



TREE BOARDS & COMMITTEES

Citizens Working Together for a Healthier Community Forest

A Town Committee or Tree and Forest Board or Committee is a citizen-led group that works with town public officials to improve the health of the urban and community forest through tree plantings, advocacy, education, management, and maintenance activities.

Why Have a Tree Committee?

There are many benefits to having a Tree Committee in your community.

Such committees can:

- **Advocate** for better public tree and forest management and for more public support for urban and community forestry.
- **Get Work Done.** They may help complete an inventory, education campaign, planting program, or tree ordinance.
- **Bring in Additional Resources** for town trees and forests. Committees help apply for grants, solicit private donations, organize fundraisers, and advocate for larger budgets.
- **Reduce Conflicts.** Committees can help reduce potential conflicts by providing a forum for reviewing complaints, addressing safety issues, and supporting tree warden decisions.
- **Help Raise Public Awareness.** Citizen committees can be quite successful at educating residents about the importance of trees and urban forestry and at raising public awareness of the needs of trees and forests.
- **Improve your Urban and Community Forest.** Taken together, all these benefits result in an improved urban and community forest for your city or town.

How Do Tree Committees Form?

Some Tree Committees have been around for decades. Others form when the Tree Warden or town officials see the need for more citizen involvement in forestry. Most are advisory to the town and Tree Warden, but some have the authority of the Tree Warden.

Most Tree Committees in Massachusetts have formed when a group of citizens wants to get more involved in forestry. In most cases, these groups go to the Mayor or Select Board and ask that an officially recognized Tree Committee be appointed.

Talk to your Tree Warden. Talk to town officials. Talk to other interested and knowledgeable residents. Ask how a citizen Tree Committee could help in your town. See if you can get one started.

Tips for Successful Tree Boards and Committees

- Try to build a board that is representative of the diversity of your community.
 - Look for members with some area of expertise (arborist, communications specialist, grant writer, etc.). Make sure, in particular, that you have some members with knowledge of trees, forestry, and arboriculture.
 - Find members who are interested in working positively with all constituents and especially with the Tree Warden, town commissions, and other public officials.
 - Start with some easily achievable and tangible projects. Some tree boards have found that difficult projects (like writing a new tree ordinance or conducting a full inventory) often result in frustration and produce little to show for the effort.
 - Rotate your leadership and membership often. This helps groups guard against “burn-out” and continually brings in new ideas.
 - Make sure that all members are committed to finding solutions, not just identifying problems.
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Examples of Tree and Forest Committees in Massachusetts

Town of Brookline: Established in 1886, the Brookline Tree Planting Committee is the oldest continuous tree planting committee in the nation. The Board of Selectmen appoints the three-member committee that advises the Tree Warden on tree selection and placement. The Tree Planting Committee also holds public hearings for street tree removal requests.

City of Fall River: This Committee began in 1996 with about a dozen individuals interested in seeing more trees in their town. They concentrate on coordinating volunteer tree plantings in neighborhoods throughout the community.

Town of Monson: This Committee formed following the tornado of June 1, 2011 and provides leadership, education, and resources for residents replanting trees following the tornado. The Committee meets once a month, and, in addition to replanting, works to advocate for trees in the community through development of a tree ordinance and management plan and through educational programming for residents.

Town of Amherst: Amherst’s Shade Tree Committee is an ad hoc group with no “official” status that works to improve the urban forest of the community. They have successfully applied for state and national grants, started a tree nursery, and created parks in town. They work with the Tree Warden, Conservation Commission, and Open Space Committee.

Town of Greenfield: The Greenfield Tree Committee operates under the umbrella of Greening Greenfield, a local nonprofit organization. The Committee meets monthly to support the work of the Department of Public Works and the Tree Warden through workshops, educational programs, and fundraising for trees in the community.

References

Tree Board University www.treeboardu.org

Bureau of Forestry
Urban & Community Forestry Program
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600, Boston, MA 02114
www.mass.gov/dcr/urban-and-community-forestry

In Partnership with:
USDA Forest Service and
the Massachusetts Tree Wardens’ &
Foresters’ Association

