

Trees for Capitol Hill Is Now Online

Margaret Missiaen, Vice-President, TFCH

Thanks to generous funding from the National Capital Bank, and the efforts of volunteer, Mark Grace, you can follow us online at <http://treesforcapitolhill.org>. Newsletter articles, photos and other information will be posted on our website. If you would like to add your email address to our list, please send it to missiaen@verizon.net with 'TFCH email list' in the subject line.

Our professional newsletter designer, Barbara Richey, who donated her time for many years, moved to Seattle with her husband Greg. For 15 years, they contributed thousands of hours to making our neighborhood a better place to live. They served on our Board of Directors and made our tree plantings fun for all. We miss them very much. We are making a direct appeal for more volunteers; please contact us if you can help. Publishing skills would be particularly appreciated.

Tree of the Year

Elizabeth Nelson

The neighbors on the 1300 block of North Carolina Ave. NE are thrilled to have their beloved “Monster Tree” chosen as the 2011 Tree of the year. Its selection caps their multi-year campaign to secure the honor. This enormous Willow Oak spans a full five yards, providing shade in the summer and serving as a snack bar and “squirrel condominium” to generations of these hardy urban rodents.

The new steward (one hesitates to say “owner”) of this leafy giant, Bill Mullins, inherited this treasure with the purchase of his new home. Bill credits the tree with creating a quiet oasis on a fairly busy street but referred me to his neighbor, Gloria Junge, who has been the tree’s number-one fan since she moved onto the block two decades ago.

Gloria loves everything about the tree, crediting it with lowered cooling costs and improved air quality. But mostly she admires its “personality”. She and her African Grey parrots can be found enjoying many a summer evening under its canopy. The birds love company, so be sure to wave and say “hi” if you happen past.



Massive willow oak on the 1300 block of North Carolina Ave., NE

Tree Planting—a Towering Success

Margaret Missiaen, Vice-President, TFCH

The first Saturday in November turned out to be a perfect tree planting day with temps in the 50's. In most locations the ground was soft and the digging easy after recent rains. At all the sites, the holes were dug before Rich Cottrell and Tony Lopez arrived with the truck load of trees from Merrifield Garden Center. Trees for Capitol Hill and the District's Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) coordinate our plantings to make sure that we do not try planting in the same locations. UFA budgets for 400 street trees in each ward each year but cannot come close to filling all the empty spaces.

Trees for planting are chosen in October from Merrifield's extensive inventory of 8-10' shade trees. This year volunteers selected a wide variety of trees, including oaks, London plane trees (a close relative of the sycamore), maples, crape myrtles, and a seedless sweet gum. In the past, we were constrained by the designated species plan developed for each street in the 1870's. Many of you will remember the beautiful arching American elms in the 600 block of North Carolina. As we now know when disease strikes, all of the mature trees lining a street die within a few years. East Capitol is losing its mature elms very rapidly. With a wider variety of trees planted along the streets, some of the trees will be resistant should a new disease arrive.

It was barely light when Beth Purcell and I arrived at 703 D Street, SE to wait for Merrifield's big, red truck. The hole was ready for the scarlet oak that would replace a dogwood that survived only a few years. We are hoping this tree will be the permanent replacement for the large linden that fell during hurricane Isabel in 2003. Around the corner on 7th Street, Angela Scott led the effort plant a London plane tree near a lovely old sycamore. Plane trees are a hybrid of the Asian and American sycamores and will develop lovely white bark as the tree matures.

London plane trees were also planted in the 200 block of 4th Street, SE. As I descended from the truck, I was greeted by a crowd of tree planters and well-wishers, including David Glaser and John Gordon from the National Capital Bank. Everyone posed for a photo as Mr. Glaser presented Trees for Capitol Hill officers with a check for \$3,000. Our youngest volunteer, Henry Gould, was there with his parents. Henry planted daffodil bulbs around the tree.

The next tree in a triangle park in the 1800 block of Potomac Ave. will be cared for Bob Dalton who lives adjacent to the park. The swamp white oak was pleased with its location in the middle of large grassy area. I'm sure the other trees in 9' by 4' tree boxes are envious. The new tree has only



Youngest volunteer plants bulbs



Henry's bulbs in bloom

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to look down the block to see the magnificent role model just inside the gates of Congressional Cemetery.

