

32nd Annual

New York ReLeaf Conference

July 22–24, 2025

Lake Ontario Event and Conference Center
Oswego, NY



**New York
ReLeaf**



**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**



**NEW YORK STATE
URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL**

Welcome to the 2025 ReLeaf Conference!

A Century of Urban Forestry: Then, Now, and into the Future!

We are pleased to welcome you to the 32nd Annual New York ReLeaf Conference, where you'll look at historical projects, discuss how urban forestry has evolved over time, and hear about future projects that will move us toward achieving 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.

25 Million Trees Initiative

Governor Kathy Hochul's "25 Million Trees by 2033" initiative recognizes the importance of trees and forests for climate mitigation and community health. Trees filter pollutants out of air and water, absorb and store carbon, help control stormwater runoff, create shade that cools temperatures, and more. To achieve New York State's goal of planting 25 million trees, DEC is encouraging reforestation across the state, in rural and urban areas, and on both public and private lands. Every tree planted—whether to create a new forest, assist in forest restoration, or green your neighborhood—is a step toward a healthier, more resilient future for New Yorkers. Take action now! Visit on.ny.gov/25milliontrees for more information on how you can get involved.

Sustainability

We encourage you to bring a reusable water bottle for use during the conference. Water stations are available to refill your bottle. 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. Additional credits for Landscape Architects (LA) may be available. 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.

Hotel Information

- Best Western Plus Oswego Hotel and Conference Center's address is:
26 East 1st Street, Oswego, NY 13126.
- Free parking is available at the conference center and hotel.

Thanks to Our Conference Sponsors:

Reception sponsor:

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Plant Geo

Roots:

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Speaker Gift Sponsor:

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2025 ReLeaf Conference Agenda at a Glance

Please see the presentation details section for more information on each session, including available continuing education credits.

All conference events are in the Lake Ontario Event and Conference Center in the Best Western Plus Oswego. Breakout rooms 1, 2, and 3 are located on the 1st floor. The Foyer, Riverfront Reception, Lake Ontario Ballroom, and rooms A, B, and C are on the 2nd floor.

Tuesday, July 22	
1:00–3:00 p.m.	Sponsor and vendor exhibit setup (<i>Foyer</i>)
1:00–3:30 p.m.	NYS Urban Forestry Council (NYSUFC) board meeting (<i>Breakout Room 3</i>)
3:00–5:30 p.m.	Attendee check-in opens (<i>Foyer</i>)
4:00–5:30 p.m.	Preconference activity (<i>Check with registration table</i>)
6:00–7:00 p.m.	NYSUFC member meeting (<i>Breakout Room 3</i>)
7:00–9:00 p.m.	NYSUFC member reception (<i>Lake Ontario Ballroom</i>)
Wednesday, July 23 – Morning	
7:30 a.m.	Attendee check-in opens (<i>Foyer</i>)
8:30– 9:15 a.m.	Welcome to ReLeaf 2025! (<i>Room A</i>) DEC Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) and NYSUFC opening remarks Welcomes from local elected officials
9:15–10:00 a.m.	Keynote (<i>Room A</i>) “Look Back to Move Forward: Storytelling in Urban Forestry,” Doug Still – Host and Producer of <i>This Old Tree</i> podcast
10:00–10:05 a.m.	Exhibitor introductions (<i>Room A</i>)
10:05–10:45 a.m.	Break – please visit our exhibitors and sponsors (<i>Foyer</i>)

2025 ReLeaf Conference Agenda at a Glance

10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Concurrent sessions Session A: <i>(Room B)</i> “Biotechnology for Protecting Threatened Trees,” Andrew Newhouse – American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project; student presentations by Amy Twohig – State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF); and Taylor Wegner – SUNY ESF Session B: <i>(Room C)</i> “Regional Approaches to Urban and Community Forestry,” Mike Boccuzzi – Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board (CNY RPDB) “New York’s Tree and Forest Establishment Initiatives,” Annabel Gregg – DEC Session C: <i>(Breakout rooms 2 and 3)</i> “Cemeteries as Green Spaces,” panel discussion with Andrew Place – City of Rochester Forestry Division, representing Mount Hope Cemetery; Christine O’Malley – Friends of Ithaca City Cemetery; and a representative from Cayuga Bird Club; moderated by Joseph Charap – The Green-Wood Cemetery
12:00 p.m.	Lunch <i>(Riverfront Reception)</i> Attendee check-in closes
Wednesday, July 23 – Afternoon	
1:30 p.m.	Meet in front of the hotel for the tours. Shuttles for the bike tour leave promptly at 1:45 p.m. Please see the full presentation and tour details section for more information.
2:00–4:30 p.m.	Concurrent local tours and sessions: Tour 1: “SUNY Oswego Green Campus Bike Tour,” Kate Spector – SUNY Oswego. Preregistration required. Tour 2: “Oswego Port Authority Walking Tour,” Preregistration required. Tour 3: “West Side Linear Park Walking Tour,” Andrew Hillman – NYSUFC, and City of Oswego Tree Advisory Board; and Jeffrey Hammill – City of Oswego Tree Care and Parks Maintenance. Preregistration required.
2:20–3:00 p.m.	Session D: <i>(Room B)</i> “Trees, Health, and Landscapes,” Jerry Bond – Urban Forest Analytics

