



The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
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STRATEGY for a GREEN CITY SUMMER 2006

CARING FOR TREES

Planting trees is just the first step in restoring a healthy urban forest. Densely populated areas present trees with special challenges like polluted air, constrained planting pits, and physical injury. Keeping the trees alive and thriving is an ongoing task for everyone involved.

TreeVitalize trees are procured by the Morris Arboretum. Arboretum experts identify species of trees that tolerate urban conditions and work with nurseries to promote best practices. The Arboretum will also conduct a follow-up study to see how well the trees survive after planting.

THE BIG PICTURE

PHS is working with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, and Penn State Cooperative Extension to educate **municipal managers, decision makers, and elected officials** about the value of trees.

“Our goal is not simply to get trees in the ground,” explains Patrice Carroll. “The larger goal is to encourage stewardship of our natural resources through education and awareness.”

Adds DiBerardinis, “When we engage citizens and connect them to this important work, we are not only ensuring the survival of a tree, but we’re building a constituency and creating advocates of our environment for the future.”

MAJOR TREEVITALIZE PARTNERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Please visit www.treevitalize.net for an up-to-date list of partners.

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- Claneil Foundation*
- Office of Representative Dwight Evans*
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- Philadelphia Eagles*
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Tending the URBAN FOREST

“We’re using the trees to connect all kinds of issues in our neighborhood. It’s a fantastic way of bringing people together.”

— **Geoff DiMasi,**
Vice President,
Passyunk Square
Civic Association

THE POWER OF TREES

Trees provide shade and beauty and so much more. A single tree on your property can increase the value of your home and help keep it cool. A neighborhood filled with hundreds of trees is a more desirable place to live, and a tree-lined shopping district feels more pleasant and earns higher profits than a barren strip mall. Plant a thousand trees and you begin to see benefits on a broader scale. Trees improve air quality across large areas by filtering out pollutants and slowing the formation of ground-level ozone. They reduce flooding by absorbing water and improve the quality of storm runoff entering rivers and streams.

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society has been promoting the benefits of trees for more than a decade. PHS created its **Tree Tenders** project in 1993 to train Philadelphia residents to become voluntary caretakers for trees on city streets. Offered in partnership with Penn State Cooperative Extension, the nine-hour Tree Tenders course covers tree identification, planting and pruning techniques, and tree-pit care. Tree Tenders also learn about organization-building, fundraising, and working with local government so they can pursue their own tree-planting projects. By working together to plant trees and improve their neighborhoods, these committed volunteers create stronger communities.

Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park Commission, the city agency with jurisdiction over street trees, has been a crucial partner in this effort. Park arborists work closely with community groups, issue planting permits, and transport trees.



The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) is a not-for-profit membership organization founded in 1827. PHS produces the **Philadelphia Flower Show** and sponsors events, activities, and publications for novice gardeners, experienced horticulturists, and flower lovers of all ages.

PHS’s urban greening program, **Philadelphia Green**, works with community groups and residents in neighborhoods throughout the city to plan and implement greening projects. Philadelphia Green also partners with private and public organizations to landscape and maintain public spaces in the city’s downtown. Proceeds from the Flower Show, along with funding from foundations, corporations, and government agencies, help to support its projects.

A REGIONAL ISSUE

Trees soften Philadelphia's dense urban environment and make the city more livable. But as development devours more and more open space outside the city, the loss of trees threatens the ecological balance on a regional level, increases healthcare and environmental costs, and erodes the quality of life for millions of people. A 2003 study by the nonprofit organization American Forests found that trees have been disappearing from Southeastern Pennsylvania at an alarming rate. According to the study, the five-county Greater Philadelphia Region (which includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties) has lost eight percent of its tree cover (the percentage of land shaded by trees) in the past 15 years.

TreeVitalize accomplishments to date:

- More than 7,000 trees planted
- 104 acres of riparian buffer zones restored
- 1,400 citizens received PHS Tree Tender training
- 1,700 people have volunteered to plant trees

of many organizations to do something about the problem of tree loss. "Scores of local and county governments, community groups, foundations, nonprofits, and businesses are really driving the initiative forward," he says. "It is rare that an initiative can harness such a broad and diverse response to a natural resource issue and do it in a way that directly engages citizens in working toward the solution. It is inspiring and hopeful to me."

TreeVitalize has three main components. First, it is working to plant **shade trees** in densely populated, moderate-income cities and towns where tree cover is below 25 percent. Second, it works with regional agencies and organizations on "**riparian buffer projects**" to replace trees near streams and rivers to help stem erosion and protect water quality.

The third component is an effort to train a cadre of **2,000 citizen volunteers** who will help plant and care for trees. Drawing on its knowledge of the Philadelphia region, its extensive work with communities, and its expertise in nurturing trees in urban environments, PHS is spearheading this effort.