Cries of “The truck is here! The truck is here!” greeted us at the corner of 15th and A Streets, NE. Basil Kempton had been waiting a long time for his new tree to arrive. He lives a half a block away but spotted us as soon as we turned the corner. We quickly planted a scarlet oak near the corner and moved down the block to plant a seedless sweet gum in front of Basil’s house.

A few bright red leaves clung to the branches of the maple we planted next to the bus stop in the 1500 block of C Street, NE. This specimen will be a star on a block with few street trees. People waiting at the bus stop commented that the shade will be appreciated during summer.

The 1300 block of Constitution Ave. NE and the adjacent park are becoming a mini arboretum with the help of Elizabeth Nelson and the North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association. A single-trunked Biloxi crape myrtle and a black gum joined the collection that included a larch and dawn redwood planted last year. Elizabeth maintains her upper body strength by carrying water to a dozen or more trees each summer.

Two trees were planted along Tennessee Ave.—a red buckeye in a triangle park and a zelkova in the 200 block. Chris McIntyre had hired someone to remove a large stump and dig a giant hole for his new tree. He even removed the liriopie from the tree box to make sure all the water goes to the tree. The last stop was the park at 7th and Mass., NE where 3 crape myrtles replaced hawthorn trees that died.



This red maple will shelter the bus stop at 15th and C Sts. NE



TFCH Treasurer, Margaret Missiaen receives a check from David Glaser of National Capital Bank



The Kempton family and friend welcome their new seedless sweet gum tree

What's a Tree Worth?

Mark Grace

This can be a precise question with factors of purchase price, transportation costs, start-up and maintenance, appreciation etc., or a broad question with factors of personal aesthetics, placement, or sentimental attachment. For those of you who like the precise, I direct you to an actual “tree benefit calculator” <http://www.treebenefits.com/calculator>. A handy tool to have courtesy of the Washington, D.C.'s own Casey Trees and Davey Tree Expert Company.

Yet for fun and this article's purpose, let's consider a variety of measures of value; the price paid on that nice little flowering ornamental over at Frager's, the carbon footprint and CO2 offset calculation taken from one of those ancient East Capitol Street elms, the small blessings given when you and friends take a walk down a shaded sidewalk. Include the negative gauge by considering the responsibility and cost when removing a sick tree, that one needing pruning and watering. Maybe it's diseased, slowly dying, looming like an angry monster over the windows of your home or car.

My personal understanding of a “tree's worth” was deepened when I decided to volunteer with “Trees for Capitol Hill” (TFCH), a local organization of neighbors and businesses giving worth to my neighborhood. It is a group where I see immediate benefits with longitudinal benefits. I already was appreciative of living under a healthy, varied leaf canopy. I saw a soothing, quality of life value in the Hill's shady streets, undeniably drawn to their calming feel on those thick, “like wearing a wet blanket” sun-stroke inducing Summer days. And, I really liked that my home's market value took on a positive price difference because of its location on a block with both old and young trees.

A good thing about trees is they are indifferent to who takes their benefits. When I help in a TFCH planting day (typically the third Saturday in November) I know the trees planted will, without prejudice, consume unhealthy air from the atmosphere just as they will release healthy air back. So, being part of a “global society” isn't just by my commercial purchases it's in my volunteer efforts. My own “tree value proposition” is pretty rich after becoming involved with TFCH.

Finally, a tree's value ultimately has no definite answer. When asked, we might each give a different response. The point of asking though is to spark one's curiosity in the value proposition of a tree, to put a personal value to trees. When I asked neighbors they didn't give it too much thought. I'll aggregate their answers and go the easy route by saying they saw the value as “a lot!” Responses ranged from “they help the environment, plant more!” Or, “the dogs seem to like them” to, “can you imagine our cooling bills without that great shade?”

But there was one response that did catch me off guard and made me really reflect on the value of a tree. It was from a neighbor who reminisced on the number of parties, big and small, held under a certain backyard tree and how, if she could, she would ask that tree to remember and reminisce with her about all the stories told beneath it. It was a sweet thought to think how that tree could be the quiet recorder of her family history.



