

D. Tree Maintenance and Care

Bernards Township recognizes that trees need general wellness care and not just emergency care. A proactive plan of routine scheduled maintenance will ensure a healthy, aesthetically pleasing and cost effective urban forest with a reduced hazard potential.

This management plan aims to provide a framework that will benefit and raise the level of care for all township-owned trees and trees along township thoroughfares. This care begins with young trees. Within 5 years of planting, structural pruning cycles begin to train young trees to establish good form. Trees with good structural form reduce potential liabilities and maintenance costs in the future. Continued maintenance on established and mature trees should reduce the risk of hazardous situations and increase tree life spans, generating benefits to the community. Routine maintenance also provides opportunities for closer inspection of upper tree canopies and a chance to identify and correct potential problems.

1. Goals:

- a. To install healthy, viable trees into the existing landscape and help them to establish as quickly as possible to insure longevity.
- b. Train and develop young trees with good structure.
- c. Maintain the health and extend the useful life span of existing trees.
- d. Encourage re-growth and natural repopulation by encouraging and supporting deer herd management programs
- e. Promote public safety with regard to trees on township properties and rights-of-way.
- f. Maintain the maximum benefit of trees in the most cost effective manner.
- g. Review and revise all tree related ordinances as necessary consistent with Township Committee standards.
- h. Educate the public with regard to trees and their benefits and care.

2. Action Statements

The following action steps will be taken to accomplish the goals during 2013-2017:

- a. Require quality planting material from internal departments and outside contractors when annual planting is conducted or when bonding requirements are met. Hire a Certified Tree Expert to examine plant material before planting occurs.
- b. Windshield surveys have been completed for all eight designated zones. At least two zones will be surveyed each year.
- c. Work with utility companies to develop a removal and replacement program to eliminate future hazards and tree line conflicts.
- d. Seek additional funds and grants for hiring of private contractors for general tree care needs beyond the scope of county and utility cooperation.
- e. Continue to seek cooperation from Somerset County tree crews to establish a routine pruning cycle in Bernards Township.
- f. Continue to work with DPW on structural pruning of young trees and remedial

- pruning based on assessments of the current windshield survey by the Shade Tree Commissioners.
- g. Expand the Shade Tree Commission website to include FAQ by homeowners. Develop letters to the editor in local newspaper to inform the public of the Shade Tree Commission's progress and also general tree care tips.
- h. Monitor Rutgers disease and insect alerts.

Shade Tree Management Plan Implementation

E. Timeline for the years 2013-2017

Year 1, 2013

- ⇒ Review at the annual organization meeting (typically the first regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the STC) the goals for the upcoming year as set forth in the current Community Forestry Management Plan.
- ⇒ Continue the windshield survey hazard tree assessment to identify existing hazards in the first two zones, starting over from the beginning, to complete all eight management zones. This hazard assessment will be carried out by the Public Works department, The Shade Tree Commission and a hired CTE consultant.
- ⇒ Continue already established tree planting projects. The Shade Tree Commission with the help of the DPW will continue to plant approximately 50 trees per year plus incidental planting and special projects such as Arbor Day. Planting will also be done through bonding requirements from developments.
- ⇒ Identify potential projects and educational opportunities related to the hydrologic cycle and water quality that might benefit from selective tree plantings as well as the preservation of existing trees and native vegetation.
- ⇒ Continue yearly public relations activities, such as Tree City USA recertification, Arbor Day celebrations, newspaper and on-line articles, Sunshine Law notifications, Charter Day and updating township website with activities. Apply for Tree Planting Grant or tree planting money from CSIP.
- ⇒ Investigate methods to improve the street tree inventory.
- ⇒ Perform an annual review of tree ordinances and recommend any changes as needed.
- ⇒ Have a booth at the annual township Charter Day to provide public outreach and education as well as gather information from residents requesting tree work or plantings.
- ⇒ Send two or more people from the Shade Tree Commission and Public Works representatives as well to the New Jersey Shade Tree Federation Annual Meeting for CORE training and CEU's. Continue to support the training programs for the Public Works Department with the use of outside consultants and safety trainers.
- ⇒ Develop an inventory of historic and otherwise significant trees in Bernards Township.
- ⇒ Continue to develop a working relationship with the local utility company to begin a proactive tree removal and replacement program underneath overhead conductors.
- ⇒ Maintain good working relationships with other committees and commissions within Bernards Township.
- ⇒ Submit an Annual Accomplishment Report to NJ Forest Service.
- ⇒ Respond to resident inquiries and requests on tree issues throughout the community.