



TREE CITY USA[®] BULLETIN

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Dr. James R. Fazio, Editor • \$3.00

On-the-Job Training Opportunities

Opportunity knocks and career paths open when young people are given insights, skills and knowledge through internships or other on-the-job training. The potential is great for communities and organizations to create internship programs and recruit tree care workers and urban foresters for the future. The benefits of reducing unemployment, training for the future, and getting important work accomplished at a reasonable cost makes this a topic worth considering.

“Oh, wow, this is what I want to do!” That is what Ernest Cisneros thought when he was given an internship to work with the city forester in Moscow, Idaho’s Parks and Recreation Department. At the time, Ernest was a college student and not sure of his future. “It was a turning point,” he now says. During that summer, Ernest learned to prune trees, file tree-related information for future reference, update the street tree inventory, work safely with tools and to do many of the other tasks associated with urban forestry in a small community. Today, Ernest is a certified arborist and works for the city parks and recreation department much of the year and for a tree care company the rest of the time. His only regret is that he wishes he had known about arboriculture sooner in life.

Ernest’s experience can be multiplied hundreds of times across the length of our country. Internships are introducing young people to careers in urban forestry and the green industries. These are jobs that they probably did not hear about in school or on the streets.

The many available training programs change lives. Funding is often a challenge, and sponsorships as well as requirements or program structures change frequently. But the need is consistent and so are the benefits. Every issue of *Tree Care Industry* magazine carries an abundance of classified ads offering jobs working with trees. Many are jobs that ‘start at the bottom,’ but others reflect the kind of opportunities for advancement that come with experience. For anyone willing to work hard, work in the outdoors, and be willing to learn new skills, the broad fields of arboriculture and urban forestry can lead the way to economic security and a career that rewards its professionals with a sense of serving society and making our earth a better place.



City of Milwaukee Forestry

Young people in Milwaukee’s exemplary training program first receive instruction in safe climbing skills. Practice sessions take place in the city’s parks before interns apply their skills while pruning trees in the street rights-of-way.

Two Model Entry-Level Programs

From two ends of the country we present a brief profile of programs that are effectively introducing young people to both the world of work and to tree work in particular. While these models depend on available funding and other local circumstances and can change from year to year, they provide good examples of what is possible.

Urban Forestry Training in Milwaukee

Milwaukee's urban forestry program has a long history of engaging young people and offering them career opportunities to work on the trees in this exemplary Tree City USA. Thanks to initial funding from the USDA Forest Service and support from the U.S. Department of Labor's Pathways Out of Poverty program and other partners, Milwaukee's 'Strengthening Diversity in Urban Forestry Service Delivery' initiative is resulting in new talent in the private workforce and better trees along the streets and in the city parks.

Who is Helped

Candidates for this program are unemployed or under-employed adult residents of Milwaukee. The goal is to make individuals aware of a career route of which they may not have been aware, and to provide skills and work habits needed in urban forestry, the utility industry and tree care companies.



City of Milwaukee Forestry

Trainees in Milwaukee learn basic work practices such as reporting on time, being part of a team, working safely and experiencing the satisfaction of steady and useful employment.



City of Milwaukee Forestry

Tree biology and proper pruning practices are part of the program that prepares future arborists.



City of Milwaukee Forestry

Helping young people take pride in a job well done is one of the goals of Milwaukee's training program.

Program Design

- ✓ Trainees are paid a fair training wage.
- ✓ Instruction is provided by Department of Public Works arborists.
- ✓ Training consists of a demanding 36-week program ranging from the biology of trees to maintenance practices and climbing skills and safety.
- ✓ Training is both in the classroom and in the field under supervision.
- ✓ The outdoor training is provided in the city parks and the street rights-of-way.

Other Support Services – Partnering is Essential

Few urban forestry departments have all the skills necessary to effectively recruit, direct and place candidates in a training program. Milwaukee is no exception. The answer is a coalition of the right organizations to do the job of workforce development. For example, the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board was asked to help with recruitment of low-income, lower-skilled adults and with case management. The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership has provided interest assessments, basic skills assessments, career coaching and job development. Riverworks Development Corporation, a nonprofit, economic development organization, has partnered for job readiness training, financial coaching and job placement.