2025 ReLeaf Conference Agenda at a Glance

3:15–4:00 p.m.	Session E: <i>(Room B)</i> “Oswego Brownfields Redevelopment,” Wei Zhang – Zynnovation LLC and the Institute of Soil Genomics for Healthy Community Forests; and Karen Noyes – Oswego County Department of Community Development
4:30–5:30 p.m.	Return from tours and break
5:30–8:00 p.m.	Dinner for all attendees at Old City Hall Brewing, 159 Water St., Oswego, NY 13126. Walk to dinner or carpool.
Thursday, July 24 – Morning	
9:00–9:45 a.m.	Concurrent sessions Session F: <i>(Room A)</i> “How Municipal Characteristics, Resources, and Services Influence NYSDEC Urban Forest Grant Obtainment and Execution: A NYS Case Study,” Rebecca Hargrave – SUNY Morrisville Session G: <i>(Room B)</i> “Journey of a Tree Canopy,” Michael Mahanna – GreenUtica Session H: <i>(Breakout rooms 2 and 3)</i> “CCE Onondaga CommuniTree Steward Program: 23 years later,” David Skeval – Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Onondaga County
9:45–10:15 a.m.	Break – please visit our exhibitors and sponsors <i>(Foyer)</i>
10:15–11:00 a.m.	Concurrent sessions Session I: <i>(Room A)</i> “New Hybrid Oaks for the Urban Landscape,” Nina Bassuk – Cornell University Session J: <i>(Room B)</i> “Modernizing Syracuse’s Tree Ordinance,” Steve Harris – City of Syracuse Session K: <i>(Breakout rooms 2 and 3)</i> “The Sidewalks of New York: The Culture of Urban Tree Preservation,” Jean Zimmerman – Consulting Arborist and Author

2025 ReLeaf Conference Agenda at a Glance

11:05 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	Closing session (<i>Room A</i>) “The I-81 Viaduct Project (I-81 removal)—Landscape Architecture for a Connected Future,” Elizabeth “Betsy” Parmley, Professional Engineer (PE) – NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) “A Century of Urban Forestry, Past, Present, and Into the Future,” Josh Behounek – Davey Resource Group; and Andrew Hillman – NYSUFC, and City of Oswego Tree Advisory Board
12:30 p.m.	Grab-and-go lunch available (<i>Riverfront Reception</i>)
12:30 p.m.	Post-conference tour of Sterling Nature Center. Preregistration required. Meet in front of hotel.
1:00 p.m.	Conference ends



**Please complete the conference evaluation
to share your thoughts with us!**

Thank You!

Regional Conference Partners



Tree Advisory Board

2025 Conference Planning Committee

Christina McLaughlin (Committee Co-Chair),
Leanna Nugent (Committee Co-Chair),
Donna Gurnett (NYSUFC Executive Secretary),
Andy Hillman, Chris Sprague, Clare Carney,
Jay Lavigne, Rachel Grumm, Jeanne Grace,
Sarah Malinowski, Amy Mackenzie, and
Jim Maloney

Presentation and Tour Details

Tuesday, July 22

4:00–5:30 p.m.

Preconference activity

- **TBD** – Details will be available at the registration table.