Beth Purcell, John McLaughlin, Rich Cottrell (Merrifield) planting at 3rd and D Sts. NE, April 1997



Elms and Zelkovas planted by TFCH in the 1990's now shade the 1300 block of North Carolina Ave NE

Tale of Two Trees

Margaret Missiaen, Vice-President, TFCH

I remember seeing the stakes that protected the newly planted American elms next to the SE Library when I moved to South Carolina Ave. in 1980. At that time South Carolina had several mature elms. Over the years all but one of the old elms succumbed to Dutch elm disease. The remaining large elm near 6th St. is near the end of its life. The young trees next to the library never thrived. The final blow was the replacement of the sidewalks a few years ago. The dead trees were removed last year, and two sturdy, new Valley Forge elms were planted by Casey Trees in January.

Casey Trees has taken the lead in planting disease resistant elms along Capitol Hill Streets, beginning with Barracks Row in December 2003. You will also find newly planted elms along Independence and Constitution Avenues. Casey Trees elms are easily identified by the cloth ties used to secure the stakes to the tree trunk. The Urban Forestry Administration—part of the DC Department of Transportation—is responsible for planting and caring for all other street trees.

I am making a public vow to ensure the survival of the two new trees on the south side of the Library. The critical task is to water them during dry spells for the next two summers. The Casey Trees website (Caseytrees.org) posts moisture conditions each Monday during the growing season, eliminating the guess work in monitoring rainfall. There are also recommendations on the amount and frequency of watering. The easy way to water is to place a watering bag around the tree and fill it once a week when needed. A garden hose connected to a nearby water source makes this job easy. I'll talk to my neighbors about connecting my hose to their house.

The city's Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) has planted hundreds of new trees on Capitol Hill this winter. Look for trees with wires attached to stakes. This method of protecting the trees has not been used by the Urban Forestry Administration for several years. All the staked street trees will need water this summer. You can help by adopting a tree near your home. Trees for Capitol Hill has watering bags for new trees. If you want one, contact Margaret Missiaen (Missiaen@verizon.net).



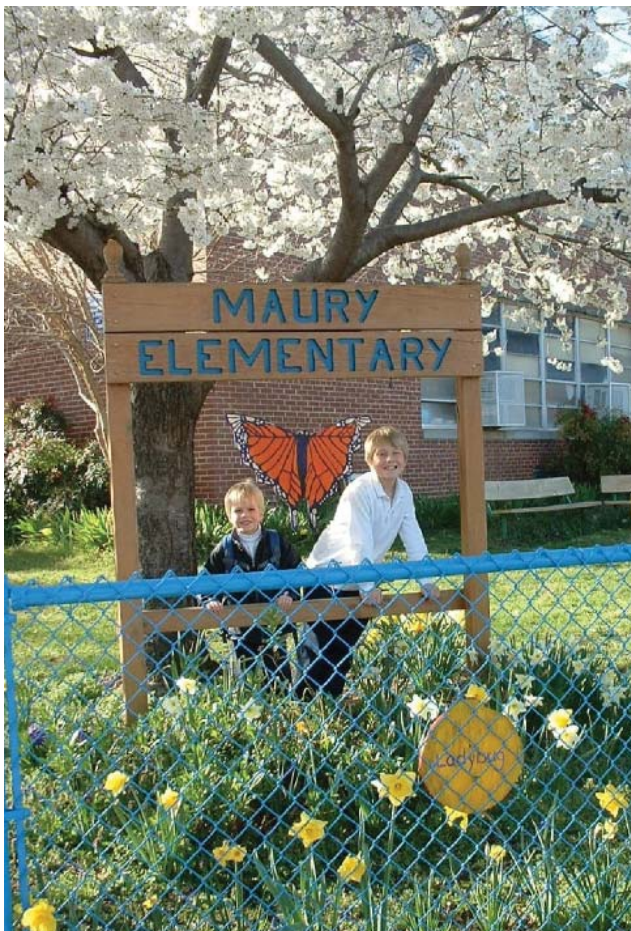
Newly planted Valley Forge Elm near the Southeast Branch Library



Deliciously full Tregator

Trees For Capitol Hill
647 South Carolina Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20003

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Trees For Capitol Hill

Who we are:

Trees for Capitol, Inc., a DC nonprofit corporation founded in 1991, is dedicated to enhancing our neighborhood by planting and caring for trees in public spaces. Our funding comes from generous grants from the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, the National Capital Bank and individual donors. We are a 501(c)(3) corporation.

To make a contribution, send a check made out to “Trees for Capitol Hill” to 647 South Carolina Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20003.

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