Results of the 2001 Survey

by

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College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Department of Extension
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BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

More than ten years ago several important events occurred regarding the expansion of urban and community forestry in the state: first, a survey (conducted in 1988) of municipalities demonstrated that few communities possessed the financial and technical resources to properly replant, care, and manage their community forest resource, and that there was little evidence of support for such efforts by elected officials; second, an urban forestry working group (which latter evolved into and incorporated as the Connecticut Urban Forest Council, Inc.) was formed by several cooperating agencies and non-government organizations with the purpose of information sharing and program direction; and third, urban forester positions were created with the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System (UCONN CES) and the Connecticut Department of Forestry, Division of Forestry (CT-DEP, Forestry).

Coincidently and timely was the passage by Congress of the 1990 Farm Title which, for the first time, included language enabling the USDA Forest Service to assist states with urban forestry. Money was also provided directly to the states through the State Forester. These funds were critical to providing the “push” to expand urban forestry to a significant program level.

In 1992 I conducted a state-wide needs assessment of communities and reported the results in 1994. Prior to that study I conducted a needs assessment of Connecticut’s Tree Wardens. The reason was simple. First, I was familiar with the history and legislation of Tree Wardens in Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association, Inc. And second, Tree Warden legislation is specific to the northeast and is a strong tradition in New England (all six New England states have Tree Wardens laws). In short, Tree Wardens were an obvious and good place to start.

In December 1991 I sent a letter and survey form to every municipality (169) in the state addressed to the Tree Warden. At that time no list of Tree Wardens existed and addresses were obtained from the Connecticut Blue Book. The goals of the 1991 need assessment were clear:

- Establish a broad base of information on skill and interest level for performing Tree Warden roles and responsibilities.
- Gather information that would help guide urban and community forestry educators in developing training programs and print materials for Tree Wardens.
- Act on recommendations specified in the survey not previously anticipated in the survey.
- Justify program expenditures and efforts based on empirical data as opposed to guess work, educator preference, or other unscientific motives.

In early 1992 I analyzed and interpreted the data. As a result of these outcomes recommendations were developed. The information was presented in a report, Connecticut Tree Warden Practices: Results of the 1991 Survey. Briefly, and building on the 1988 survey, results confirmed what many suspected: most Connecticut communities where not adequately caring for their public trees and that although charge with the duty by state statute, most Tree Wardens did
not possess adequate skills required to conserve public trees while providing for public safety. Two recommendations resulted from this need assessment: first and foremost, create a Tree Wardens association to provide educational opportunities, social cohesion, and voice for Connecticut’s Tree Wardens and, second, conduct at least two Tree Warden educational seminars each year.

A portion of the survey was devoted to the idea of developing a Tree Wardens association. Tree Wardens were asked if they supported the idea and, if yes, would they join such an organization. They were also asked who would be willing to serve as charter board of directors if interest in the association existed. A majority (87%) of survey respondents indicated such an association would be beneficial.

With this information a spring training program (on hazard tree assessment) at the Haddam Cooperative Extension Center. After the workshop all Tree Wardens were invited to participate in the first organizational meeting of the Tree Wardens’ Association of Connecticut. An interim board was created with interim officers elected. It should be mentioned that there was some opposition to the formation of this organization. However, the elected board remained adamant that the organization had a specific, unique, and essential purpose and mission.

This association has accomplished much due to strong board of director involvement (all are busy people who volunteer their time to serve) and visionary leadership. The rest, as it is often said, is history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the board of directors of the Tree Wardens’ Association of Connecticut, Inc. for providing funds for the printing of this publication. I would also like to thank them for their devotion and volunteer service to the organization specifically, and to Tree Wardens in Connecticut in general. Karl Reichle, president of the association, must be singled out for his strong leadership and vision for an influential, vital organization.

I would also like to thank the USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, for financial support and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Forestry, notably Chris Donnelly and Fred Borman, for their cooperation.