Right: PHS staff member Maitreyi Roy shares information at a Tree Jamboree event.



Left: Volunteers at work in the Passyunk Square neighborhood

TAKING ROOT IN NEIGHBORHOODS

Under the TreeVitalize banner, PHS is working with residents, neighborhood groups, the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania, and the Fairmount Park Commission to **plant trees in Philadelphia neighborhoods and parks**. PHS organizes planting events, works with community groups, facilitates partnerships, and provides oversight.

Neighborhood organizations must submit applications to take part in TreeVitalize and contribute in-kind resources such as labor and neighborhood outreach. "We couldn't do this without these motivated volunteers," says TreeVitalize project director Patrice Carroll, "and Fairmount Park has gone above and beyond in their support for the community groups who are doing the planting."

In West Philadelphia, the nonprofit group University City Green has been working with several active Tree Tender groups. Through TreeVitalize, it offers technical assistance, provides tools, and helps leverage resources for volunteer greening projects. "TreeVitalize enabled us to strengthen partnerships within West Philadelphia as well as develop relationships with tree advocates in other parts of the city. We're proud to be a



resource for these efforts," says Amanda Benner, executive director of UC Green.

In the Passyunk Square neighborhood in South Philadelphia, new trees have brought big changes—and not just in the neighborhood's appearance. Geoff DiMasi, vice president of the Passyunk Square Civic Association, says his group's involvement in TreeVitalize has been "transforming." He says the group has planted hundreds of trees through the program and has strengthened the community in the process.

"All of our tree plantings are volunteer projects," DiMasi says. "We make it a party. We have people lined up to plant the trees—at one planting we had 200. The neighbors get to know each other at the plantings. Then the people who get trees in front of their houses end up spending more time outside, so they talk to their neighbors more."

The Civic Association's first project was to plant 43 trees around the Capitolo Playground, a project that brought about better communication between park employees and residents. The group then forged closer ties with the police district by dedicating a group of trees to local officers.

"We're using the trees to connect all kinds of issues in our neighborhood," says DiMasi. "It's a fantastic way of bringing people together."

BRANCHING OUT

As part of the TreeVitalize citizen education effort, PHS has **expanded its Tree Tenders** training to communities beyond the city. Each spring and fall the course is offered in the city as well as in two other municipalities in the region.

"Until now, we've focused on Philadelphia and we weren't sure of what the response would be outside the city," says Tree Tenders manager Mindy Maslin. "It's been great—better than we had hoped. We've had 80 to 100 people sign up for each class, and local governments have been very welcoming."

PHS has launched a **Citizens Campaign** to encourage homeowners to plant trees on their properties. It includes "Tree Jamboree" events that are designed as fun, educational events where people can learn about the benefits of trees, get a planting lesson, and pick up PHS coupons for rebates on tree purchases. Tapping its broad membership base, PHS holds a TreeVitalize tree sale at a major members' event each fall and offers special displays at its annual Philadelphia Flower Show.

PHS also provides "**Main Street Trainings**" on urban tree planting and care for municipalities to help them successfully integrate street trees in commercial districts.

In Delaware County, Media borough manager Jeff Smith says his town already had an active shade tree commission and was eager to increase its efforts through TreeVitalize: "When we heard about the program, it seemed like a perfect fit. We've planted trees in some of our most trafficked areas and gateways; it has helped beautify the area." DCNR foresters provide technical assistance for all planting projects outside of Philadelphia.

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TOMORROW'S TREE TENDERS

Hundreds of street trees are being planted around Philadelphia schools through TreeVitalize. Last fall, fourth grade students at the Reynolds Elementary School received lessons in tree care, read tree poems and quotes, and helped mulch 12 newly planted cherry trees in their Brewerytown neighborhood. (Trees currently shade just two percent of Brewerytown.) They were joined by DCNR secretary Mike DiBerardinis (left) and Pennsylvania Congressman Dwight Evans.

FOCUS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

PHS's Philadelphia Green program has recently begun to focus on environmental initiatives, and TreeVitalize offers a platform to address the consequences of deforestation. "Trees are such a vital part of the region's green infrastructure—our parks, open spaces, and neighborhoods," says Philadelphia Green director Maitreyi Roy. "By becoming part of the TreeVitalize partnership, Philadelphia Green can reach out to more communities and promote the value of trees on a regional level in a way that we would not be able to on our own."



Volunteers from PECO Exelon help plant trees in Philadelphia's Pennypack Park.

GET INVOLVED

To support the work of PHS and Philadelphia Green, please call 215-988-8800 or make a secure contribution online at www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org. For information

about TreeVitalize, please see www.treevitalize.net or contact Patrice Carroll at 215-988-8874 or pcarroll@pennhort.org.

