

OREGON

Oregon Department of Forestry

An old saying has gotten a new twist, “trees grow on money.” In Oregon, like many states, the more populous and affluent cities tend to have more sophisticated urban and community forestry programs than those in smaller communities. Research also indicates that within cities, tree canopy correlates with income. Given the multiple benefits of urban tree canopy, these findings raise environmental justice concerns within and between cities.



Oregon Community Trees Board of Directors toured Orenco Woods Nature Park in Hillsboro during a recent meeting. Head Over Heels is a sculpture using woven branches of willow and red twig dogwood. *Photo Credit: Oregon Community Trees*

The Oregon Department of Forestry’s (ODF) Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Assistance program works with its nonprofit partner, Oregon Community Trees (OCT), the state’s urban and community forest council, to serve smaller communities across the state, as well as underserved populations in all cities. Together, these partners cohost an annual conference and determine urban forestry award recipients. Additionally, OCT, through a small grant program, annually funds four to six Arbor Day “boost” grants to Tree City USAs and routinely hosts half-day seminars on tree pruning and tree protection. By optimizing its partnership with OCT, ODF extends expert UCF advice and encouragement to cities that do not have large UCF programs and to non-traditional populations who want to learn more about urban forestry work.

Oregon’s population is around 4.1 million, with over 95 percent living in one of Oregon’s 241 incorporated cities. There are five cities with populations over 100,000, and approximately 229 cities with populations of less than 50,000. Of those 229 cities, 147 have populations less than 4,000. One of the ongoing challenges for ODF’s UCF Assistance program is to make UCF awareness and management relevant to communities of different sizes, with fiscal disparities and underserved populations, and in climatically diverse areas.

No community is too small for UCF! In larger cities, smaller, underserved populations can also benefit from UCF awareness and outreach. With a staff of two, the UCF Assistance program must rely on its partners to assist communities with their understanding and use of urban forest management concepts. Comprised of a variety of professionals—urban foresters, arborists, city planners, educators, utilities, nurseries, and university extension—the all-volunteer board of OCT helps the ODF-UCF program by offering technical assistance in and promotion of urban forestry across the state.

OCT and ODF-UCF have been conferring urban forestry awards and cohosting an annual conference, along with the USDA Forest Service, for years. Several years ago, the ODF-UCF program decided to focus on building Tree City USA communities within Oregon as a way to encourage commitment to and participation in urban forestry throughout the state. Over the years, the OCT and ODF-UCF partnership has worked together to provide incentives for participation in the Tree City USA program, such as discounts on annual conference registration, special Arbor Day presenters for benchmark years, and participation in an Arbor Day “boost” grant program, which is funded by OCT. These small competitive grants are offered to Oregon Tree City USA communities to help them “boost” their Arbor Day activities.

Since the OCT board is also a place to hone the professional meeting and collaboration skills of its directors, several of its directors have led workshops on technical arboricultural skills for city staff. OCT has also partnered with programs that train under-represented groups in arboricultural skill-building. These half-day workshops occur around the state. When possible, International Society of Arboriculture continuing education units are offered to city-staff attendees, and similar work-credit recognition is extended to non-traditional participants learning about arboricultural skills for the first time. It is not uncommon to have more than 50 attendees at these events.

This collaboration between the ODF-UCF program and OCT is a cost effective and efficient way to extend high-quality technical instruction and positive urban forestry support to Oregon communities of all sizes.



OCT partners with ODF to produce an annual Oregon urban and community forestry conference that is attended by UCF-folks from across the state. *Photo Credit: Eric DeBord*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Oregon Department of Forestry
Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program
<https://www.oregon.gov/odf/forestbenefits/pages/urbanforests.aspx>