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West Hartford, Connecticut
October 12, 2002
TREE WARDENS AND URBAN FORESTRY

The first municipal tree protection laws in the United States were passed in colonial New England. For example, in 1636 – only sixteen years after the Puritans arriving in Massachusetts Bay – the Town of Boston issued an order “to prevent the trees being planted in the settlement from being spoiled.” The first community-based forest conservation group was founded in 1846 in Keene, New Hampshire, “to see if the town will permit the Forest Tree Society to fence in and ornament with trees a small portion of the Common.”

However, the first state-wide urban forestry laws (state laws that mandate the care of municipally owned trees in all towns and cities in that state) did not appear until much latter. The early 1900’s is generally recognized as the first Conservation Era in the United States. Private citizen’s and elected officials recognized the need for the conservation of trees and forests and, as result, the federal and state governments created agencies to conserve and protect forest resources. This came at a time when most of the non-residential lands in New England, especially in the three southern states, were abandoned farmland and cut-over or burned forests. Forest renewal became a social priority at this time and this sentiment included taking care of trees in cities and towns.

The Tree Warden Statutes that were enacted during this period in all six New England states provide the earliest examples of state urban forestry laws. These statutes required (or enabled) local municipalities to appoint Tree Wardens to conserve municipally owned trees. In 1899 Massachusetts passed the first Tree Warden statute with the other five New England states following suit laws modeled on the Massachusetts law but not exactly. Most of the laws require that municipalities appoint Tree Wardens and require qualifications.

It has been a hundred years since these laws were passed. The forest (both rural and urban) has changed. More roads, people, buildings, pollution, and other factors detrimental to tree health and survival exist today. Our society is also more litigious. Public safety and tree conservation are the priorities of the Tree Warden in the current era. Tree Wardens must balance the need to identify and cause the removal of high risk trees while, at the same time, maintaining a canopy of public trees that enhance community well-being.

It is clear that Tree Wardens have been the first urban foresters and remain on the front-lines today.

(this section was based on Tree Wardens and the Evolution of Urban Forestry in New England (Ricard 1997).)
NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF TREE WARDENS IN 2001

Ten years after the first Tree Wardens needs assessment was completed, it is timely and appropriate to see what, if any, gains have been made and what needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of Tree Wardens. Therefore, questions from the first survey where repeated on the 2001 form so that differences could be explored. New questions were also added.

This report, therefore, is a summary of the results of the 2001 Connecticut Tree Wardens Survey. It will serve, again, to guide urban forestry educators and others to further improve Connecticut’s municipally owned, public trees. As with the 1991 need assessment survey the goals are as relevant today as they were ten years ago, and are reaffirmed here.

- Establish a broad base of information on skill and interest level for performing Tree Warden roles and responsibilities.
- Gather information that would help guide urban and community forestry educators in developing training programs and print materials for Tree Wardens.
- Act on recommendations specified in the survey not previously anticipated in the survey.
- Justify program expenditures and efforts based on empirical data as opposed to guess work, educator preference, or other unscientific motives.

THE 2001 SURVEY OF TREE WARDEN PRACTICES

Survey Methods

A survey (Appendix A) was sent to all Tree Wardens on the 2000 mailing list. This list is maintained by UCONN CES and is updated continuously. The list is used to notify Tree wardens of workshops and conferences, the Tree Warden School and Certification Program, mail them new educational material, and associated Tree Wardens’ Association of Connecticut, Inc. information. It is very likely that this mailing list is more accurate than the 1991 list do to these repetitive mailings.

Each Tree Warden received a cover, the four page survey form, and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope and were returned to the University of Connecticut, Department of Extension, West Hartford Campus.

All questions resulted in categorical data and required simple descriptive statistical analysis. Data was entered and analyzed with EXCEL. Out of the 169 surveys mailed, 97 were completed and returned, a 57% rate of return.
Results

Tree Warden Profile

Most Tree Wardens (68%) (Figure 1) are municipal employees in the communities they serve (Figure 1). The average number of years Tree Wardens have served is 10.5 years with one individual reporting being appointed 31 years (the high) ago and eleven Tree Wardens reporting being appointed in 2001 (the low). More than half of the respondents (58 total), or 61%, were appointed in the last ten years (note: n symbolizes the number of Tree Wardens answering that specific question).