Wednesday, July 23

KEYNOTES

9:15–10:00 a.m. | Keynote Address (Room A)

“Look Back to Move Forward: Storytelling in Urban Forestry”

Doug Still – *Host and Producer of “This Old Tree” podcast*

Embracing science-backed management strategies isn’t the only thing urban foresters can do to grow the local tree canopy. We can also connect communities to their arboreal heritage by uncovering and sharing meaningful stories of significant trees, pioneering individuals, and transformative events in local forestry history. By documenting and celebrating these narratives, practitioners of urban forestry not only preserve valuable cultural knowledge but also strengthen the human-tree relationship at the heart of urban forestry’s mission.

Keynote credits available: CNLP: 1.0; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 0.75; ISA BCMA – Management: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

CONCURRENT SESSIONS A, B, AND C

10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Session A (Room B)

“Biotechnology for Protecting Threatened Trees”

Andrew Newhouse, Ph.D. – *Director, American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project and SUNY ESF professor*

Student Presentations:

Amy Twohig – *SUNY ESF*

Taylor Wegner – *SUNY ESF*

This presentation will include updates on transgenic American chestnut trees with enhanced blight resistance, which are currently undergoing federal regulatory review. Newer work on other trees, such as American elm and American beech, will also be discussed. The student presentations will evaluate the growth, morphology, and respiration physiology of transgenic American chestnuts to assess their suitability for restoration application, including reintroduction to urban and community forests.

Credits available: CNLP: 1.25; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 1.25; ISA BCMA-Science: 1.25; SAF: 1.0; DEC Pesticide Applicator category 2 and 3A: 0.75

Presentation and Tour Details

10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Session B (Room C)

“Regional Approaches to Urban and Community Forestry”

Mike Boccuzzi – *Senior Planner, CNY RPDB*

The presentation will cover CNY RPDB’s UCF program, the grant application process, and why a regional approach to urban forestry may help smaller capacity-strapped municipalities in upstate New York. The presentation will highlight how entities, such as regional planning boards, can step up to assist municipalities in implementing their urban forestry goals and lift much of the administrative burden that can prevent projects from being fully implemented.

“New York’s Tree and Forest Establishment Initiatives”

Annabel Gregg – *25 Million Trees Initiative Coordinator, DEC*

New York State won’t meet its climate goals without maximizing the carbon sequestration power of trees and forests. DEC’s 25 Million Trees Initiative Coordinator will run through the goals of Governor Hochul’s Initiative to scale up the State’s tree planting efforts and the goals of DEC’s long-term reforestation plan.

Credits available: CNLP: 1.25; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 1.25; ISA BCMA-Management: 1.25; SAF: 1.0

10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Session C (Breakout rooms 2 and 3)

“Cemeteries as Green Spaces”

Panel discussion with **Andrew Place** – *City of Rochester Forestry Division, representing Mount Hope Cemetery*; **Christine O’Malley** – *Friends of Ithaca City Cemetery*; and a representative from *Cayuga Bird Club*; moderated by **Joseph Charap** – *The Green-Wood Cemetery*

Panelists will discuss their experiences with cemeteries as green spaces along with the challenges and opportunities that cemeteries present when managing trees and providing public recreation and education opportunities.

Credits available: CNLP: 1.25; ISA Certified Arborist, Municipal Specialist, and BCMA – Management: 1.25; SAF: 1.0

AFTERNOON TOURS AND SESSIONS E AND D

All tour groups will meet outside of the hotel. We recommend attendees bring a full water bottle, sunscreen, and other comfort items for being outside for the duration of each tour.

If you did not sign up for a tour in advance or if you want to change or drop your tour, please check with the registration table.

Presentation and Tour Details

2:00–4:30 p.m. | Tour 1: SUNY Oswego Green Campus Bike Tour

Kate Spector – *Sustainability Manager, SUNY Oswego*

Shuttles for the bike tour will leave the hotel promptly at 1:45 p.m. If driving, biking, or walking to the location, meet at the BikeShare Shop-Service Building 20 on the SUNY Oswego Campus. Please arrive by 2:00 p.m.

This is a 3-mile round-trip bike tour around the campus to view notable trees, planting sites from a previous Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant, a permaculture garden, pollinator gardens, and alvar—a rare North American ecosystem—beds. SUNY Oswego is providing the bikes for this tour.

Attendees should bring their own helmets and safety gear.

Credits available: CNLP: 2.5; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 2.0; ISA BCMA – Management: 2.0; SAF: 2.5

2:00–4:30 p.m. | Tour 2: Oswego Port Authority Walking Tour

Representative – *Port of Oswego Authority*

Learn how this busy shipping port operates and about the containment efforts used to prevent invasive species that arrive on cargo from being introduced to the surrounding environment. The tour will be 1–2 miles, which includes approximately 0.5 miles round-trip travel from the event center to the port.