An important feature of this kind of cooperation is that individual trainees are provided with a holistic approach to career preparation and improving their lives.



Tangible Results

When candidates successfully complete Milwaukee's urban forestry training initiative, they are helped to find employment in urban forestry or other parts of the green industry. This is possible not only through the skills and knowledge they gain in curricula validated by the Tree Care Industry Association, they also are awarded industry-recognized credentials such as TCIA's Ground Operations Specialist and Tree Climber Specialist certifications. They may also qualify for such marketable certificates as Pesticide Applicator and a commercial driver's license. In addition, they are well on their way toward being able to pass the exam toward becoming a Certified Arborist through the International Society of Arboriculture.

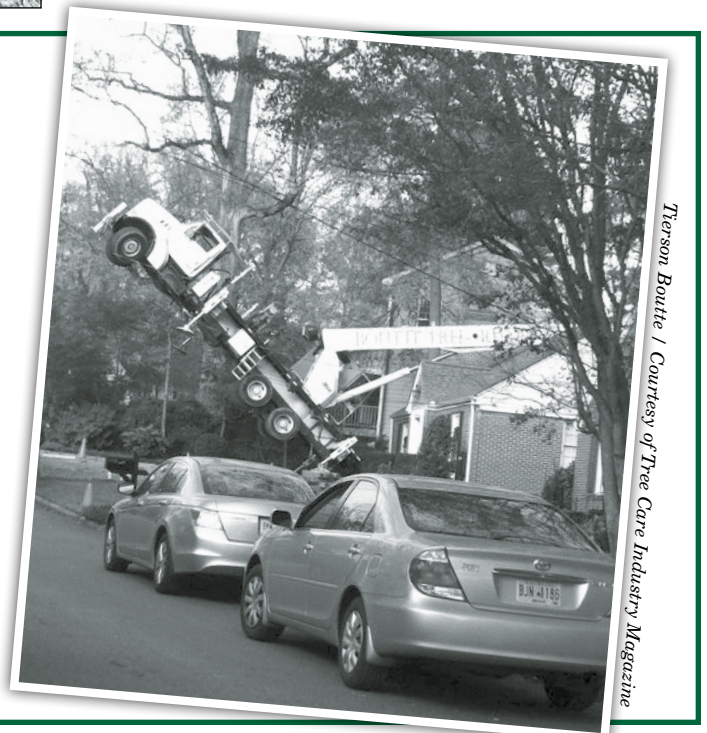
Another benefit is that trained workers are available to local utilities and tree care companies. Some graduates may even be employed by the urban forestry unit in Milwaukee's Department of Public Works to help meet its street tree pruning goal of 6- to 7-year cycles.

Learning to use ropes and tie knots is an important part of the training for prospective tree workers.

Whoops!

Formal Training is Sometimes Best

Tierson Boutte, owner of Boutte Tree, Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia, learned his skills on the job and he provides on-the-job training and safety emphasis for his employees. But after a crane operation during tree removal went amiss in the hands of a young employee, Tierson says, "I placed less emphasis on formal credentials and training protocols than I did with on-the-job training and attitude... I (still) believe it's important to focus on hard work and on-the-job training, but that this was an example of a situation where more formalized training would have prevented an accident."



Tierson Boutte / Courtesy of Tree Care Industry Magazine

Two Model Entry-Level Programs Cont'd.

The Los Angeles Conservation Corps

According to California ReLeaf, and a recent study done by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, urban forestry in California supports more than 60,000 jobs in that state, resulting in \$3.3 billion in individual income and \$3.6 billion in added value to the state's economy. California ReLeaf correctly points out that a broad spectrum of jobs is needed to support urban forestry – and these are *non-exportable* jobs. Moreover, the work of urban foresters, landscapers, nursery growers, arborists and others in the green industry “make California’s cities and towns better places to live, work, and play.”