![Bar chart showing municipal and non-municipal employees serving as Tree Wardens (n=96).]

Figure 1. Total municipal employees and non-municipal employees serving as Tree Wardens (n=96).

Of those Tree Wardens who are municipal employees, almost half (46%) (Figure 2) reported that they are directors of public works (one reported being the assistant director). Road foreman was second (19%), Tree Warden was third (12%), and so forth (Figure 2).

![Bar chart showing job titles for Tree Wardens who are municipal employees.]

Figure 2. Job titles for the 56 responding Tree Wardens who are municipal employees.
Of the Tree Wardens who are not municipal employees, no one discipline stood out (Figure 3). Most were in a "green industry" or natural resource discipline (arborist, 18%; landscape architect, 12%; nurseryman, 12%, forester, 6%). Retired was the largest category at 28%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nurseryman</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemist</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area manager</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arborist company</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forester</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape architect</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Warden</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Job titles for the 17 responding Tree Wardens who are non-municipal employees.

As for level of education of the 90 Tree Wardens responding to the question, 54 possess a college degree while 36 do not.

Fifty-seven percent possess professional certificates and/or licenses. These include arborist license (25), registered landscape architect (4), custom grounds (8), certified forester (2), ISA certification (4), certified leisure protection (1), UCONN Road Master (1), and Massachusetts Certified Arborist. Slightly more than half belong to organizations (other the Tree Wardens’ Association of Connecticut, Inc.) that help as Tree Wardens (22 belong (n=82) to the Connecticut Tree Protective Association).
Tree Warden Work

Risk tree assessment was considered the most important duty for 60% of the respondents (Figure 4) in 2001. Tree removal (19%) was the most important duty considered for another 1/5th of the Tree Wardens. Public safety (10%), a duty that might involve risk tree and/or sight-line assessment, followed next.

![Diagram showing percentages of Tree Wardens' duties](image)

**Figure 4.** The duties of responding Tree Warden (n=97) considered most important.

In regards to the duty consider second most important by responding Tree Wardens, three duties were about of equal importance to more than 60% of the respondents (Figure 5); tree removal (27%), responding to complaints (21%), and public safety (20%).

![Diagram showing percentages of Tree Wardens' duties](image)

**Figure 5.** The duties of responding Tree Wardens (n=79) considered the second most important.

In contrast to what Tree Wardens consider to be the most important duties a Tree Warden must attend to, a philosophical question, are the tasks that they actually perform in their operations. Figure 6 illustrates this. Risk tree management is the task performed by 39% of the respondents, followed by tree removal (26%), combining for 67% of the total. Both traits may be similar in that tree removal, obviously, eliminates a tree as risk. Fielding questions is the third task performed (15%).

2001 Tree Warden Survey
Figure 6. The tasks that responding Tree Wardens spend the most time on (n=85).

State law mandates that Tree Wardens post public trees ten days prior to removal or pruning. Seventy-eight (93%) respondents stated they post trees prior to pruning and/or removal while six (7%) do not (n=84).

A public hearing may be requested by a person to the Tree Warden. The person requesting the hearing must request this in writing within the ten day posted period. The Tree Warden shall then hold a public hearing at a reasonable time. Public tree hearings have been conducted by half of the respondents (n=88).
Tree Warden Continuing Education

In 1997 the Tree Wardens’ Association of Connecticut, Inc. and UCONN CES initiated the Tree Warden School and Certification Program with the first class of 30 participants held in the fall of 1998. All participants passed the final exam given on the last day with a minimum grade of 70%. Graduates are then considered to be Certified Tree Wardens and must attend workshops to obtain at least 15 continuing education credits in a three year period to maintain certification.