Credits available: CNLP: 2.5; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 2.0; ISA BCMA – Management: 2.0; SAF: 2.5

2:00–4:30 p.m. | Tour 3: West Side Linear Park Walking Tour

Andrew Hillman – *NYSUFC, City of Oswego Tree Advisory Board*

Jeffrey Hammill – *City of Oswego Tree Care and Parks Maintenance*

Explore the riverfront park and check in on trees that were planted with a Small Business Administration Urban Forestry Grant decades ago, all while learning about the history of urban forestry in Oswego. This tour leaves from the event center and is a total of 2–3 miles round trip, including walking in the park.

Credits available: CNLP: 2.5; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 2.0; ISA BCMA – Management: 2.0; SAF: 2.5

Presentation and Tour Details

2:20–3:00 p.m. | Session D (Room B)

“Trees, health, and landscapes”

Jerry Bond – *Urban Forest Analytics*

This presentation brings together research on the interactions among trees, humans, and landscapes in order to suggest new perspectives on familiar topics. Research indicates that the mere sight of trees greatly improves the recovery and survival of hospital patients, a fact which serves as an index to these critical interrelationships. Such developments give the concept of a healthy landscape in and around our urbanized world a renewed, vital importance that needs exploring.

Credits available: CNLP: 0.75; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 0.75; ISA BCMA – Management: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

3:15–4:00 p.m. | Session E (Room B)

“Oswego Brownfields Redevelopment”

Wei Zhang – *Zynnovation LLC and the Institute of Soil Genomics for Healthy Community Forests*

Karen Noyes – *Associate Planner, Oswego County Department of Community Development*

Stormwater runoff from brownfields can enter surface water and groundwater. Vegetation, especially large plants like mature trees, can intercept, retain, and detain stormwater to reduce contaminated stormwater runoff. The trees and the associated soil microbiome can also metabolize, decontaminate, or reduce the toxicity of contaminants. This is a collaborative urban forestry effort to manage stormwater runoff and to reduce pollution by planting hundreds of trees on brownfields around Oswego County.

Credits available: CNLP: 0.75; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 0.75; ISA BCMA – Management: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

Thursday, July 24

CONCURRENT SESSIONS F, G AND H

9:00–9:45 a.m. | Session F (Room A)

“How Municipal Characteristics, Resources, and Services Influence NYSDEC Urban Forest Grant Obtainment and Execution: A NYS Case Study”

Rebecca Hargrave – *Associate Professor, SUNY Morrisville*

A review of survey results and U.S. Census data, which explored whether community attributes (size, affluence, and environmental justice areas), resources (staffing and access to grant writers), and urban forestry program services (tree boards, partners, Tree City USA recognition) align with successful DEC urban forest management grant obtainment. The presentation will also examine perceived barriers to applying for these grants and will highlight community successes and barriers when executing the projects.

Credits available: CNLP: 0.75; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 0.75; ISA BCMA – Management: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

Presentation and Tour Details

9:00–9:45 a.m. | Session G (Room B)

“Journey of a Tree Canopy”

Michael Mahanna – *Board Member, GreenUtica*

This presentation will discuss the history of the City of Utica’s tree canopy through the eyes of a five-year-old in 1966 to present day.

Credits available: CNLP: 0.75; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 0.75; ISA BCMA – Management: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

9:00–9:45 a.m. | Session H (Breakout rooms 2 and 3)

“CCE Onondaga CommuniTree Steward Program: 23 Years Later”

David Skeval – *Executive Director, CCE Onondaga*

In 2002, CCE launched the CommuniTree Steward program. This was in response to 50 years of canopy loss in the City of Syracuse, punctuated by the 1998 Labor Day Storm. Twenty-three years later, the program is still running strong and has been adapted by other counties. This is a look back on the successes, challenges, and lessons learned and will answer the question, “Is a CommuniTree Steward program right for our county?”

Credits available: CNLP: 0.75; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist, and BCMA – Management: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

CONCURRENT SESSIONS I, J, AND K

10:15–11:00 a.m. | Session I (Room A)

“New Hybrid Oaks for the Urban Landscape”

Nina Bassuk – *Professor Emeritus, Cornell University*

Hybrid oaks were developed at Cornell University to look for alkaline soil tolerance, drought and flooding tolerance, and insect and disease resistance, as well as for good form and vigor. Hundreds of hybrids were created by crossing native trees in the white oak group (primarily swamp white oak and bur oak) with western and southern oaks from dry/wet and alkaline soil conditions.

