

# THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL TREE PLANTING INITIATIVE<sup>1</sup>

by Fred Deneke

Less than a decade ago a 30 to 65 million dollar program of urban and community forestry was little more than a dream. Today it is on the verge of reality with the President's proposed Community Trees element of his America The Beautiful Initiative. The Forest Service and the State Foresters are charged with implementing and leading this important Presidential initiative. With Presidential leadership and the large sums of monies involved, it is essential that we exercise "statemanship" in our leadership. In doing so, it will be important to stretch beyond our boundaries and keep in mind some key leadership points.

## Seek Cooperator/Partner Ownership in Programs

Statesmanship means rather than lead our partners, lead *with* our partners. This will involve giving authority and power over to our partners in the process. That does not mean abdicating our responsibility for administering a sound program as required by law. It does mean fully living up to the responsibility of providing for input and participation from our partners and cooperators in designing and carrying out the program. From my experience, when you give away your ownership and power in true sharing, that power returns to you many fold and manifests itself in public support for our role as leaders and role as an organization.

The Urban Forestry Committee of the National Association of State Foresters is on record as recommending to their fellow State Foresters four key requirements that should go a long way towards implementing this leadership point. They are recommending that State Foresters 1) have a full time, state level coordinator for urban and community forestry, 2) have a State wide Urban and Community Forestry Council, 3) develop a State level plan, and 4) give leadership to helping to coordinate volunteer tree planting and care efforts.

State Foresters who incorporate the spirit of becoming one with the State Council in designing and implementing their programs will be highly successful. This will mean involving the Council in helping to shape programs and actually asking the Council to help determine program and funding priorities. The result will be partners who have ownership and a stake in a State's urban and community forestry program as they will see it as "their" program. This type of involvement will eventually lead to State level funding for expanded urban and community forestry programs that will last beyond the five year time span of this current Presidential initiative.

## Share Resources

We have just emerged from a dearth of funding support for all State and Private programs not just urban and community forestry. The tendency under such times is to guard turf and resources carefully holding them very close to the vest.

We must recognize that there will be a tendency to continue in the "old" pattern of protecting our turf and financial resources. We have partners such as State Extension Services, city foresters, planning and zoning commissions, landscape architects, State level nursery and arboriculture organizations, and volunteer groups who have complementary strengths, skills and networks that make for successful urban and community forestry initiatives. Recognize and use their strengths and networks in support of urban and community forestry programs. It will be important for us to stretch and reach out and share resources with our partners and cooperators.

**Rise to Opportunities.** Maintaining a "New Frontier" mentality is fundamental to the success of any future program. It will be important to stay on the cutting edge and remember that progress is tied to the concept of seizing opportunities when they arise. As in the movie *Dead Poets' Society* "Seize the moment!" if you will. The op-

1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in Toronto in August 1990.

portunity is before us: *PRESIDENTIAL INTEREST IN TREES!!!* It has occurred only two other times in the past 100 years: Theodore Roosevelt in the late 1800's, and Franklin Delanor Roosevelt with the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's.

**Mix tradition with innovation.** Now is the time to take some new approaches to implementing state level urban and community forestry programs. We will need to take some calculated risks. Challenge yourself to "see things differently" so you can "do things differently". Examples might be in the way of staffing and stretching resources as follows. Here are just a few ideas for consideration:

- Contract with city foresters or Extension offices in key cities to provide technical support to volunteer groups in their tree related endeavors.
- Contract with a successful volunteer leader to work with emerging volunteer groups in other cities in enhancing their organizational and motivational skills.
- Fund a university extension group or the Junior League to develop volunteer leaders at the community level for tree related endeavors.
- Rather than staffing an urban forestry specialist in a traditional district State Forester office, house the position with a city forester or key volunteer group.
- Work with universities and offer training to consulting arborists and foresters on the latest technologies in tree planting and care. Then cost-share funds with local communities so they can contract for services from a well trained cadre of consultants.
- Contract with State-level conservation groups or state extension services to develop and distribute educational and I&E programs and materials.

**Involve volunteer leaders and new partners.** Traditionally we have tended to work only within existing formal "tree related" organizations in our urban and community forestry programs (e.g. city governments). I can remember not too long ago that volunteer groups were looked upon as less than professional and, though well intended, almost a misguided nuisance in urban and community forestry programs. In the past decade, many of these groups have become a powerful force in support of urban and community forestry programs. We are now recognizing that the

development of successful ongoing urban and community forestry programs involves developing local support and ownership of citizens.