Of the 96 Tree Wardens responding, half (51%) stated that they were Certified Tree Wardens as illustrated in Figure 7. Fifty-nine percent (n=90) of the Tree Wardens stated that they had attended a Tree Wardens Association sponsored workshop in the past three years. Of these, 93% stated that the workshops increased their skills and knowledge (Figure 7). Sixty-four percent of the Tree Wardens responding (n=94) have also attended other workshops (Figure 8) with the Tree Wardens having increased their knowledge and skills (94%) at these as well (Figure 9). Seventy-nine percent stated that they have received training in risk tree assessment.

![Increased knowledge and skills 93%](image)

**Figure 7.** Of those responding Tree Wardens who attend Tree Warden Association workshops, the percentage of those who thought the workshops increased their skills and knowledge (n=59).

![Attended workshops 64%](image)

**Figure 8.** The percentage of responding Tree Wardens who have attended workshop sponsored by other organizations or agencies in the past three years (n=94).

![Increased knowledge and skills 94%](image)

**Figure 9.** Of those responding Tree Wardens who attend workshops by other organizations or agencies, the percentage of those who thought the workshops increased their skills and knowledge (n=62).
Community Tree Programs

Less than 37% of the communities with responding Tree Wardens have shade tree ordinances (Figure 10).

![Pie chart showing 37% with shade tree ordinances and 63% without.]

**Figure 10.** The percentage of towns of the responding Tree wardens with shade tree ordinances (n=70).

Less than half (45%) of the Tree Wardens responding (n=91) said that their community had a tree replacement program. Of those communities with a program the range of annual expenditures was a maximum of $112,500 and a minimum of $200 and a $17,544 average. Exactly 50% (44 respondents) stated that they had received either grant or private contributions for tree replacement.

Twenty-two percent of the responding Tree Wardens stated that they have tree inventories (Figure 11).

![Pie chart showing 22% with tree inventories and 78% without.]

**Figure 11.** The percentage of towns of the responding Tree Wardens with tree inventories (n=92).

Of the 89 Tree Wardens responding, 64% stated that their crews are not trained in tree care, while 36% are. However, and most importantly, fifty-one out 61 respondents stated they would welcome tree care training opportunities for their crews.
Responding Tree Wardens are in general satisfied with utility line tree maintenance performed in their community (Figure 12).

![Satisfied 78% Not satisfied 22%](image)

**Figure 12.** The percentage of responding Tree Wardens who indicated satisfaction with utility line tree maintenance performed in their community (n=90).

More than half (63%) of the responding Tree Wardens (n=90) stated that they routinely supervise and/or inspect utility tree maintenance crews when in their communities.

Less than half (35%) of the responding Tree Wardens (n=94) stated that there are tree related citizen organizations in their communities. These included a Tree Committee (1), green preservation associations (2), garden clubs (6), Knox Park Foundation (1-Hartford), land trust (1), millennium trees (1), and a neighborhood organization (1). The majority (93%, 27 total (n-29)) had a favorable working relationship with the citizen tree organization. Two respondents had a poor working relationship with their citizen organization.

**Connecticut Tree Law**

When asked if they believed existing state laws are adequate in helping protect, care for and maintain the public trees in their community while providing for public safety at the same time, 84% said yes (n=89) while 16% said no. Sixty-nine percent stated that they would like to see the state statutes changed to require continuing education for Tree Wardens (n=89) while 62% went so far as to state that they favor professional accreditation for and/or licensure of Tree Wardens. Half indicated that they prefer that certification of Tree Wardens remain voluntary.

