



The Acorn

Winter 2009
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Urban Forestry and the Economy: Feeling the Effect of the Financial Crisis

We are all aware of the current economic state of our country and the effect it has had on millions of Americans. But have you ever sat back and wondered if and how the crisis is impacting urban forestry? While you might not want to hear this, it is. Local governments, tree care companies, landscapers and nurseries have all been hit by the economic hardship. We contacted several Council members, representing different spectrums of urban forestry, and asked them to share how they have been effected. Here is what they had to say...

The Government: If you are a government employee in the state of South Carolina, it would be safe to assume that you are effected by the current state of our economy. Many governments have gone to great lengths to save money by prohibiting travel, initiating hiring freezes and furloughing up to five days a year. Municipal Urban Forestry divisions find themselves unable to fulfill their work requirements because they are unable to recruit, hire and train qualified employees. The City of Charleston has recently reduced overtime by half, which has the potential to negatively impact its public trees. It is anticipated that 20-25 large trees will not be maintained properly, and more than 100 young trees will not be trained pruned. The City of Rock Hill, though not directly impacted by the economy at this time, finds itself in a “buyer’s market” for contracting out projects, with most bids coming in with extremely competitive pricing.

Tree Care Companies: The “buyer’s market” results from companies competing for limited jobs by offering reduced rates. With limited revenue, many companies are forced to layoff labor, which reduces their ability to solicit large-scale, high-paying jobs. Throw in the mix that several companies are in debt to banks and financial institutions, and there is no question why they are forced to close their doors.

Landscapers: Luckily for landscape companies, grass will always continue to grow, but turf and other plant installations are suffering. Unfortunately, many developers and companies have either reduced or omitted landscaping from their projects. As the demand for services decreases, landscape companies layoff crews, who then turn around and open their own small-scale, independent landscaping company, creating more competition with lower prices and compromised quality.

Nurseries: Many find themselves slashing prices in order to move the product. One local nursery has cut back on making large purchases of chemicals, liners and other supplies, opting to purchase only necessary items. Its owner admits that sales, though off considerably from this time last year, have been steady. He contributes this to their bullish approach and competitive prices. No one has been laid off, but hours have been reduced and they are now closed on Fridays. Nurseries throughout the state are concerned because with the decrease in landscaping projects, the toughest times are still to come.

We are told that our economy will actually get worse before it gets better. Experts are forecasting that it will take a year to hit rock bottom, at which time we can begin building back up. What can we, as stewards of urban forestry, do in the meantime? Governments may turn to more “in house” or local training until travel restrictions are rescinded. Supervisors may need to work harder on short-term strategic planning and morale building in order to encourage employees to “do more with less.”

Hopefully, commercial tree care companies will be able to educate their clients that it is better for them to use ethical, knowledgeable arborists than to cut corners by hiring undertrained folks who could end up creating a hazardous situation or costing more within a short period of time. Nurseries will continue to offer bargain prices. We can help by taking advantage of these bargains and buy plant materials from them.

As with commercial arborists, try to utilize landscape companies that employ knowledgeable, well-trained employees. Until the housing market recovers, some landscapers may begin to perform more maintenance than plant installation. If an opportunity presents itself, utilize this important aspect of the Green Industry.

As stewards of our state’s urban forests, it is imperative that we work together to see us through this crisis. In the end, we will come out stronger and better than before.

President's Letter



This is the first edition of *The Acorn* for 2009 and I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a **HAPPY URBAN FORESTRY NEW YEAR!** If you ate collards on Jan. 1, I hope that the green you receive this year is not only money but more healthy and vibrant trees. Given the times we're in, most of us can use more of both.

2008 was a productive year for our organization. We hosted our Annual Conference, The Carolina Arborists Workshop and co-sponsored the Sustainable Parking Lot Design with Canopy Trees workshop. The Board of Directors, elected by you, has worked hard on your behalf and 2008 President Eddie Bernard provided diligent and invigorating leadership throughout the year.

What can we expect for 2009? Simply put, more great things. We have hired Karen Hauck as our new Executive Director. Karen introduces herself on this page, so I won't steal any of her thunder. Suffice it to say that Karen is visionary, dynamic and experienced. She is going to be an incredible asset to us all.