After propagating the hybrid oaks clonally, trees were given to communities around New York State in 2018 and 2019 and their performance was evaluated over time in order to choose the most promising trees to be distributed to the nursery growers.

Credits available: CNLP: 0.75; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 0.75; ISA BCMA – Science: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

Presentation and Tour Details

10:15–11:00 a.m. | Session J (Room B)

“Modernizing Syracuse’s Tree Ordinance”

Steve Harris – *City Arborist, City of Syracuse*

Originally written in the late 1950s, Syracuse’s Tree Ordinance was nominally updated in 1981. With the high demand for housing, record levels of development, and Micron’s potential growth impact looming, updating Syracuse’s Tree Ordinance is a high priority. This session will review the public input process around the release of the first draft of the updated ordinance in April, the content of that draft, the comments that followed, and our response.

Credits available: CNLP: 0.75; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 0.75; ISA BCMA – Management: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

10:15–11:00 a.m. | Session K (Breakout rooms 2 and 3)

“The Sidewalks of New York: The Culture of Urban Tree Preservation”

Jean Zimmerman – *Consulting Arborist and Author*

A consulting tree inspector on a city construction site oversees planting, tree pits/guards, and restoring major thoroughfares. This talk will focus on the types of work encountered, sharing stories from the field, and describing the crucial stakeholders throughout the process—foremen, machine operators, laborers, flaggers, engineers, neighborhood residents, and others.

Credits available: CNLP: 0.75; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 0.75; ISA BCMA – Management: 0.75; SAF: 0.5

CLOSING SESSION

11:05 a.m.–12:30 p.m. | Room A

“The I-81 Viaduct Project (I-81 Removal)—Landscape Architecture for a Connected Future”

Elizabeth “Betsy” Parmley, PE – *I-81 Viaduct Project Director, DOT*

This presentation explores how landscape architecture plays a role in connecting urban spaces in this transformative infrastructure project. Attendees will gain insight into how thoughtful landscape design can shape a more livable and connected future in Syracuse.

“A Century of Urban Forestry, Past, Present, and Into the Future”

Josh Behounek – *Business Development Manager, Davey Tree Resource Group*; and **Andrew Hillman** – *NYSUFC, and City of Oswego Tree Advisory Board*

In the summer of 1931, the Davey Tree Expert Company completed a comprehensive inventory of the street and park trees for the City of Oswego. This is one of the earliest known inventories of its kind, using mapping, species codes, and maintenance recommendations. Andy Hillman will describe urban forestry in Oswego over the past century, including the 1931 tree survey and the Small Business Administration grant program that planted West Linear Park decades ago. Josh Behounek will provide a glimpse of the future of urban forestry in light of rapidly changing technology, including AI, machine learning, drones, and light detection and ranging (LiDAR).

Credits available: CNLP: 1.5; ISA Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist: 1.5; ISA BCMA – Management: 1.5; SAF: 1.5

Speaker Bios

Thank you to all our speakers who make the conference possible by sharing their knowledge with us!

Keynote

Doug Still – Host and Producer of *This Old Tree* podcast

Doug Still is a consulting arborist and the host and producer of the award-winning *This Old Tree* podcast. He was City Forester in Providence, RI, from 2005 to 2022, and has 30 years of experience in urban forestry. Doug has a BA in Art History from Oberlin College and an MS in Forest Resources from Penn State University. He is a former president of the Urban and Community Forestry Society, where he received several awards, including Life Membership and the Award of Achievement. He serves on the boards of the New England International Society of Arboriculture, the Rhode Island Tree Council, and the Providence Neighborhood Planting Program.

Closing Panelists

Elizabeth “Betsy” Parmley, PE – I-81 Viaduct Project Director, DOT

Elizabeth “Betsy” Parmley, PE, is the director of the transformative I-81 Viaduct Project. At \$2.25 billion, it is the largest infrastructure project in DOT history.

