal concerns over the excessive time and labor spent mowing vacant lots and struggles with managing invasive plants. By replacing these areas with native plantings, we transform maintenance burdens into community assets.

**Beyond Housing conservation technicians seed a lot near Normandy city hall with native plants.** *Photo credit: Beyond Housing*



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## Prairie and Woodlands On Vacant Lots, (Continued)

### Why Native Plants? A Comparison to Turfgrass

Traditional mowed turfgrass provides few benefits beyond aesthetics and recreational use. In contrast, native tallgrass prairie ecosystems offer measurable advantages:

Benefit	Tallgrass Prairie	Turfgrass
Stormwater Mitigation	Absorbs ~6 inches of rainfall per event	Absorbs ~0.5 inches
Air Particulate Capture	Captures ~15 lbs of particulates per acre annually	Captures ~5 lbs
Soil Surface Temperature	Lowers surface temp by ~10°F	Negligible effect
Carbon Sequestration	Stores ~1.5 tons of carbon per acre annually	Stores ~0.5 tons

Not to mention the broader ecological benefits, including improved habitat for pollinators, birds, beneficial insects, and enhanced soil health.

By converting high-maintenance turf into native habitat, we reduce municipal costs, mitigate urban heat islands, improve stormwater management, and sequester carbon. While prairie conversions are sometimes labeled "low-maintenance," the reality is that specialized knowledge is required for proper stewardship. Through our training programs and hands-on assistance, we are helping municipalities build long-term capacity to manage native landscapes effectively.

**Results of Beyond Housing conservation technicians seeding project near Normandy city hall.** *Photo credit: Beyond Housing*



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## ***Prairie and Woodlands On Vacant Lots, (Continued)***

### **Ecology and Equity: The impact on communities**

It is important to recognize the lasting ecological impact of redlining and discriminatory housing policies. Due to this intentional practice, that has created a geography of poverty, these families now face higher temperatures, lower tree canopy coverage, and increased environmental stressors. According to [American Forests](#), communities of color on average have 38% less tree cover and are over 10°F hotter than white communities. Research consistently links low canopy coverage to increased respiratory illnesses, reduced life expectancy, and poorer overall health outcomes.

Using data from our canopy study, we prioritize our work in the most vulnerable areas, to focus our efforts where they are needed most. Beyond Housing's holistic approach acknowledges that affordable housing, healthcare, education, and ecology must work together to create strong, equitable communities. You can dive deeper into our canopy study date here: <https://our241.com/trees-in-the-241/>

While ecological restoration alone won't solve these systemic challenges, it is a critical piece of the puzzle. By strategically increasing native plant cover and urban tree canopy, we are working to reverse decades of environmental disinvestment and build a healthier, more resilient future for all.

### **Final Thoughts**

Through vacant lot repurposing, ecological workforce development, community forest management and native plant advocacy, Beyond Housing is transforming neglected spaces into sustainable assets that serve both people and the environment. By reducing maintenance burdens on municipalities, improving ecological resilience, and addressing environmental justice concerns; we hope our work can provide a model for how native plants can be used to create healthier, more livable communities. The biggest takeaway I have learned doing this work is that all these projects need to start with two questions "How can we help?" and "How do we make this solution sustainable?"

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank our partners, the Missouri Department of Conservation, Forest ReLeaf of Missouri, Missouri Stream Teams, The Arbor Day Foundation, and, most importantly, the municipalities we work with for their support.

***To find out more about Beyond Housing and/or sign up for their newsletter visit their website-[The 24:1 Community - Beyond Housing](#)***



# MW-ISA presents Gold Leaf Award to MCFC member for his outstanding leadership with the Missouri Arbor Day Poster Contest