**Tree Warden Organization**

Out of 83 respondents, 82% are members of the Tree Wardens’ Association of Connecticut, Inc. Of these 57 stated that they are generally satisfied with what the organization has done since it was founded in 1992, while two are not. Reasons for not joining were: “not interested” (two respondents), “not enough time” (two respondents), and “never thought of it” (one respondent).
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![Pie Chart: Satisfied 78%, Not satisfied 22%]

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COMPARISONS WITH THE 1991 SURVEY RESULTS

In 1991 more than half (66%) of the Tree Wardens reported that they were municipal employees and this remained about the same (68%) in 2001. Of those reporting to be municipal employees, public works directors were the greatest job title report in both years, just under half. Other positions remain proportionally about the same. The only change, interestingly enough, was the reporting of first selectman. In 2001 only 6% of the Tree Wardens reporting were first selectman, down from 15% in 1991. In 1991 67% reported possessing college degrees; in 2001 it was about the same. Regarding Tree Wardens who reported having certificates, the percentage was about the same (more than half) in both years.

A major difference between years is that the percentage of Tree Wardens reporting risk tree management to be their most important duty in 2001 was 60% while in 1999 it was only 27%. Tree removal, the second most important task, was about the same in both years.

However, when asked what they spend their time doing (what tasks they perform most regularly, risk tree management was about the same (39%, 2001; 33%, 1991). This is interesting in that it seems that in ten years awareness of risk tree management has increased dramatically, actually applying it is another matter altogether.

In the 2001 survey more than half of the respondents stated that they have attended Tree Warden Association sponsored workshops. Sixty-three percent stated that they had attended workshops sponsored by other organizations or agencies. This number was up from 47% in 1991. In 2001 93% of the Tree Wardens stated that the training was worthwhile, up slightly from 85% in 1991.

The shade tree ordinances were up from 23% in 1991 to 37% in 2001. Tree replacement programs were up from 26% (1991) to 45% (2001). Twelve percent of the communities had some form of tree inventory in 1991 which increased to 22% in 2001. In 1991 less than half (40%) indicated that they had community tree groups in their town. In 2001 this statistic decreased to 35%.

A vast majority of respondents (81%) stated that they were generally satisfied with utility tree trimming and removal practices. This percentage decreased only slightly in 2001 to 78%.

In both years Tree Wardens felt that existing state Tree Warden statutes were adequate in helping them protect, care for and maintain the public trees in the communities. In both years, again, the majority of Tree Wardens believed that they would like to see that state statutes changed to require continuing education.

In 1991 87% of the respondents thought it would be good if a Tree Warden Association was created. In 1992 this came to pass. And in 2001 82% of the respondents stated that they belonged to the organization.
RECOMMENDATIONS

An important purpose of this survey was to see whether or not progress has been made in ten years concerning the effectiveness of Tree Wardens. It is fair to conclude that progress has been made in several categories: increased recognition that risk tree management is critical, that continuing education is important (and, related, that voluntary certification has been desirable), tree replacement has increased, and that the creation of the Tree Wardens' Association of Connecticut, Inc. has desirable and well-received by Tree Wardens.

However, applying what is learned in the classroom, through peer-to-peer contact, and through experience, on a daily basis, remains difficult for most Tree Wardens. This may be due more to a lack of time available, lack of sufficient financial resources, and a lack of trained personnel, rather than to will and ability on the part of Tree Wardens.

Therefore, based on this survey, and in consideration of ten years of change since the first survey in 1991, it is recommended that the following recommendations be acted upon:

- Continue support of the Tree Warden Association.
- Increase membership and member participation in association activities.
- Continue the Tree Warden School as demand dictates.
- Maintain strong continuing education opportunities for Tree Wardens.
- Provide training to municipal crews (such as road crews) who prune and/or remove and/or plant trees routinely or occasionally.
- Continue to integrate Tree Wardens into the variety of urban forestry organizations and functions around the state and within their communities.
- Increase public awareness of the responsibilities and duties of Tree Wardens.
- Increase understanding and appreciation of Tree Wardens with municipal officials, especially with chief elected officials.
Appendix A

The 2001 Connecticut Tree Warden Questionnaire
Please complete the following...

1. What is the population of your city or town?

2. In what year were you appointed tree warden?

3. Are you a municipal employee (circle one)?
   a. If yes, what is your municipal job title?
   b. If no, are you a private citizen who has volunteered to serve as tree warden (circle one)?
      If yes, what is your private job title?

