

The Faces of Urban Forestry



Lori Lester
Special education teacher



Urban School Trees Aid Learning and Help Build Character

When she was young, Queens native Lori Lester went to a nature camp in upstate New York. It changed her life and now she is using that experience to change the life of students in Public School 219. The opportunity came when the New York Restoration Project provided trees to replace those destroyed by a tornado in 2010. To date, 76 have been planted on the school grounds, including 20 apple trees. A science grant from the New York Botanical Garden is also helping to introduce the students to trees and gardens.

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“We do hands-on gardening with the children on field trips to the Botanical Garden and we have raised beds here at the school,” says Lori. The school’s gardens include a variety of herbs and vegetables as well pollinator plants to attract bees for the little orchard. Lori observes, “It helps children learn about the environment and healthy eating. We are trying to get them away from junk food and counter the problem of obesity. The kids have a vested interest in the trees and plants and feel good about them, and self-respect is built from seeing products that come from their efforts. It takes lessons out of the text books and provides things the kids will remember.”



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A joint project of U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Arbor Day Foundation. For more information visit arborday.org/faces