

# 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual

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## **New York ReLeaf Conference**

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July 15-17, 2026  
Manhattan University  
Bronx, NY



**New York  
ReLeaf**

# Welcome to the 2026 ReLeaf Conference!

## Caring for Trees in a Changing City

We are pleased to welcome you to the 33rd Annual New York ReLeaf Conference, where you'll look at some of New York City's Great Trees, discuss how arborists can grow to meet the future, and hear about grant projects and training programs that are moving us toward our shared goal of greening our communities for the benefit of all. You'll also have the opportunity to network and exchange ideas with leading urban forestry specialists and professionals.

## Sustainability

We encourage you to bring a reusable water bottle for use during the conference. You are also welcome to bring a reusable coffee mug.

Our food vendors have supplied paper and compostable supplies or reusable silverware when possible. We also encourage you to utilize our transportation options or walk when attending the tours and dinner.

## Continuing Education Credits

Continuing education credits are available for International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), Certified Nursery & Landscape Professional (CNLP), Society of American Foresters (SAF), and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Pesticide Applicators, as noted in this program.

Please check with the registration desk or presentation moderators for details.

We can also provide certificates of attendance for those who need proof of attendance for planning and zoning boards or other programs.

Session moderators will have sign-in sheets for credits available at the end of each session. Attendees must sign in on those sheets to receive credits.

## College Information

- Manhattan University's address is: 4513 Manhattan College Pkwy Bronx, NY 10471.
- A linen package will be available at check-in. It includes fitted and flat sheets, a pillow, and a blanket. Please bring any additional toiletries or linens you may need.
- Free parking is available for attendees and overnight guests in the college's parking garage.

## 2026 ReLeaf Conference Agenda

| Wednesday, July 15          |   |
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| 1:00–3:00 p.m.              | Sponsor and exhibitor setup   |
| 3:00–6:00 p.m.              | Attendee check-in open  |
| 1:00–3:30 p.m.              | NYS Urban Forestry Council board meeting  |
| 1:00–6:30 p.m.              | <b>Preconference Activity:</b> Community Reforestation (CoRe) Community of Practice - meeting and potential field trip for anyone interested in reforestation and restoration of forested natural areas. Location: Kelly Commons, 4th Floor, Room 4B.   |
| 4:00 p.m.                   | <b>Preconference Activity:</b> NYC Great Tree 5K Run: Bronx Edition. Celebrate NYC's Urban Forest with a 5K run. Join runner, ISA Arborist and NYC Parkie John Kilcullen, Administrator, South Shore Parks Staten Island for an easy 5K run/walk to visit and learn about the Great Trees of Van Cortlandt Park and the surrounding Manhattanville University neighborhood.<br><a href="https://www.nycgovparks.org/facilities/great-trees">https://www.nycgovparks.org/facilities/great-trees</a> . Cost \$17.76.  |
| 6:00–7:00 p.m.              | NYS Urban Forestry Council members meeting  |
| 7:00–9:00 p.m.              | Conference Reception  |
| Thursday, July 16 – Morning |   |
| 7:30 a.m.                   | Attendee check-in opens   |
| 8:30-9:15 a.m.              | Welcome to ReLeaf 2026! DEC Urban Forestry and NYSUFC opening remarks   |
| 9:15–10:00 a.m.             | <b>Keynote: “Take to the Trees,”</b> Marguerite Holloway, Professor and Director of Science and Environmental Journalism, Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and Author of “Take to the Trees”   |
| 10:00–10:20 a.m.            | Awards and Exhibitor introductions  |
| 10:20–10:45 a.m.            | Break – please visit our exhibitors and sponsors  |
| 10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m.       | <p>Concurrent workshop sessions</p> <p><b>Session A: “From Canopy to Craft: Reimagining Urban Wood Waste as a City Resource,”</b> Chris Borman – Director of Tree Preservation, NYC Parks, and Elizabeth (Liz) Zink and Itai Jaffe of Tri-Lox.</p> <p><b>Session B: “Urban Forest Plans for Changing Cities,”</b> Emily Nobel Maxwell – Senior Advisor, City Parks Foundation, Principal, Nobel Cause Consulting; NYC Mayor's Office of Climate &amp; Environmental Justice staff; Steve Harris, Syracuse City Forester.</p> <p><b>Session C: “NYC Parks’ Climber Pruner Training Program“</b> Ben Osborne - Assistant Commissioner of Forestry and Horticulture, New York City Department of Parks and Rec, and Ducep Moreno – Climber Pruner Training Program Manager</p> <p><b>“Veterans Green Career Landscape Program”</b> Helen Thurston – Trustee, Evergreens Cemetery Preservation Foundation</p> |