4. What is your most important duty as tree warden?

5. What is your second most important duty as tree warden?

6. What task do you spend most of your time on?

7. Are you a Certified Tree Warden (circle one)?
   a. If yes, in what year did you graduate?

8. Have you attended Tree Warden Association workshops in the past three years (circle one)?
   a. If yes, how many?
   b. If yes, have Tree Warden Association workshops helped increase your skills and knowledge (circle one)?

9. Have you attended other tree related workshops sponsored by other organizations (such as CTPA, UCONN Cooperative Extension) in the past three years (circle one)?
   a. If yes, have these workshops helped increase your skills and knowledge (circle one)?
Please tell me about your communities tree care efforts.

1. Does your city or town have a street tree or shade tree ordinance (circle one)?
   YES  NO

2. Does your town have a tree replacement program (circle one)?
   YES  NO
   a. If yes, what is the annual tree replacement budget? $____________
   b. How many trees were planted in 2000? ______________

3. Have you received grants or private contributions for tree replacement (circle one)?
   YES  NO
   a. If yes, how much has been received since 1995? $____________

4. Does your town have a tree inventory (circle one)?
   YES  NO
   a. If yes, how is it maintained (i.e., computer, GIS)?

5. What was the annual budget your town spent on tree care in 2000? $____________

6. Are town tree crews trained in tree care (circle one)?
   YES  NO
   a. If yes, how did they receive their training? ______________
   b. If no, would you welcome the opportunity to have them receive training from an outside organization, such as the CT Dept. of Environmental Protection (circle one)?

7. Are you satisfied with the utility line tree maintenance performed in your community (circle one)?
   YES  NO
   Please elaborate ________________________________

8. Do you routinely supervise and/or inspect utility tree maintenance crews when they perform tree work in your community (circle one)?
   YES  NO

9. Is there (or are there) any tree related citizen organizations in your community (circle one)?
   YES  NO
   a. If yes, please name it (or them): ________________________________
   b. If yes, do you and they work well together (circle one)?

10. Have you received hazard tree assessment training (circle one)?
    YES  NO
11. Have local businesses or corporations funded tree planting and/or maintenance projects during the past ten years (circle one)?
   YES NO
   Please elaborate

Please comment on the Connecticut state statutes related to tree warden powers and duties...

1. Do you believe existing state laws are adequate in helping you protect, care for and maintain the public trees in your community while proving for public safety at the same time (circle one)?
   YES NO

2. Would you like to see the state statutes changed to require:
   a. the continuing education and training of tree wardens (circle one)?
      YES NO
   b. professional accreditation for and/or licensure of tree wardens (circle one)?
      YES NO

3. Would you prefer that certification of tree wardens remain voluntary (circle one)?
   YES NO

Please provide the following information...

1. Are you a member of the Tree Wardens' Association of Connecticut, Inc. (circle one)?
   YES NO
   a. If yes, how many years have you been a member?
   b. If yes, are you generally satisfied with what the organization has done since it was founded in 1992 (circle one)?
      YES NO
      Please elaborate

   c. If no, why have you not joined (circle one)?
      YES NO
      Please elaborate
2. Do you possess a college degree or degrees (circle one)?
   a. If yes, in what disciplines and what level (i.e., AS, BS, MS, etc.)

   YES  NO

3. Do you post trees prior to pruning and/or removal (circle one)?
   YES  NO

4. Have you ever conducted a public hearing (circle one)?
   YES  NO

5. Do you possess professional certificates/licenses (circle one)?
   a. If yes, please list them

   YES  NO

6. Do you belong to any associations or organizations that help
   you in your capacity as tree warden (circle one)?
   a. If yes, please list them

   YES  NO

Please add any additional comments that you might have on the back of this sheet.
Thank you.

Please return to:
Robert M. Ricard, Extension Educator
UCONN Cooperative Extension
1800 Asylum Ave.
West Hartford, CT 06117-2600

Any questions?
Call me at 860/570-9257