Community government support of trees is best developed in concert with developing community understanding and support. I harken back to the early days of urban and community forestry in Kansas. The first phase of program development/involvement was to create local tree boards (volunteers) who then worked on the city council to pass ordinances and fund programs. It will be essential that leading volunteer tree groups are included on the State level councils. The President's tree planting initiative presents an opportunity as never before to involve new partners and expand and strengthen existing relationships with our traditional partners. Don't overlook any and all new potential partners and *remember*, the President's initiative calls for expanded involvement of volunteers in tree related endeavors.

**Restate the value of trees in forests in light of public concerns.** Last, but not least, in view of the prediction of global climate change and deterioration of the ozone layer, trees and vegetation are finally being recognized in a consensus acceptance of their importance in terms of public health and welfare. The issues of the day have given us an opportunity as never before to *communicate the values of urban vegetation to the public and to decision-makers in terms of the public health and welfare* rather than environmental amenities or niceties that can be cut at the first sign of budget shortfalls. We have an important leadership role in insuring that we expand our research and other efforts to make once and for all the strong tie between healthy trees and forests and healthy people and societies.

## Conclusions

Successfully implementing the President's Tree Planting initiative will require strategic planning. And a strategic plan must first entail a vision. Here is a vision statement we propose for the national initiative. It is expressed in terms of change in condition/health/quality of individuals, communities and the natural environment and came through some collective thinking from a partner in the Minnesota Extension Service. People act individually and together in communities to exert control over the quality of their lives, and they see the "natural

environment" as one of the factors influencing individual and community health through environmental health (Environmental health as a means to achieving community health). The vision is:

**SUSTAINED, HEALTHY TREES AND FORESTS AND THEIR ATTENDANT RESOURCES FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL BEING OF PEOPLE**

An accompanying goal we have developed is:

**CITIZENS AND GROUPS, LOCAL JURISDICTIONS AND PROFESSIONALS EMPOWERED AND WORKING TOGETHER TO SUSTAIN HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH HEALTHY COMMUNITY TREES AND FORESTS**

In a recent article in *Arbor Age*, Bailey Hudson, City Parks Director in Santa Maria, California remarked "we can only enhance our sense of the future by examining the forces of change that surround us. We need to recognize and understand the origin of these changes and where these transformations are headed, so that we can make adjustments accordingly."

What are the forces of these changes? In his book on *In Search Of Excellence* Tom Peters makes the point that fads move from the coasts in-

ward and rarely last whereas trends have their beginnings at the grassroots and then move to the national scene tend to last over longer periods of time resulting in real movement or change on the part of societies.

I submit to you, that the trend evidence for the present environmental awareness and activism and its resultant focus on tree protection and tree planting could be found in virtually every local newspaper. Whether it be harvesting of "old growth" timber, "new perspectives" in the Forest Service, support for tree planting in our nation's cities and communities, or retention of forest cover in the face of development, all are resulting from a public increasingly interested and involved in what is happening to the environment and much more attuned to an understanding of the "web of life" or biological interrelationships.

We, in turn, must recognize the "deep rooted" origin of the current wide support and interest in President's program and give strength to it by giving attention to involvement, or if you will, our interrelationships with others in the process of implementation.

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**ABSTRACT**

FUNK, R. 1990. **Fertilizer basics I. Understanding fertilizer content.** *Am. Nurseryman* 172(11): 55, 58-63.

Woody plants require at least 16 elements for proper growth and development. For optimal health, the plants must receive sufficient amounts of these nutrients — either from the environment or through supplemental fertilization. Air and water provide three elements, carbon, hydrogen and oxygen. The macronutrients nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are often called the primary nutrients because plants require relatively large amounts of these elements. Calcium, magnesium and sulfur are also considered macronutrients. Used in smaller quantities, but no less important, are the micronutrients: iron, manganese, copper, zinc, boron, molybdenum, chlorine and cobalt. Because not every soil contains sufficient macronutrients and micronutrients, horticultural professionals use fertilizer to provide for the plants' needs. Fertilizer is any material that supplements the soils supply of the elements required for plant growth and development.