Buzz words become buzz words for a reason. They are appropriate descriptors for the times. A buzz word of late has been empowerment. We want our entire membership to feel empowered to influence the direction of the South Carolina Urban and Community Forestry Council.

One way we hope to empower you is with a new feature in *The Acorn*. You'll see that we have added a "Letters to the Editor" section. We want to hear your stories, good and bad. What's happening in your community or in other communities you know about? Others may learn from your experiences. You can ask questions about the Council or offer suggestions that may make the Council a better organization. If there is a technical urban forestry question you've been puzzling over, let us hear it. Chances are that one of our readers has experienced something similar and can offer suggestions. We've also added a "Member Spotlight" section to introduce you to your fellow Council members, as well as a section entitled "A Day In the Life Of," where we learn about the different professions within urban forestry.

We want you to become more involved in the coordination and management of your Council. If you have an interest in serving on the Board of Directors, let us know. If you would like to serve on one of the committees that plans conferences and workshops or acknowledges with awards deserving people and communities, let us know. If you would like to write an article or have an idea for an article for *The Acorn*, let us know. You can help us to serve South Carolina's trees and the people who care about them by volunteering on their behalf.

ADVOCATE, EDUCATE and NETWORK are the methods we employ in the pursuit of our mission statement, "to foster the stewardship of urban and community forests." Remember those three tenets, if you will. If we keep them in mind and work together, we all can be the stewards that South Carolina's community forests need and deserve.

Danny Burbage, President

From the Executive Director

As you read through this newsletter, you will notice several things have changed. We have a new president and new board members, *The Acorn* has added several new sections, and the Council has a new executive director. I am so excited to be part of this team of passionate, dedicated and committed individuals working together to protect our state's trees.

After receiving an undergraduate degree in Anthropology and a master's degree in Rural Sociology from Auburn University, I began my professional career working in the non-profit sector. My first job was as the educational specialist for a domestic violence center, followed by the program manager for a transitional housing center for women and children. Knowing this was not the field for me, I took my program management experience and sought a job in the environmental sector.



For the past five years, I have been the director of Keep Charleston Beautiful (KCB), an organization dedicated to enhancing the local environment in and around Charleston. Leaving KCB behind for this new venture, I bring with me a passion for the environment along with extensive knowledge and experience managing a non-profit organization.

As I transition into this new position, I will work with all of you to grow the Council and offer new and exciting programs to both professionals and the general public. Please feel free to share your thoughts and hopes for the Council with me at scucfc@gmail.com.

Karen Hauck, Executive Director

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The Acorn is a quarterly newsletter produced by the SCUCFC. We welcome your articles, news items, and photographs that may be of interest to our readers. Items may be sent to SCUCFC, PO Box 1679, Ladson, SC 29456 or scucfc@gmail.com.

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Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor is a new addition to *The Acorn* and is an opportunity for members to ask questions, discuss a specific concern, highlight an existing program, or just share news. Please send your submissions to scucfc@gmail.com.

Dear SCUCFC,

The key to implementing any urban forestry program is public and political support. There will always be people who have an interest in the environment and improving their community. Our responsibility is to identify them and encourage their efforts. Success breeds success.

One success story that comes to mind is the Town of Irmo. In the early 1980s, it was like Irmo discovered bulldozers. In about a six month period, one side of Highway 60 from Railroad Ave. to Midlands Tech was cleared and left red and eroding. I thought, "here is a community where people pride themselves on their schools and their civic efforts, but they don't see a problem with the rest of the town's environment."

Then, about 15 years ago, it began to change. In 2000, when I was hired to administer the Landscape Ordinance of Lexington County, Irmo had already begun to make a difference. The Town enacted a tree ordinance and initiated a community-wide tree planting effort. Since then, they have developed an outstanding park and created significant, well planted interstate highway exchanges.

The Town hired a trained horticulturist and to date, they have raised \$100,000 and planted 2,000 oaks and crape myrtles on the way to a goal of 5,000. Other objectives of the program are to make Irmo a destination for its beauty and to identify themselves as the gateway to Lake Murray.

Recently, the Irmo Arbor Day Committee was recognized by the Lexington County Council and they received the SC Urban and Community Forestry Council's Golden Acorn Award. The Town also received the Council's Heritage Tree Award and the SC Wildlife Federation Award for Community and Civic Organization.

