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UEC Urban Forestry Practitioners Share All!

Urban forestry is one important way of connecting cities to the environment, so it's appropriate that the Urban Ecology Collaborative's Urban Forestry workgroup should be featured in this Special Issue of *Cities and the Environment*.

Keywords

urban forestry, UEC, Urban Ecology Collaborative

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Of course, in an important sense, as my teenage son is always adamantly reminding us, there is no division between any human habitat – whether urban, suburban, or rural – and “the environment,” of which all are a part. And it's thinking like that that gives many of us hope that “environmentalism” can extend to the cities, which may or may not be our species' salvation, depending on your point of view. Those of us engaged in the field of urban forestry are certainly committed to that endeavor.

Formed in 2002 to create an active “community of interest” on such matters, the Urban Ecology Collaborative (UEC) encompasses eight northeastern U.S. cities. These are, from north to south, Boston, Providence, New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh (a slight detour to the west), Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. While active participation in the UEC Urban Forestry group varies over time, we maintain representation from each of those cities – and when possible, from across sectors, including municipal agencies as well as nonprofit entities. State, federal, and academic partners are also involved. Of course, at times our very success at maintaining full participation can make conference calls somewhat challenging – not a bad problem to have.

As the list of last year's topics indicates (see Table 1), we cover some broad ground during our monthly conference calls – everything from Arbor Day activities to million-tree planting programs. Typically, an urban forestry practitioner from one city takes the lead on the featured topic by sharing the local experience. That's followed by a round robin exchange among all others on the call, highlighting experiences that may be comparable or vastly different. Those commonalities and variations are precisely what make the UEC network so valuable to its participants. After all, there is no single ideal solution to any given urban forestry issue; it's most helpful to have an assortment of “best practices” to choose from and adapt to local circumstances.

Table 1. Urban Ecology Collaborative (UEC) Urban Forestry Working Group 2012 Topics
The Urban Forestry Working Group gathers monthly with a conference call, a webinar, or an in-person meeting.

Month	Presentation	Organization
Jan	Urban Waters Meeting in New York, NY	NYC Parks/ USFS hosted
Feb	Ash – Urban Wood Utilization	USFS
Mar	Who Wants to Adopt One Million Trees?	NYC Parks
Apr	Role of Tree Preservation & Management in Realizing Urban Canopy Goals	SavATree
May	Celebrating Arbor Day Tales from UEC Partners	UEC Roundtable
Jun	Green Jobs Programs	URI
Jul	Building Community Through Tree Giveaways	NYRP
Aug	Annual Meeting in Washington, DC and Berryville, VA	Casey Trees hosted
Sept	Pittsburgh's Urban Forest Master Plan	Tree Pittsburgh
Oct	Best Practices	UEC Roundtable
Nov	Urban Waters	SavATree
Dec	TreePhilly Campaign Summary	TreePhilly

In addition to its monthly calls, the UEC Urban Forestry group makes a point of gathering face-to-face over two days each summer, rotating among the participating cities. The opportunities for in-depth presentations, peer-to-peer networking, and general camaraderie during these much-anticipated gatherings create and strengthen the bonds that keep the UEC community going throughout the year.

Appearing in this Special Issue of *Cities and the Environment* gives us the chance to reach colleagues well beyond our usual geographic boundaries in hopes that we can share useful information and perhaps inspiration. The Practitioner's Notes and research report published here are offered in that spirit of collaboration. Each article addresses a pressing concern in urban forestry and models a possible approach to consider. This includes observations, case studies, trial and error experimentation, and the like. In addition, the cross-comparison charts (see Tables 2a and b accessed via Supplemental Content), characterize each city's urban forestry program on an array of factors.

Notably, *Cities and the Environment* itself originated through the UEC before branching out on its own. This Special Issue is a homecoming reunion of sorts. We hope you find it informative and perhaps provocative. For more information about the UEC Urban Forestry group, contact either of the current co-chairs, Sarah Tobing (Sarah.Tobing@parks.nyc.gov) or Erica Smith (Erica.Smith@phila.gov).

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