

Urban and Community Forestry Program

2016 Accomplishment Report – Connecticut

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Introduction

Connecticut is a heavily forested State that is also highly urbanized. More than 3.5 million people live on approximately 3.1 million acres of land, of which roughly 1.8 million acres (58 percent) are forested. About 73 percent of the land area is under tree cover. The State continues to become more and more urban, with 80 percent of the population living in urban or suburban environments. Connecticut is also a strong home-rule State that has 169 separate municipalities, each of which has full responsibility for local government. This emphasis on local self-governance can make urban forestry a very absorbing local activity within the State.

Key Accomplishments

Response to the Emerald Ash Borer

In 2012, the emerald ash borer was found for the first time in Connecticut (figure 1). Representatives from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Division of Forestry, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension, USDA APHIS, and the U.S. Forest Service worked to educate communities, organize field tours, produce informational sheets, and sponsor training sessions. However, they found that hurdles, such as town budget issues, tended to blunt the sense of urgency they were trying to communicate. Towns were not moving from a discussion of general need to a commitment to local action.

To address this, an Emerald Ash Borer Worksheet was developed by the Connecticut DEEP Division of Forestry, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Connecticut Urban Forest Council. Through a seven-step process, a municipality develops a plan of action that is locally specific in its details. The plan starts with a determination of the number of ash trees in the community and then moves on to determining which trees might be saved and the costs associated with the various options for treatment.

The Connecticut Urban Forest Council also provided small grants to assist three communities with these time-consuming assessments. Hartford has developed preliminary numbers on the costs it will face in dealing with the city's approximately 800 ash trees. Sprague, a smaller and more rural community, found that it had about 550 ash trees that it needed to deal with and is beginning to review cost options. The results will provide a good model for many of the other towns and cities in the State.

The Latest Emerald Ash Borer Map for Connecticut

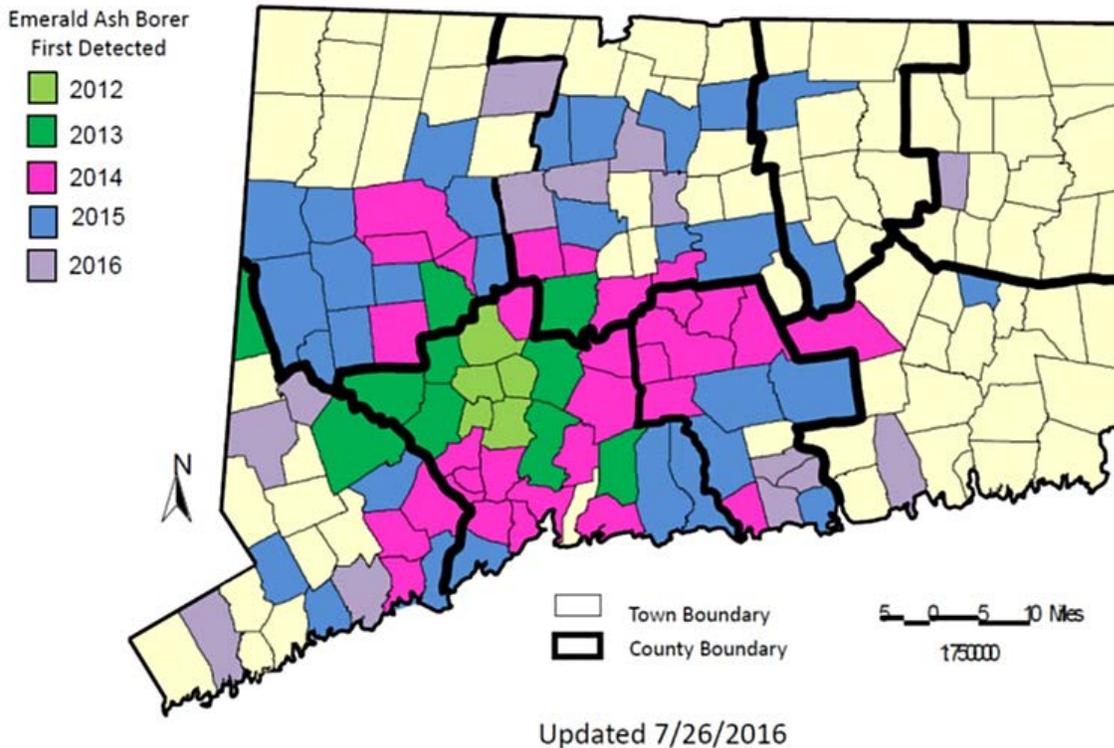


Figure 1. Latest Connecticut emerald ash borer infestation map.

Connecticut Tree Wardens Celebrate 25th Anniversary

In April 2017, the Tree Wardens Association of Connecticut (TWAC) celebrated its 25th anniversary. This milestone comes at a time when the organization is getting not only bigger, but better. The organization has come a long ways in its first quarter century and expects to go even further in the decades to come.

In 1992, the office of the tree warden in each town was fairly isolated. While State statute required that each municipality appoint a tree warden, there were no standards or qualifications established for the position and little description of the expected duties. In many cities and towns, the position of tree warden was *pro forma*, tacked on to a municipal employee's other responsibilities. For the person who was tree warden, there existed little opportunity to discuss experiences and problems with peers.

The founders of TWAC took this on as a challenge. Led by Bob Ricard of the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension, these tree wardens laid the foundation for an organization that would encourage sharing among tree wardens, provide educational opportunities, and work to better define the tree warden's proper role.

And it worked. Over the years, a great deal of assistance has been provided through the Urban Forestry Program within Connecticut DEEP, including via grants issued by the State agency and funded by the U.S. Forest Service. However, the vast bulk of what has been accomplished has come from the internal effort of the tree wardens themselves.

A short list of the notable accomplishments of the TWAC would include these:

- Establishing a school for educating tree wardens
- Determining the basic standards for what is needed for someone to be a “certified tree warden”
- Working with the legislature to see these standards converted into legally recognized standards for “qualified tree wardens”
- Seeing Connecticut go from a patchy number of more or less capable tree wardens to well over 90 percent qualified tree wardens
- Becoming fully independent financially and structurally as an organization
- Boasting a growing membership of a new generation of tree wardens whose enthusiasm for the organization is based in a personal identity in the title and the office and who look to continue the good work of TWAC

Statistical Highlights

Managing Communities:	31
Developing Communities:	132
Population of Participating Communities:	3,500,028
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	14,750