Andrew Hillman – NYSUFC, and City of Oswego Tree Advisory Board

Andy Hillman is a former president of NYSUFC and has been active in NY ReLeaf since its inception. He co-chairs the Region 7 NY ReLeaf Committee and is currently on the NYSUFC Board of Directors. Andy is also a former president of the Urban and Community Forestry Society (formerly SMA) and is an Honorary Life Member and Award of Merit recipient, the society's highest award. For many years, Andy represented the society on the ANSI A300 Committee, which develops the national

tree care performance standards. He is a founding member of the Urban and Community Forestry Society Municipal Forestry Institute teaching cadre.

Andy was the Supervisor of Tree Care for the City of Oswego and City Forester for the City of Ithaca. He was a Senior Urban Forestry Consultant for the Davey Resource Group for 10 years prior to retirement. Andy chairs the Town of Ulysses Tree Advisory Council and serves on the City of Oswego Tree Advisory Board.

Josh Behounek – Business Development Manager, Davey Resource Group

Josh Behounek is a Business Development Manager for the Davey Resource Group's Environmental Consulting division, although a better title might be “Theoretical Arborist.” Josh has worked for Davey for more than 20 years and currently focuses on providing innovative and technical solutions for communities, nonprofits, commercial clients, and state agencies, throughout the U.S. and internationally, to proactively and sustainably manage their trees and other natural resources. He has worked as a traveling inventory arborist, climbing arborist, an adjunct professor, and has held numerous volunteer positions in local, regional, state, and national nonprofit organizations.

Josh graduated from Southern Illinois University Carbondale with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry Resource Management, is a Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist with Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ), a graduate of the Society of Municipal Arborist's Municipal Forestry Institute, and has hugged dozens of national champion trees.

Speakers

Nina Bassuk – Professor Emeritus, Cornell University

Nina Bassuk has been a professor at Cornell University for over 40 years. She specializes in urban landscape establishment, including tree selection and soil remediation.



Speaker Bios

Michael Boccuzzi - Senior Planner, CNY RPDB

Michael Boccuzzi is a Senior Planner in the Energy Management program of the CNY RPDB since 2021. He is a Clean Energy Communities Coordinator in the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA's) Clean Energy Communities program, as well as a Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Coordinator in the NYS CSC program. Mike works with CNY municipalities to implement actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the effects of climate change, and promote a green economy. He provides technical assistance such as conducting greenhouse gas inventories, drafting sustainable policy, applying for grant funding, and creating community education campaigns.

In 2023, Mike led the successful effort at the CNY RPDB to apply for the U.S. Forest Service Inflation Reduction Act - Urban and Community Forestry grant program, resulting in a \$9 million award from the U.S. Forest Service to provide urban and community forestry planning, implementation, and capacity building throughout CNY, with 100% of the funds going toward projects in disadvantaged communities.

Jerry Bond – Owner and Principal, Urban Forest Analytics LLC

Jerry Bond has been a consulting urban forester with his own company, located in Geneva, since 2012. His interests lie in tree emergency management, social and environmental benefits, tree health, and root preservation. His publications on these and other topics can be found on his website: www.urbanforestanalytics.com/.



Annabel Gregg – 25 Million Trees Initiative Coordinator, DEC

As the 25 Million Trees Initiative Coordinator, Annabel fills program implementation gaps at DEC to assure the Initiative's success—from finding novel ways to get New Yorkers excited about trees and forests to analyzing the needs within and communicating the State's climate and forestry goals to the public in a meaningful and engaging way.

Rebecca Hargrave – Associate Professor, SUNY Morrisville

Rebecca Hargrave is an associate professor in the Environmental Sciences department at SUNY Morrisville. She teaches arboriculture, dendrology, forest recreation, tree health, and forest and wildlife sampling. She has urban forestry degrees from Penn State and the University of Minnesota and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Urban Forestry and Arboriculture at UMass Amherst. Rebecca is also an ISA Certified Arborist and is TRAQ credentialed. Before Morrisville, she was an Extension Educator for CCE of Chenango County, working with invasive species, horticulture, forestry, and natural resources.

Additionally, Rebecca serves as chair of Morrisville's Campus Tree Board and chair of the City of Norwich Street Tree Committee. She lives in Norwich with her husband and two boys.

Steve Harris – City Arborist, City of Syracuse

Steve Harris has been City Arborist for Syracuse Parks since 2010. In this role, Steve oversees a 10-person team (and contractors) that annually plants 1,400 trees, prunes over 4,000 trees, removes 500 trees, manages over 10 acres of natural areas, and oversees tree protection along 40 linear miles of road during construction.