Recruiting at-risk young adults and school-aged youth into the green workforce is a goal of the LA Conservation Corps. It represents a win-win situation in that it helps put young people on a productive and positive path to the future and it helps meet the need for entry-level workers. The Corps was founded in 1986 and is the largest urban conservation organization of its kind in the nation.

Who is Helped

LA Conservation Corps conducts a multi-faceted program that reaches target audiences from elementary students to 24-year-olds:

- ✓ Elementary and middle school students at 16 schools can participate in after-school enrichment activities, including tutoring services and being introduced to trees and nature.
- ✓ Paid jobs are offered to 14- to 17-year-olds in the ‘Clean & Green’ program.
- ✓ Three charter high school campuses are operated for 14- to 18-year-olds.
- ✓ Young Adult Corps members (ages 18 to 24) receive on-the-job training, paid work experience *and* attend one of the charter schools to complete their high school education.



Courtesy LA Conservation Corps

Corps members learn to grow and maintain trees in a nursery and staging area at Griffith Park in Los Angeles.

Program Design

‘Clean & Green’ is one of the oldest programs of the Corps and provides opportunities for young people during their school vacations and weekends each year. The work consists of trash removal from neglected streets and alleys, cleaning up graffiti and planting trees. According to the Corps, “Crew supervisors strive to cultivate a positive work ethic in the youth that trains them to be responsible and dedicated workers, as they mentor them to help them see the value of staying in school, preparing for college and giving back to their communities.”

The ‘Young Adult Corps’ helps young people complete their high school diploma while receiving paid, on-the-job training and support services. This school/work program alternates two-month blocks of classes at the charter school with work projects in recycling, community garden construction and management, river revitalization, park construction and landscaping, brown field remediation, and urban forestry tree planting. The latter includes serving as the prime contractor for the city’s Department of Water and Power’s planting program and maintaining a staging area at Griffith Park for up to 7,500 five-gallon trees.



Courtesy LA Conservation Corps

Youngsters in the Clean & Green program learn good work habits while cleaning up the city’s streets, alleys and parks.

Support Services

Young people need all the help they can get, and the LA Conservation Corps tries to provide that in a number of ways. Beyond ordinary teaching and supervision, these include:

- ✓ The Youth Leadership Council provides a mechanism for participants to offer feedback to the staff. Positions in the Council include president, vice president, secretary, public relations, two treasurers, reporter and sergeant-at-arms. The Council not only provides an outlet for concerns and a way for staff to improve, it also teaches organization skills, small group cooperation and how to provide constructive criticism.
- ✓ One-on-one mentoring. Council members are paired with staff so the young people are provided guidance and at the same time learn how to interact with adults in the workplace.
- ✓ Case managers help all Corps members with individualized plans for meeting their personal, educational and occupational goals.
- ✓ Follow-up services are provided after an individual exits the program. For up to 12 months, case managers phone and visit to help ensure success in education or employment.

Tangible Results

In one year, Clean & Green served over 1,100 teenagers. The community benefited not only from social problems prevented or corrected, but also with:

- 10,865 alleys and city blocks cleaned
- 11 murals painted
- 6,840 trees planted and maintained
- 68,478 square feet of community gardens maintained
- 82,176 square feet of graffiti removed
- 1,573,749 pounds of litter collected

The Young Adult Corps annually puts some 500 young people on a more positive track in life, including the attainment of high school diplomas. Over the lifetime of this program, work results have included the delivery of over 46,000 trees to Water and Power customers, including providing advice on where to locate the trees to save energy, how to plant them, and the care needed. Another 45,886 have been distributed by Corps members as one of five major planting partners in the Mayor's Million Trees Los Angeles initiative.

Enabling the completion of high school as well as providing workplace and life skills are among the goals of the LA Conservation Corp.

A Personal Profile

Celia Garcia is a single mom with two children. When she heard about the Los Angeles Conservation Corps she didn't care very much about trees. What she wanted was a high school diploma and a second chance in life, things she had heard were possible if she enrolled in this job-training program. She also found out that its Transition Living Program would provide her and her children a safe place to stay. This

“You can see your work grow. Once we plant a tree in a school or a parkway, I can go back in the future and say, ‘I planted that tree.’”

part of the program is a godsend to Corps members who experience homelessness.