Irmo has had the epiphany that its people, its natural resources and its economy are interconnected and interdependent. John Muir said, "when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

Sincerely,

Rhett Bickley



Member Spotlight

Name: Michelle Strange

Occupation: Keep America Beautiful of Anderson County, Coordinator

Education/Training: Bachelor of Science

What the Council means to me: As a SCUCFC member, I've had numerous educational opportunities and have gained a vast knowledge about trees and forestry. I've enjoyed networking with fellow tree-huggers that fuel my passion to continually grow Anderson County.

Interested in being in the spotlight? Please send your information to scucfc@gmail.com.

Trees in Charleston are Paying Huge Dividends

Charleston recently partnered with the USDA Forest Service, Center for Urban Forest Research to conduct a study of the benefit of their community trees. Their findings include a cost-benefit ratio that shows for every \$1 spent on care and maintenance, trees are paying back \$1.35 in benefits for stormwater reduction, energy conservation, and cleaner air. This is a 35% return on the investment. Not bad in today's market.

Charleston is home to more than 50,000 publicly managed trees on streets, traffic medians, parks, wooded buffers, and drainage areas. "For purposes of this study, we used only the 15,244 street trees which have been inventoried," said Dr. Greg McPherson, Center Director. "Our research in Charleston has shown that the municipal street trees provide \$717,000 in annual benefits, about \$47 per tree, and only cost the city \$530,000 per year to maintain. That is a huge return on your investment."

The Center's research clearly shows that healthy city trees improve air quality, lower summer temperatures, decrease the need for air conditioning, and reduce stormwater runoff. "These environmental benefits are important to the human health and well-being of Charleston residents," said McPherson. "We also know that healthy street trees increase real estate values, provide neighborhoods with a unique identity and increase business income."

Charleston trees are also associated with some intangibles such as increased community attractiveness, stress reduction, reduced crime and recreational opportunities that make Charleston a more enjoyable place to live, play, work, shop and do business. "If we could put a dollar value on these kinds of tree benefits, Charleston's return on investment would be a lot higher. Right now we can't, but we are working on it," said McPherson.

The details of the study clearly show how municipal trees benefit residents. Like many cities, Charleston is faced with improving the management of its stormwater. The federal Clean Water Act requires municipalities to obtain a permit for managing their stormwater discharges into water bodies and identify the Best Management Practices (BMPs) it will implement to reduce its pollutant discharge. According to McPherson, "The good news for Charleston is that its street trees intercept 28.3 million gallons of stormwater annually, or 1,858 gallon per tree on average. The total value of this benefit to the City is \$171,000, or \$11.24 per tree. We like to think of trees as mini-reservoirs, controlling runoff at the source. And Charleston's trees do that very well."

Dr. McPherson also points out that certain species are much better at reducing stormwater runoff than others. The best trees in Charleston for reducing stormwater runoff are the Laurel oak (\$38 per tree), Water oak (\$36 per tree) and Live oak (\$19 per tree). Interception by Live oak alone accounts for 41% of the total dollar benefit for street trees. Poor performers are species

with relatively little leaf and stem surface areas, such as Dogwood and Crape myrtle.

Live oaks account for 23.8% of the total tree numbers, but provide 34.6% of the energy savings, as expected for a tree with such a significant presence and importance. Water oaks and Laurel oaks provide even greater energy savings on a per tree basis. One reason their contribution is greater than Live oaks is because, as semi-deciduous trees, they block less of the winter sun's rays and, therefore, do not have a negative effect on heating costs, as live oaks can. Crape myrtles, in contrast, make up 20.1% of the population and provide less than 5% of energy savings, simply because they are small crowning trees. "Size is definitely a factor," said McPherson. Together, all of the street trees in Charleston annually save a total of 1,039 MWh and 2,002 Mbtu of electricity and natural gas respectively, for a total retail savings of \$120,991 or \$7.94 per tree.

The study also found that trees dramatically benefit human health. Charleston's street trees clean the air of nearly 3.6 tons of ozone, particulates and other gaseous pollution per year, and sequester another 944 tons of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, while offsetting an additional 711 tons of CO₂, along with 4 tons of sulfur dioxide through reductions in energy plant emissions. "But the largest benefit to the residents of Charleston is the property value increase," according to McPherson. The value is just over \$398,000 per year to the community, with Laurel oak (\$83 per tree), Water oak (\$66 per tree) and Live oak (\$51 per tree) providing the biggest benefits, while small trees and palms are examples of trees that provide very few benefits. "Each homeowner can expect the resale value of their home to increase by 1% for each large front yard tree," explained McPherson.