Speaker Bios

Michael Mahanna – Board member, GreenUtica

Michael Mahanna studied Horticulture at Morrisville College and had a 20-year career at Hamilton College as a Horticulturist and Arborist. In 2010, Michael jump-started the Master Gardener program at CCE of Onondaga County after a long absence. He is currently a Vocational Horticulture Instructor with the NYS Department of Corrections, lead arborist for the City of Utica's Urban Forest Revitalization Project, and proud PopPop of two tree-hugging granddaughters.

Andrew Newhouse - Director, American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project, and Professor, SUNY ESF

Dr. Andrew Newhouse has been working on projects that overlap the fields of conservation biology and molecular biology since 2003. Since 2007, he has worked with the American Chestnut Research & Restoration Project at SUNY ESF. This project has developed transgenic American chestnut trees with enhanced tolerance to chestnut blight, a disease that nearly extirpated mature trees from their native range in the Eastern U.S.

Andrew's contributions to this project have ranged from molecular analyses to ecological comparisons, with a recent focus on the federal regulatory review process that is required before transgenic trees can be distributed or used for restoration. In addition to American chestnuts, ESF's research team has made progress on trees such as Ozark chinquapin, American elm, and American beech, with the goal of protecting these and other threatened native trees from introduced pests.

Christine O'Malley – Preservation Services Director, Historic Ithaca

Christine O'Malley leads Historic Ithaca's efforts in education, advocacy, and community engagement and consults with home and property owners, businesses, city and county government officials



and staff, and educators. She has worked on local designations of properties and National Register nominations. As part of the CROWD (Circularity, Reuse, Zero Waste Development) working group, she participates in efforts to promote salvage and sustainability in the community.

David Skeval – Executive Director, CCE Onondaga County

David Skeval has worked as a forester in the Northeast since 1986.

He was the Community Forestry Educator at CCE of Onondaga before becoming Executive

Director in 2012. David has served on the Onondaga County Planning Board and the Onondaga County Farmland Protection Board. He is Chairman of the Onondaga County Legislature Deer and Tick Management Committee, DEC representative to the Forestry Advisory Board and Deer Management Board, a DEC Cooperating Forester, and he is on the CCE State Director's Advisory Council. Besides spending lots of time outdoors, David enjoys brewing beer, restoring Coleman lanterns, and spending time with his grandchildren. David has a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University and a master's degree from SUNY ESF in forest resource management.



Amy Twohig – Graduate Student, SUNY ESF

Amy is a graduate student at SUNY ESF. Originally from Ireland, she holds an undergraduate degree in botany from the University of Maine and is now a master's student in ESF's Department of Environmental Biology. Her research concentration is in forest pathology and focuses largely on vector-pathogen complexes of plant diseases. Amy's work is specifically related to oak and chestnut conservation and reintroduction in the face of fungal disease outbreaks. Outside of academia, she is a proud tarantula parent and an avid crossword solver.

Speaker Bios

Taylor Wegner – Graduate Assistant, SUNY ESF

Taylor Wegner is a master's student in Ecology and Ecosystems at SUNY ESF. Before attending ESF, she obtained a Master of Science in Information from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Driven by a desire to focus on environmental issues, she redirected her studies and career trajectory toward tree physiology and its impact on broader ecosystem processes. As part of ESF's American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project, her research evaluates the growth, morphology, and physiology of transgenic American chestnuts. Upon graduation, she intends to pursue a career in arboriculture.

Jean Zimmerman – Consulting Arborist and Author

Jean Zimmerman is the author of critically praised commercial fiction and nonfiction and has worked as a Certified Arborist since 2015 with broad experience in the tree industry. Jean has helped municipalities manage their tree populations and has worked to ensure that tree preservation regulations are upheld in New York City. An NYSUFC board member, she edits the nonprofit's monthly blog, *Taking Root*. A graduate of the Urban and Community Forestry Society's Municipal Forestry Institute, she has also served as a judge for New York City Park's Great Tree Search of 2024. She has taught writing to arborists at private tree companies and at conferences in her program, "Writing for the Trees." An honors graduate of Barnard College, Jean earned an MFA in writing from Columbia University School of the Arts. She maintains a blog at jeanzimmerman.com. She lives with her husband in Hastings-on-Hudson, where for three years she chaired the Tree Preservation Board. She is currently working on a book about her experiences in the tree world.



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- Sign up for NYSUFC's monthly newsletter, *Taking Root*, by clicking the subscribe link on the right-hand side at www.nysufc.org.
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