



Growth Award Program Gets an Upgrade

**TREE CITY USA®
BULLETIN**

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The Tree City USA Growth Award program is an innovative way to encourage communities of all sizes to — as the name implies — grow their tree care programs beyond basic expectations.

Until recently, there had been little change in the Arbor Day Foundation's Growth Award program since its inception in 1991. At that time, the program was developed to provide an incentive for existing Tree City USA communities to go beyond the four standards necessary for that award and engage in activities that do even more for improving tree planting and care. To receive recognition for the Growth Award, 10 points in one year were necessary, with a list of activities provided along with a number of points assigned to each. These were organized within four categories: Education & Public Relations, Partnerships, Planning and Management, and Tree Planting & Maintenance.

But then last year, a team of urban forestry professionals were invited to join staff of the Arbor Day Foundation to fine-tune the program so it can better serve the nation's

cities, towns, and military bases. Specifically, the team was challenged to provide a way to meet the following goals:

- Increase participation by communities striving for Growth Awards.
- Align key activities with federal reporting metrics.
- Link the program to state action plan priorities for community assistance.

After months of work, including surveys of state urban forestry coordinators to arrive at equitable point values for each activity, the revised Growth Award program is now ready for Tree City USA communities to use. It still requires 10 points to be earned in a single year. However, it now centers around five categories and a renovated list of activities, some that can be used annually for the award and others being a one-time only opportunity. An abbreviated form of the new framework is found in the following pages, with the full descriptions and application materials available online as shown on page 8.



Category A: Building the Team

Personnel and adequate funding are an essential foundation for urban forest sustainability. There are 15 opportunities in this category, with most being eligible for points each year.



Points for a new funding source might include tree mitigation funds generated by commercial development.

BUDGETS

- » **Budget Increase (4 pts)** An increase over an average of the past three years can be documented.
- » **Donation Account Created (4 pts, one time only)** A special account, to augment general fund expenditures, has been created to accept public donations for tree planting and care, arboretum improvements, memorial trees, etc.
- » **Grant Applications (3 pts)** Two or more pertinent grant applications were submitted.
- » **New Funding Source (5 pts, one time per source)** A new, permanent source was found that is 5% or greater than the current municipal forestry program budget.
- » **Emergency Appropriation (2 pts)** There is a supplemental budget in the event of an emergency such as an insect/disease outbreak, storm damage, drought, or wildfire.

STAFF

- » **City Forester (10 pts, one time only)** A professional, credentialed, urban forester was hired for the first time. This is a leadership position.
- » **Supervising Arborist (10 pts, one time only)** A staff person (with credentials such as ISA or state certification), was hired to oversee safety and performance for tree workers.
- » **Other opportunities (4-5 pts)** include allied professionals added to the community forestry team (one time only, per position); additional credentials obtained by staff (one time per individual, per credential); green jobs made available, such as internships and other work programs.

TRAINING

- » **Tree Worker Safety (4 pts)** There is a formal, documented safety program for tree workers.
- » **Continuing Education (3 pts)** At least 10 hours of sanctioned educational opportunities were supported or sponsored for staff, tree board members, and/or nonprofit partner employees.
- » **Arborist Exchange (3 pts)** There was participation in either the Society of Municipal Arborists or Alliance for Community Trees exchange program.
- » **Department Accreditation (10 pts, one time only)** Accreditation received from the Society of Municipal Arborists.
- » **Leadership Training (5 pts, one time per course, per individual)** A staff member graduated from an approved, professional program.



Category B: Measuring Trees & Forests

Knowing what you have in the urban forest and its condition is essential to sustainable management.

TREE CANOPY

- » **Assessment** (10 pts, eligible every five years) High-resolution assessment of both public and private land using specialized imagery methods was conducted.
- » **Sampling Estimate** (5 pts, eligible as above) Use was made of i-Tree Canopy methods to determine plantable space and potential canopy.
- » **Land Cover Analysis** (Same as above) Use was made of i-Tree Landscape to prioritize planting and retention programs.