When one thinks of programs that benefit trees in the state of Missouri, the Arbor Day poster contest should be at the top of the list. Troy Powell has led the Arbor Day Poster Contest in Springfield, MO for over 11 years and beginning in 2022, he led the efforts for the entire state of Missouri. It is well known that if we want to create a love for trees you must instill those values at a young age. The Arbor Day poster contest, a creation of the National Arbor Day Foundation, is a project targeting 5th graders. This program worked so well in the city of Springfield, that he presented this program to participating partners in the state. With Troy's energy and enthusiasm, more cities and schools are participating than ever before. Last year over 1200 posters were submitted in the state of Missouri. Each October, Troy and other staff or volunteers visit area schools to present the poster contest to 5th grade students and teachers. Students have a few guidelines to create a poster with that year's theme. Last year's theme was "Trees Work for Clean Water." Teachers collect the posters and submit them for voting. In the city of Springfield, all posters are hung at a designated location and area tree-related groups, like MCFC and Tree City USA, are invited to vote on their favorites. Votes are tallied and there is a winner from each school. Those winning posters are submitted to the state committee who vote on 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, plus popular vote. In 2024, for the first time ever, Springfield had the 1st, 2nd and 3rd state winners and the state popular vote! Each year during the month of April, Arbor month, Troy Powell leads a group of tree lovers consisting of representatives from the Missouri Department of Conservation, Tree City USA, City Utilities, the City of Springfield, and devoted volunteers to gather at each participating elementary school. Fifth graders join us outside where a tree is planted on the school campus and there is a short presentation on the history of Arbor Day, correct mulching and tree watering, and planting guidelines such as "right tree, right place." The tree is named after the poster winner for that school and their teacher, such as the Smith/Jones American Hornbeam and is recorded in the Big Book of Trees. Some Springfield Schools have a forest of trees from participating for many years! The school winner is honored with prizes for their winning poster. This wonderful program is increasing awareness and a love of trees for youngsters in our city and our state. This is a gift to our future and Troy is leading the way!



*Troy Powell on right, accepts Gold Leaf Award from MW-ISA Chapter President Andy Berg in January 2025.*





# Announcements

## New resource and information now available on MCFC website.

In response to requests this season to have jobs posted on the MCFC website, a Job Openings page is now live! This will be a simple list of open position announcements with links. You can find the page under the [Resources](#) tab. Currently several positions are posted on the website and we would be happy to add more! Please send any position announcements to your regional groups and/or the MCFC Administrator at [admin@mocommunitytrees.org](mailto:admin@mocommunitytrees.org)

## Tour des Trees 2025: Deadline to Register is June 10!

The Tour des Trees is a fundraiser that support TREE Fund's grant and scholarship programs, and is also a great way to educate the public about the importance of tree research and caring for the trees in our communities. Join the movement and get moving (on your bike) by riding for trees this year!

**Dates:** August 10-16. Five riding days; partial options available.

**Location:** Starts and ends in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**Deadline to register:** June 10.

For information: Visit [www.treefund.org/tourdestrees](http://www.treefund.org/tourdestrees)

To register or to make a donation: Visit [www.tourdestrees.org](http://www.tourdestrees.org)

Want to support but can't make it to Michigan this year? The good news is you can participate virtually and still support TREE Fund. Sign up for the Virtual Tour des Trees at home, set a fitness goal and ride, walk, run, or swim in your neighborhood.

Register and hit fundraiser tiers to earn apparel prizes! See [www.treefund.org/virtual-ride-option](http://www.treefund.org/virtual-ride-option) for details.

## Survey opportunity for tree care professionals

Researchers from the Universities of Toronto, Florida, and Wisconsin-Stevens Point are researching how arborists perceive the likelihood of failure of included bark. Tree care professionals are asked to review a series of scenarios and photos to rate the likelihood of failure. As an incentive, you have the option to enter a draw for one of ten \$100 USD gift cards to an arborist supply store.

[https://rotman.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_cLRElApMNJg4YwC](https://rotman.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cLRElApMNJg4YwC)

## Innovating use for invasive Callery pear trees.

If you have an abundance of Bradford Pear and are looking to rid your landscape of them, chip them up and use the wood chips to grow mushrooms! A citizen scientist in New York recently inoculated Callery Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) ramial chips with the edible wine cap mushroom (*Stropharia rugosa annulata*). If converting these nuisance trees into decomposed rich soil amendments and a pile of tasty mushrooms seems like a commendable project worth trying, contact Field & Forest Products at [info@fieldforest.net](mailto:info@fieldforest.net), 800-792-6220 or 715-582-4997 for more information about the process and mushroom spawn availability.