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| 12:00 p.m.  | Lunch, and attendee check-in closes  |
| Thursday July 16 – Afternoon – Concurrent tours and Presentations |  |
| 1:30 p.m.   | <p>Transport to tour sites for those on tours. Buses meet at main gate across the street from Kelly Commons</p> <p>1:30 PM Bus for Tour 1: Inwood Hill Park leaves</p> <p>2:00 PM Bus for Tour 2: Woodlawn Cemetery leaves</p>   |
| 1:30–4:30 p.m.  | <p>Tours must be signed up for during conference registration. If you wish to change your tour or sign up for one late, stop by the conference registration table to see if space is available.</p> <p><b>Tour 1: Tour of Inwood Hill Park.</b> Led by Tim Wenskus, DEC Forester.</p> <p>Inwood Hill Park is a 196-acre park at the northern tip of Manhattan, containing the last natural forest and salt marsh in Manhattan. On this tour attendees will see a grove of 200-year-old tulip trees, enjoy spectacular views of the Hudson River, and learn about 35 years of urban forest management and restoration from Tim Wenskus, who designed and managed much of the work.</p> <p>Accessibility: While much of the tour will be on paved trails, participants will be hiking/walking over a mile, up a 100 feet of grade change, and some stretches include uneven rocky terrain.</p> <p>Space is limited to 55 people. Bus to return to campus leaves at 4:00 PM</p> <p><b>Tour 2: Woodlawn Cemetery Tree Tour.</b> Led by Elizabeth Hunter –Coordinator of Public Programs for Woodlawn, Jonathan Clemente –Preservation Program Manager for Woodlawn, Meg Ventrudo - Executive Director of the Woodlawn Conservancy, and Herb Landmann - Project Manager for the Davey Tree Expert Company.</p> <p>The Woodlawn Cemetery is a National Historic Landmark and a Level II Arboretum. Woodlawn is the final resting place of musicians, Gilded Age Tycoons and Society Members, Suffragists, Authors, and notable citizens of the Harlem Renaissance. As a Level II Arboretum, Woodlawn has more than 6000 trees including 8 New York City Great Trees. This is a part walking and part trolley tour. The group will visit Woodlawn’s famed jazz corner, the final resting place of Miles Davis and Duke Ellington, and will see the weeping beech at the mausoleum of Jay Gould.</p> <p>Accessibility: Much of the walking portion of the tour is on paved surfaces or relatively flat grassy surfaces up to a mile, with a trolley tour portion taking attendees to other sites around the cemetery. If needed, a golf cart can be available for the walking portion of the tour.</p> <p>Space is limited to 55 people. Bus to return to campus leaves at 4:30 PM</p> |

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| 2:00–3:30 p.m. | <p><b>Session D:</b><br/> <b>“Increasing Capacity for Just Language: Reflecting on Histories of Native, Non-Native, and Invasive Species Language and Frameworks”</b><br/> Tina Cuevas - Natural Areas Outreach Coordinator, NYC Parks, Lea Thali – Deputy Director of Natural Resources Training, NYC Parks, Neha Savant – Wildlife and Fisheries Ecologist, NYC Parks</p>   |
| 3:30-4:00 p.m. | <p><b>“Distributed restoration of the American chestnut in New York City: challenges, opportunities, uncertainty.”</b> Jason Smith - Director of Northern Manhattan Parks for the New York Restoration Project. This talk will provide an overview of the New York Restoration Project's effort to establish disease resistant hybrid American Chestnuts in New York City. Following an update on the largest urban planting of potentially disease resistant American Chestnut in northern Manhattan's Highbridge Park Jason will provide an overview of the Thousand Chestnut Challenge, a collaborative, grass-roots effort to distribute and grow hybrid American chestnut throughout NYC. This talk will explore urban Chestnut restoration as an example of pragmatic conservation in the face of rapid environmental change and uncertainty. In particular, it will share social media and narrative approaches that have been effective in developing a distributed network of tree growers and galvanizing strong public interest in urban biodiversity.</p> |
| 4:00–5:15 p.m. | Return from tours and break   |
| 5:15–8:00 p.m. | Conference dinner event for all attendees   |

Friday July 17 – Morning

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| 9:00–9:45 a.m. | <p>Concurrent workshops</p> <p><b>Session E: “What Do I Do with All This Public Tree Data? Using Syracuse’s TreeKeeper Data to Inform Future Urban Forest Management Decisions”</b> Jude May - Master’s student in Natural Resources Management, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.</p> <p><b>Session F: Community Reforestation (CoRe) Grant Panel Discussion.</b><br/> Moderated by Clara Pregitzer – Deputy Director of Conservation Science, Natural Areas Conservancy, this panel discussion features CoRe grantees: Brent Knepper – Forester, City of Kingston; Martin Larocca – Deputy Chief Sustainability Officer, Binghamton University; John Zeiger – Thain Family Forest Manager, New York Botanical Garden.</p> <p><b>Session G: “Advancing Tree Equity in New York: Catalyzing Community-Driven Impact and Statewide Collaboration”</b><br/> Lida Aljabar - Senior Director, Catalyst Initiative at American Forests</p> <p><b>“Growing Roots Together: Participatory Action Research, Reciprocity, and Transformation in Urban Forestry”</b> Dr. Mayra Rodríguez González - Extension Urban Forester, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension</p> |
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| 9:45–10:00 a.m.       | Break – please visit our exhibitors and sponsors  |
| 10:15–11:00 a.m.      | <p>Concurrent workshops</p> <p><b>Session H: “The Future Urban Arborist: Skills, Tools &amp; Technologies Cities Need for the Next 5 Years”</b><br/>Shravya Peddigari - General Manager/Market Leader, SavATree.</p> <p><b>Session I: “Preserving Trees During Construction In An Evolving City”</b> Ariane Trani - Deputy Director for the Permits and Plan Review team at NYC Parks housed under the Division of Environment and Planning, Forestry and Horticulture</p> <p><b>Session J: “Resilience in Action: Green-Wood's Stormwater Strategy,”</b><br/>Joe Charap – Vice President of Landscape, The Green-Wood Cemetery</p> |
| 11:10 a.m.–12:15 p.m. | <b>Closing session: “The Arboreal Dimensions of Black New Yorkers”</b><br>Georgia Silvera Seamans - Executive Director, Local Nature Lab  |
| 12:15 p.m.            | Lunch – grab and go or enjoy on campus  |
| 1:00 p.m.             | Conference ends   |

# Thanks to Our Conference Sponsors:

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