TREE INVENTORY

- » **Management Inventory** (10 pts, eligible every five years) A spatial (GPS) inventory of street and/or park trees, including planting spaces and maintenance needs was conducted.
- » **Management Inventory System** (7 pts, one time only, per system) Installation of a computerized system for tracking tree inventory, planting spaces, and management activities was conducted.
- » **Tree Inventory Portion** (3 pts) An update of a portion of a public tree-by-tree inventory was conducted and entered in a management system.
- » **Street Tree Survey** (6 pts, eligible every five years) Using i-Tree protocols, completion of a sample-based survey of right-of-way trees and planting spaces was completed.

URBAN FORESTS

- » **Natural Areas Sampling** (5 pts, eligible every five years) One sample plot/acre of all or most of the natural areas in the city and evaluations of ecological value/condition was completed.
- » **Ecosystem Services Assessment** (10 pts, eligible every 10 years) Using i-Tree Eco protocols, structure, function, and value of public and private trees were determined.
- » **Periodic Update** (5 pts, eligible after the above) The above was updated using plot-based data.
- » **Forest Health Threat Assessment** (eligible every five years) A report for the community of threats in preparation for an insect or disease outbreak was completed.



Trained volunteers and partner organizations can help gather the data necessary for meeting one or more of the measurement criteria in this section of Growth Award criteria.



Category C: Planning the Work

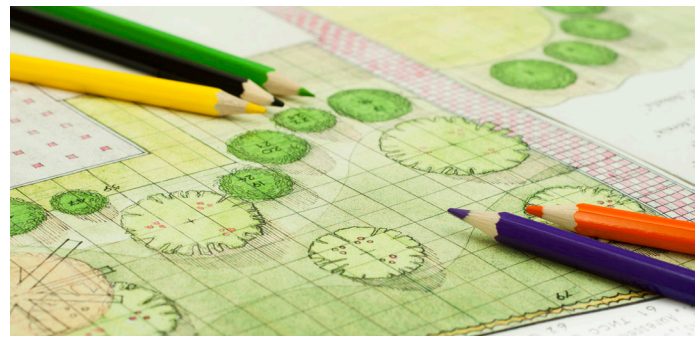
A sound urban forestry program requires careful, deliberate planning.

POLICIES

- » **Ordinance Clauses** (5 pts, eligible each year, for new clauses) One or more new clauses from a list of 10 specified clauses were added.
- » **Species List** (3 pts) A stand-alone document was created with recommended and/or prohibited trees for planting on public property.
- » **Risk Management Policy** (8 pts, one time only) A written policy for inspecting and mitigating reported tree problems was developed.
- » **Private Tree Protection Ordinance** (9 pts, one time only) Requirements were added for protection (with standards), mitigation, and penalties during private land development.
- » **Canopy Cover Goal** (8 pts, one time only) An analysis-based goal for the city's tree canopy to direct planting and/or retention, especially in areas of low tree cover, was adopted as official policy.
- » **Policy or Plan Update** (5 pts, eligible every five years, per title) Any pertinent updates to five-to-10-year goals and objectives were added.

PLANS

- » **Annual Work Plan** (3 pts) Appropriate targets and budget were identified for tree care.
- » **Single-Issue Plans** (5 pts, one time only, per title) A written plan to address specific tree care issues was developed.
- » **Other Plans** (5–10 pts) This includes Management Plans, Section Plans (such as for a neighborhood or major park), Master Plan, and Green Infrastructure Plan (mostly for open space corridors and natural areas).



Planning is not the most exciting part of community tree stewardship, but it is essential for prioritizing needed work, staying on track, and being accountable for tax money or donations.



Category D: Performing the Work

Not surprisingly, this section of the criteria is the largest. There are work opportunities suited to communities of any size and most are eligible each year for points toward the Growth Award.



