

# FUNDING CITY TREE PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE <sup>1</sup>

by Oliver D. Diller

It is an honor for me to represent a city of 19,000 on this panel. It is my purpose today to demonstrate that it is possible for a small city without much money to have a fairly good tree planting and maintenance program if a few tree-minded individuals are willing to give some free service and help guide the program and stimulate interest.

Small cities and villages have street tree problems similar to those of larger cities but the methods of funding satisfactory programs vary greatly from one community to another. Our street tree program was described very well by Dr. Paul Tilford at the 41st meeting of the International Shade Tree Conference in August, 1965. I will try to update his report today.

The Wooster Shade Tree Commission is now in its 21st year. In April, 1953 the city council passed an ordinance which established the Commission. Its duties are to *study, investigate, plan, advise, report, and recommend to Council and the Administration any action, program, plan or legislation which it finds advisable for the care, removal, or planting of trees and shrubs in public ways, streets, and alleys.*

Six years ago I received a questionnaire from a lady in Urbana, Illinois requesting information about Wooster's Shade Tree Program. Her questions were, "What combination of circumstances enabled you to establish a sound shade tree program? What steps were taken, and in what order, to launch it?" My answers to those questions will serve as the outline for this talk. The combination of circumstances which got us started in 1953 were a series of wind storms during the early 1950's and an administration and council which responded to a concerned citizenry.

Each storm would bring down a few big and rotten silver maples. Telephone and electric service were frequently interrupted so the citizens began to realize that they had a problem. This

prompted the Chamber of Commerce to request the Mayor to appoint a Shade Tree Commission. The Commission consists of the Director of Administration, City Engineer, the chairman of the Laws and Ordinances Committee of the Council and four other persons who are citizens and residents of the city and who are appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the council. The Commission is strictly advisory.

## Street tree survey

When the Commission was first organized there was no appropriation so the Chamber of Commerce contributed \$500 toward a shade tree survey. An Ohio State University student was employed for one month to list the trees by species, size, and condition which were growing in the tree lawn between the curb and sidewalk. The survey showed that Wooster had 2,592 trees between the curb and sidewalk and that one-third of them were silver maple. Fortunately, only 9% of the trees were American elms. Over 200 trees were recommended for removal although we were wise enough to realize that the removal process would have to be done gradually for physiological reasons.

## Preparation and distribution of the brochure *Street trees for Wooster*

One of the most helpful means of informing the citizens of Wooster about our program was the distribution of a brochure which was prepared by our own Dr. Paul Tilford. It explained the shade tree ordinance, outlined the objectives of our shade tree program, and gave specific suggestions as to desirable species for planting and their care. The first edition of 5,000 copies in 1954 was funded by the local light and power company and was distributed through the water office. The second edition revised in 1968 was financed by the Wayne County chapter of The Izaak Walton League of America.

<sup>1</sup>Given at the Horticulture Short Course, Columbus, Ohio, January 27, 1975.

### **Establishment of a shade tree arboretum**

In 1954 a shade tree arboretum was started on city-owned property. The purpose was to provide a place where the citizens of Wooster could go to see what particular trees are like and to help them select trees to plant on their home grounds. To date, about 70 different species and cultivars have been planted in duplicate. While the emphasis has been on selected types which require a minimum of pruning and care, some new cultivars which need further evaluation have been planted. Actually, this project has been of greater benefit to the members of the Commission than to the general public because several selections were not suitable for street and yard planting. The cost of the trees was paid privately by an interested member of the Commission while planting and maintenance were done at city expense.

### **Arbor day dogwood project**

Ever since 1956 each first grade youngster in Wooster city schools has gone home on Arbor Day with a potted dogwood seedling with instructions as to how and where to plant it. Many front and back yards in our city have several flowering dogwoods in various stages of development. Children like the idea of having their own tree and watching it grow. The Wooster Lions Club buys the seedlings and does the potting. The city pays for the paper pots and a local garden club furnishes plastic bags, bamboo stakes, and twistems. The trees are distributed to the schools by the department of education.