"The City's continued investment in the care and management of its trees is critical to ensuring that the community maintains or increases its return on investment into the future," said McPherson. "Cut back on the planting, watering and pruning of City trees and residents will ultimately experience a pinch in their wallets. The citizens of Charleston can rest assured that their trees are vastly improving their quality of life and that the money they are spending annually is a wise investment of municipal dollars. Continued management will ensure that the community increases its return into the future."

Information provided by the USDA Forest Service, Center for Urban Forest Research. For a complete copy of the study, please contact scufc@gmail.com.

The Town of Irmo Receives the 2008 Heritage Tree Award



The SC Urban and Community Forestry Council announced on Arbor Day that the 2008 Heritage Tree for South Carolina is a majestic White oak (*Quercus alba*) that presides over Irmo's Town Park. The White oak stretches more than 70 feet into the air, with a canopy equally as wide. An ancient tree, it has become the focal point of the town's central park that was transformed in recent years from three acres of weeds and briar-choked trees.

The mighty oak tree brings a legacy of permanence and grace to the newly created park. Park planners have protected its health by keeping as much foot traffic as possible off the tree's roots through the design and construction of a tiered deck that provides multiple levels of seating under her branches. The tree is maintained by the Irmo Public Services Department, which ensures it is annually checked by a certified arborist, trimmed, fertilized and watered as needed.

Irmo's White oak was chosen for its demonstration of how public trees provide South Carolina residents with spaces to congregate and enjoy the unique atmosphere of each community.

South Carolina's Heritage Trees program of the SC Urban & Community Forestry Council was developed in 2004 as a way to identify, celebrate, and recognize those remarkable trees that evoke great community spirit in South Carolina. Nominees can be trees with special historical or cultural significance or simply, a tree that is of special significance to the community. All nominees must be trees located on public property within South Carolina. We are now accepting nominations for the 2009 Heritage Tree. For more information or to submit a nomination, please contact Karen Hauck at scucfc@gmail.com or visit our website at www.scurbanforestry.org.



We recognize individuals and programs that further the mission of our organization and strengthen urban forests throughout the state with our Golden Acorn Awards.

The Golden Acorn Distinguished Service award recognizes an individual for his or her outstanding contribution to urban forestry. Nominees can include foresters, arborists, growers, educators, community leaders, elected officials, exceptional volunteers, or concerned citizens; anyone who has "made a difference" in urban and community forestry.

The Golden Acorn Outstanding Urban Forestry Program recognizes a local government or organization providing exemplary leadership and vision to a comprehensive urban forestry program. Activities can include beautification, fundraising, partnerships, tree planting or preservation, scheduled tree maintenance, tree inventories, public education and memorial tree planting programs.

We are now accepting nominations for the 2009 Golden Acorn Awards. For more information or to submit a nomination, please contact Karen Hauck at scucfc@gmail.com or visit our website at www.scurbanforestry.org.

A Day In The Life of ...

A Practicing Arborist

By Eddie Wilkerson, Foreman, Bartlett Tree Experts

My typical day as an arborist begins with getting to work and getting briefed on the upcoming job. Once at work, it's time to get moving and set up the truck for the job and get fellow workers to the correct crews. As a CDL driver, the morning can be hectic at times, trying to maneuver large vehicles safely through morning traffic and inattentive commuters. As we arrive at the client's home, the first priority must be to create a safe work environment. This is accomplished by coning off work trucks, placing signs to alert vehicles, chocking the wheels of our trucks and ensuring the flashers are operating in order to give advanced warning to approaching vehicles.



After reviewing the job card and discussing on-site hazards with employees, the job can begin. Each employee is assigned their job according to their strengths. In some cases, the job is used as a chance to teach the employee something new, a chance to hone one's skills. During the job, when we have free moments, chainsaws can get sharpened or debris can get chipped. It's just as important to continue cleaning while working as it is to do the cutting. After lunch, the job will usually continue until complete. This means working until 4 or 5 in some cases to bring a job in on time.