Natural areas in or near cities add richness to life and provide valuable ecoservices. Their acquisition and management can contribute to a Growth Award.

PLANTING TREES

- » **Tree Planting Program (8 pts, one time only, per program)**
A new program (for example, NeighborWoods) was created for installing trees on public or private property.
- » **Tree Planting Projects (2 pts)** Trees were planted by the city, local utility, or nonprofit partner as part of an existing program.
- » **Survival Monitoring (4 pts)** Sponsors of a tree planting program inspected and reported on survival.
- » **Community Tree Nursery (5 pts, one time only, per facility)**
The city or partner organization established a nursery to supply trees for the planting program.
- » **Planting Site Evaluation (3 pts)** Proposed planting sites were evaluated for a specific purpose.
- » **Planting-to-Removals Ratio (3 pts)** The number of trees planted on public property is greater than the number removed.

MAINTAINING TREES

- » **Tree Reporting Process (5 pts, one time only)** A process was established for citizens to report safety issues and staff to make a record of response time for mitigation.

- » **Young Tree Training (4 pts)** A program of care for newly planted trees such as watering, pruning, etc., was developed.
- » **Systematic Maintenance (5 pts)** Separate from the above, systematic preventive and restorative maintenance, as necessary, was performed on 10% or more of public trees.
- » **Utility Tree Care (1 pt)** Local tree work is done by a Tree Line USA utility or a Tree Care Industry Association Accredited Utility Contractor.

TREE RISK MANAGEMENT

- » **Annual Risk Survey (4 pts)** A “limited visual” survey in at least high-priority zones was conducted to identify potential hazards (using ANSI A300 Part 9 and ISA Best Management Practices).
- » **Other Activities (4–5 pts)** Tree Risk Mitigation, a Mock Exercise simulating response to disasters, and an Urban Forest Strike Team that either is sent or received to evaluate public trees after a disaster.

Category D: Performing the Work (Continued)

RECYCLING & REUSE

- » **Tree Debris Recycling (4 pts)** Landfill use was avoided for 100% of municipal leaf and woody debris.
- » **Public Installations (2 pts)** Recycled wood from municipal operations was used in landscaping (mulch, benches, etc.)
- » **Urban Wood Utilization (4 pts)** A portion of wood from tree care operations was converted to high-quality end products (cabinets, etc.) or higher value products such as fuel pellets, etc.
- » **Processing Facility (5 pts, one time only, per facility)** The city or business established a processing plant for municipal wood residue.



PROTECTING TREES

- » **Tree Protection (4 pts)** Trees on public or commercial developments are monitored for conformance to ANSI A300 standards and city code.
- » **Enforcement Proceedings (3 pts, one time only, per project)** Violations of tree protection code were appropriately enforced.
- » **Tree Rescue (2 pts)** One or more trees were relocated from construction sites to public property.



NATURAL AREAS

- » **Land Stewardship (2 pts)** One or more city-owned natural areas were inspected and maintained in a safe condition.
- » **Restoration Work (3 pts)** Following a plan, practices such as invasive species removal were conducted on city-owned natural areas.
- » **Forest Health Management (4 pts)** Following a plan, any of a wide range of practices were used to improve the condition of a city-owned forest (thinning, pheromone inhibitors, wildlife fencing, etc.)
- » **Open Space Acquisition (5 pts)** Land was acquired through purchase, donation, or long-term agreement and made available for public use.



Partnerships, volunteers, and outreach to residents of all ages is the goal of the activities in this award category.

Category E: The Community Framework

Tree boards, other volunteers, city staff, and supportive residents make it all happen.

COLLABORATION

- » **Citizen Tree Board** (10 pts, one time only) An active tree board was established by ordinance.
- » **Departmental Communication** (3 pts) At least once a year, representatives from city departments meet to coordinate urban forestry policy and projects.
- » **Nonprofit Tree Group** (10 pts, one time only, per organization) An independent organization dedicated to trees was chartered and has started pertinent activities (tree planting and care, education, etc.)
- » **Cooperative Partnership** (4 pts) An agreement or contract was established between any two entities that benefits trees or urban forestry.
- » **Alliance for Community Trees Membership** (1 pt) Membership is held by the city or a local nonprofit group.