Like other young people between 18 and 24 years of age, Celia attended mandatory life skills classes. She also gained experience working in the Corps' tree nursery. This

changed the course of her life. “I started to learn the names of trees and how to care for them,” she said. She soon progressed to work on the mayor's Million Trees LA project. She would contact residents and ask if they wanted a tree planted in the right-of-way by their house, and then follow through with the planting.

Celia discovered her love for trees in the Corps and became a supervisor of planting crews of 5 – 12 young workers. For Celia, the LA Conservation Corps was a life-changing experience. She once said, “The work is hard, but it is good.” She also likes the results of her efforts: “You can see your work grow. Once we plant a tree in a school or a parkway, I can go back in the future and say, ‘I planted that tree.’”



Courtesy LA Conservation Corps

Internships

Internships for college students offer an especially good way to launch a career in arboriculture or urban forestry and immediately gain on-the-ground experience. Many internships are available, some for summer only and some for longer periods of time; some on a volunteer basis, but even more that pay. Here are just a few worth exploring:

International Society of Arboriculture



There may be no better opportunity for juniors and seniors in four-year college programs than to be awarded a student fellowship to work at the headquarters of the International Society of Arboriculture. Students receive a stipend for the summer and have the chance to work with leading professionals as they help develop education materials and become familiar with all aspects of ISA's mission and operations.

USDA Forest Service



The Forest Service primarily uses three programs to provide on-the-job opportunities. These fall under the auspices of the U. S. Office of Personnel Management's 'Pathways Programs:' (1) The Internship Program is for currently enrolled students and includes 320 – 640 hours of work experience and completion of the student's degree, (2) The Recent Graduates Program provides work and mentoring for up to one year after graduation, and (3) The Presidential Management Fellows program, a leadership development effort offers training and senior-level mentoring for competitive candidates that have completed an advanced degree. In all cases, successful candidates may be converted to permanent employment if they perform satisfactorily, meet all requirements for a particular job, and a position is available and funded.

Society of Municipal Arborists



Students who are accepted into this program gain experience working alongside practicing professionals. These urban foresters also serve as mentors and help the students identify and develop skills needed to be successful. The positions are nationwide and provide a housing stipend, an hourly wage for ten weeks, and travel and registration expenses to attend the annual SMA Conference.

Arbor Day Foundation®

Arbor Day Foundation

Currently the Arbor Day Foundation sponsors two internship programs, both intended to promote the Tree Campus USA program. One is in partnership with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the nation's oldest Greek-lettered organization established by African-American women. Undergraduate students selected for this program are paid a stipend and receive training to promote and conduct Arbor Day and other activities on their campus. This, in turn, contributes toward earning or maintaining a Tree Campus USA award.



Standards that are in place for a campus to gain Tree Campus USA status include involvement of students in planning for tree planting and care as well as interacting with local arborists and the city forester. Internships promoting these activities provide valuable experience for future leaders.

Arboreta

Internships in arboreta provide excellent experience working with plants, caring for high-value trees and working with the public. Many of the nation's largest, such as Morton Arboretum in Chicago and Arnold Arboretum in Massachusetts, have excellent programs. Private areas, such as Disney World in Florida and Callaway Gardens in Georgia, also offer opportunities, as do arboreta at many of the nation's universities.

Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania



Interns at the 167-acre Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia work under the mentorship of the chief arborist. The students obtain experience in climbing techniques, pruning, tree-risk inspection, integrated pest management and other aspects of arboriculture.



Tree City USA Growth Award

There are a number of opportunities within the requirement guidelines to earn points toward a Tree City USA Growth Award by initiating an on-the-job training program in your community. For a complete list of eligible activities, see Bulletin No. 18 or visit arborday.org.