After the day is over, we come back to the shop and unpack equipment. Job cards get filled out by the foreman, and the next day can be prepared for if there's time. This is also a time for employees to repair broken equipment or complete their shop chores. Each employee is in charge of managing a different part of the shop; this allows all employees to leave the shop faster the next morning.

Some of my favorite days occur when I get the chance to develop skills that I am still unsure of or can improve. Luckily, and as I'm sure most arborists can attest to, each day can present these opportunities. Someone once told me that in this field, you'll never know everything because it's always changing. I can appreciate that, but it still doesn't stop me from trying to improve my knowledge and skill level. One thing I've learned since coming to Bartlett is not to let the time frame of a job push you into unsafe actions just to bring the job in on time. Time is important to us as a company, but also important is using opportunities presented to us as teachable moments. A friend and mentor, Danny Burbage, taught me this.

A Day In the Life Of... is a recent addition to The Acorn. We would love to hear your story. If you are interested in highlighting your personal profession and skills, please contact us at scucfc@gmail.com or by mail at PO Box 1679, Ladson, SC 29456.

We Have A New Address!

**SCUCFC
PO Box 1679
Ladson, South Carolina 29456
scucfc@gmail.com**



ACORN PARTNER

SCUCFC gratefully acknowledges the generous support of this newsletter by Bartlett Tree Experts. If you or your company would like to become an Acorn Partner, contact Karen Hauck at scucfc@gmail.com.

Choosing the Right Tree for the Right Place

South Carolina Urban and Community Forestry Council

Latin name: <i>Parrotia persica</i>	Texture: medium
Common name: Persian ironwood	Growth rate: medium
Zones: 5A-8B	Light: partial shade to full sun
Height & Width: 20' -40'h x 20' -40'w	Moisture: drought resistant
Type: deciduous	Soil: tolerates all textures; slightly alkaline to acidic; drought
Habit: upright oval, eventually rounded; moderate density; symmetrical; medium texture	Origin: Iran

Features:

Leaf: Alternate, simple reddish purple when unfolding changing to lustrous medium to dark green during summer and developing brilliant yellow to orange to scarlet fall color.

Bark: Older branches and trunks develop an exfoliating gray, green, white, brown color (on 4-8" diameter branches).

Habit: Small, single-stemmed tree or large, multi-stemmed shrub with an oval-rounded head of upright, ascending branches.

Additional notes: One of Michael Dirr's favorite urban trees.

Siting: Persian ironwood is a very tough urban tree that is drought tolerant. It can be grown in a variety of sites: container or above-ground planter, buffer strip, highway, near a deck or patio, shade tree, or as a specimen.

Care: Persian ironwood should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, slightly acid soil, and will adapt to alkaline soil provided other cultural requirements are met. Trees will not tolerate wet soil conditions, but should show considerable drought tolerance. Transplant balled and burlapped or from a container; prune in spring. Plant so root flare is visible in loose soil high in organic matter. At planting, water the root ball daily with two gallons of water per inch of trunk of diameter for two weeks, every other day for two months, and then weekly until established.



Contact the SC Urban and Community Forestry Council at www.scurbanforestry.org for membership and additional information.

*Soil pH is determined using a professional soil test. Contact your Clemson University County Extension service for assistance www.clemson.edu/extension/. Click on "local offices".

Tree selected from the *Urban Tree Species Guide: Choosing the Right Tree for the Right Place*.

Author: Carroll Williamson, City of Columbia

Reviewer: Danny Burbage, City of Charleston





PO Box 1679
Ladson, SC 29456

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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|---------------------------|--|
| April 22, 2009 | Arboriculture Awareness Day, Presented by the SC Forestry Commission and Clemson University, Ladson, SC. For more information, please contact Mark Arena at (843) 719-4140 x 113. |
| June 4-6, 2009 | South Carolina Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects Annual Conference, Aiken, South Carolina. For more information, please visit www.scasla.org. |
| July 3, 2009 | Nominations for Golden Acorn Awards and Heritage Tree are due |
| September 17, 2009 | Carolina Arborist Workshop, Harbison State Forest's Environmental Education Center, Columbia, SC |
| October 29, 2009 | SCUCFC Annual Conference, Columbia, SC |
| December 4, 2009 | South Carolina Arbor Day |

Visit www.scurbanforestry.org for more information