VOLUNTEERS

- » **New Tree Board Member** (2 pts) One or more new members joined the board or commission.
- » **Service Organizations** (2 pts) A service organization planted trees or conducted other pertinent projects. For example, Tree Campuses, neighborhood associations, Kiwanis, etc.
- » **Volunteer Tree Care** (4 pts, but not with the above) Organizations such as TreeKeepers, Citizen Foresters, etc., are in place and conducted pertinent activities.
- » **Volunteer Coordinator** (5 points, one time only) The city or a nonprofit partner hired a coordinator with at least 50% of duties to develop and coordinate volunteer resources for tree planting and care.
- » **Citizen Science** (3 pts) A project was organized for data collection related to urban forestry.

OUTREACH

- » **Eligible activities** (3–6 pts) include developing a public tree care guide (one time only), a community forestry report, publications, a publicity campaign (one time only, per campaign), and environmental equity efforts.

AWARENESS

- » **Tree Festival** (4 pts) An event such as Arborfest, Oak Festival, etc., was held to build public awareness of trees.
- » **Interpretive Program** (2 pts) Included are tours, nature centers, and similar ongoing programs.
- » **Awards Program** (2 pts) Formal recognition of individuals or organizations was given.
- » **External Recognition** (2 pts) The community received a regional, state, or national award for its community forestry program or projects.
- » **Arbor Day Events** (2 pts) An Arbor Day event was held (such as a school celebration) that was beyond the official city observance.

EDUCATION

- » **Tree Care Workshops** (3 pts) Two or more sessions on tree care were held for homeowners, arborists, or the green industry.
- » **Education Facility** (5 pts, one time only, per facility) A new nature center or other facility with programming about trees and woodland ecosystems was created.
- » **Related activities** (2 pts each) are youth education and outdoor classroom.



Growth Award Honor Roll

Every community that earns a Tree City USA Growth Award deserves recognition and appreciation. Currently there are 341 such communities throughout the nation. These cities, towns, or military bases not only provide added benefits for their residents and businesses, they demonstrate progress toward sustainability that comes with continuous, systematic urban forestry.

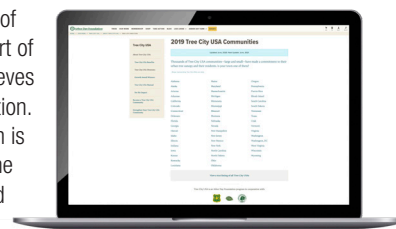
Special recognition goes to Eules, Texas, for receiving the Growth Award more times than any other community in the nation — 29 years! Communities that have received the Growth Award for 28 years are listed below in alphabetical order along with the number of years as a Tree City USA:

Clinton, Iowa	30 years
Durango, Colorado	40 years
Dysart, Iowa	32 years
Gainesville, Georgia	33 years
La Grande, Oregon	30 years
Lincoln, Nebraska	42 years
Orlando, Florida	43 years
Scottsdale, Arizona	38 years
Urbana, Illinois	44 years
Winter Park, Florida	40 years

An important feature of the Growth Award criteria is that a community of any size can participate and achieve the award. For example, the smallest current Growth Award community is Gays Mills, Wisconsin, with a population of 502. The largest is Phoenix, Arizona, with 1.6 million residents.



A Growth Award sticker and number of years sticker for road signage are part of the rewards when a community achieves Tree City USA Growth Award recognition. A plaque for city hall or other location is also provided, along with listing on the Arbor Day Foundation's webpage and suggestions for local publicity.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For quick access to more information about the Growth Award criteria and points, and for sources of assistance, please visit arborday.org/growthaward.

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