### **Dutch elm disease control**

The Dutch elm disease appeared in Wooster in 1949. In the late summer of 1958 the College of Wooster administrators became alarmed over the prospect of losing over 300 fine elms on the campus. The Shade Tree Commission suggested that the President of the College call a meeting of leading citizens in the community to consider what could be done to control the disease. As a result of this meeting the Mayor appointed a Wooster Citizens Elm Tree Committee and a member of the Shade Tree Commission was

chosen to be the chairman. The initial survey in 1959 indicated that we had about 4,000 elms in Wooster, 240 of which were between the curb and sidewalk. As late as 1967 the town still had 2,800 elms left. City trees were sprayed each spring until 1968 when DDT was banned. An inspector has been employed during the months of June, July, and August to scout for diseased trees ever since the program was started. During the period 1959-1969 funds to pay the inspector were contributed by the College of Wooster, garden clubs, service clubs, and other civic organizations. Since then the city has included *this in the street tree budget*. Although spraying has been discontinued, the sanitation program is continuing and limited experiments on the use of *Benlate* have been conducted in cooperation with the USDA Shade Tree and Ornamental Plants lab at Delaware, Ohio.

### **Tree removal, planting, and pruning**

City Hall has provided modest but dependable appropriations for street tree care, removal, and replacement for the past 20 years. During the past two years an appropriation of around \$15,000 per year has been available. This amounts to about 80 cents per capita.

Tree removal is done by a local tree service company, usually during the late fall and winter months when city street maintenance crews are available to dispose of the brush. This reduces cost of tree removal by about 50%. The list of trees to be removed or pruned is prepared by the chairman of the tree care committee who makes a detailed inspection on foot.

Similarly, the chairman of the tree planting committee along with other members of the Commission decides where new trees should be planted and a list is prepared and submitted to the Director of Administration in November. Trees are ordered in December or early January from commercial nurseries and planted the following spring by the same tree service company which does tree removal.

Since 1954, the city has planted an average of 55 street trees per year or a total of 1,100 trees to date. Population growth of street trees has been about zero but during this period defective

specimens of less desirable species have been replaced with better trees.

In addition to the 1,100 street trees which have been planted, over 11,000 dogwood seedlings have been distributed through the first grade Arbor Day project. Even with an estimated 50% survival, the flowering dogwoods are giving Wooster the reputation of being a dogwood city. In fact, in 1969 Wooster was officially recognized as the dogwood city by the Ohio General Assembly and Wooster City Council.

### **New shade tree nursery**

In the spring of 1973 the city established a shade tree nursery on city-owned land. Two hundred small trees of Greenspire linden, hawthorn, and six cultivars of crabapples were planted in checkerboard pattern at 12 x 12-foot spacing. In 1974, 267 additional trees of 13 different species and varieties were planted in this area. Two hundred and thirty-five trees have been ordered for the spring of 1975. The purpose is to purchase trees of smaller sizes at nominal cost and to have them available for planting along city streets and in our parks in the future.

### **Recognition of beautification projects**

During recent years the chairman of the public relations committee has arranged for a

series of feature stories under the title *It makes for a beautiful Wooster* to be published in the Wooster Daily Record. These articles gave recognition to business establishments which did a good job of landscaping. Examples were a car wash, hardware, two banks, a clothing store, a shopping center, and the Daily Record Office building. Also, a year-end report of the activities of the Commission was published in the January 3, 1975 issue of The Daily Record. In addition, one of the members of the Commission who is a professional landscape horticulturist prepared plans and supervised the landscaping of a new city maintenance facility. He also prepared a landscape plan for a proposed minipark.

### **Conclusion**

Since 1954 the City of Wooster, Ohio has been able to carry on a modest but consistent shade tree planting and maintenance program because of the support it has received from the city administration and the general public. The three elements necessary for any successful tree program in cities regardless of size are interested citizens, responsive administrators, and capable advisors.

*Chairman, Wooster Shade Tree Commission  
Wooster Ohio*

## **ABSTRACT**

Himelick, E. B. 1974. **Fundamental diagnostic procedures in arboriculture.** Proc. Midwestern Chapter, I.S.T.C. 29: 21-43.

To be an effective diagnostician a person should have the ability to recall information and experiences and associate these with the problem at hand. To verify the observations and diagnostic data taken, reference books and other publications often are necessary and indispensable in making a final field diagnosis. The most highly trained diagnosticians will usually refer without hesitation to one or more publications to verify their diagnosis. The art of diagnosing is acquired by a combination of training and field experience. The best diagnostician is one who is richest in knowledge, experience, and associations drawn from a multitude of tree problems with which he has had to deal. The tree or trees should be periodically examined to determine if the diagnosis was correct or incorrect. This adds to your experience, and builds confidence in your ability to diagnose.