Job Training Never Ends

Employees already in the workforce need on-the-ground training experiences as their careers develop as much as those just entering tree-related professions. Bartlett, Davey and many other tree care companies provide career-long training, often in conjunction with the Tree Care Industry Association. Bartlett sums up the goal of many large and small companies in the industry with its statement: "We encourage our employees to succeed both in and out of the workplace." To do this, they sponsor employees to attend workshops and training sessions, encourage gaining certification in their particular fields, and send them on temporary details located in other geographic areas or parts of the company.

The Society of Municipal Arborists and cooperators sponsor a unique learning experience through its Municipal Arborist Exchange. Members have the opportunity to receive funding for travel and basic expenses to spend at least one week visiting and working with another city's forestry department. This can be within the United States or internationally and either "one way" or "two way," meaning the participant reciprocates by hosting a professional from the city that was visited. Participants then write a report for SMA's website of what they have learned. Here is a sampling of some international exchanges that have provided professional growth through this program:

Joe Benassini, Sacramento, California

Visited Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

David Sivyver, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Visited Turin, Italy

Dr. Gianmichele Cirulli of Turin

Visited Milwaukee

Delia Juncal, Oceanside, California

Visited Kelowna, British Columbia

Lisa Olson, Cheyenne, Wyoming

Visited Ljubljana, Slovenia

Lena Marion of Slovenia

Visited Wyoming and Colorado

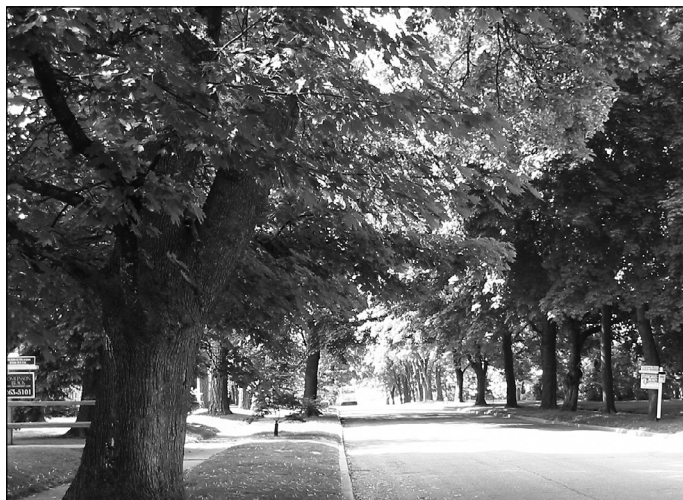


Following a municipal arborist exchange, participants are expected to share and extend the value of their experience through online reports found at SMA's website. Photos by Joe Benassini as seen in "City Trees", the magazine of the Society of Municipal Arborists (www.urban-forestry.com).

A Checklist for Success

When considering creating an internship for your community or organization, here are some suggestions that will help lead to success.

- Be selective.** Sympathy for a candidate by itself can be disastrous if basic qualifications are not evident. It may be prudent to require a basic level of reading ability (10th grade level, for example, so instructional materials can be mastered), as well as any physical needs (for example, the ability to lift 40 pounds and/or work in a rope and saddle at 20 feet and be free of vertigo or undue fear of heights).
- Put all expectations in writing.** Create the equivalent of a contract so that applicants know exactly what is expected of them, and what they will receive in return. Be detailed, including time to report for work each day, respect for safety instructions, abiding by rules for a drug- and alcohol-free workplace, etc.
- Use partnerships.** Your agency or organization is unlikely to have all the skills necessary for recruiting and managing interns. The help of community organizations that routinely work with employment or training issues should be enlisted early in the planning stage. Likewise, companies or organizations that are potential employers should be part of the team effort.
- Provide tangibles.** In planning your training program, plan it around achievable certifications that will help make the trainees more employable. This might include ISA Tree Worker or Arborist Certification, a commercial driver's license, applicator certification, and first aid/CPR certification.
- Support after training.** Keep abreast of industry or your organization's needs and help trainees apply for future employment. Help them write good résumés, practice job interviews, and obtain feedback on performance from employers after a former intern obtains a permanent job.



Internships in communities large and small can provide on-the-ground training for young people in all aspects of urban forestry while at the same time helping to provide valuable service by planting and caring for public trees.

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