

Annual work plan: Bluffton Tree Commission 2011

The year of 2010/2011 kept the Bluffton Tree Commission members busy with many tree planting activities. First and foremost, was our need to deal with the Emerald Ash Borer invasion. A 2010 Western Lake Erie basin ash removal / replacement grant was applied for and awarded to Bluffton. This matching funds grant money enabled us to afford to remove potentially hazardous dead/dying ash trees (43) from tree lawns and our two public parks (Buckeye and Village parks) and to replace them with a diversity of future shade trees. Two of our planting projects involved collaboration with the local Boy Scout troop. Justin Weaver lead a perennial flowering plant landscaping project at the Village park; Luke Oxender lead a shrub (Viburnum) planting project at the Buckeye park as part of their Eagle Scout badge requirements. Our 2011 Arbor Day celebration honored Fred Rodabaugh with the planting of a weeping cherry tree near the Bluffton Village town hall. Fred has served as the mayor of Bluffton and an ever-faithful volunteer for many years.

The Bluffton Tree Commission members also participated in several educational activities during 2010 / 2011. Two of our members completed the Tree Commission Academy (TCA) freshman level; other members will be completing the freshman level in January of 2012. All plan on continuing the series of classes during the 2012 year. Several members attended the Northwest Ohio Urban Forestry Seminar held at Bluffton University, November 3rd, 2011. The entire tree commission just completed a survey of hazardous street trees in Bluffton with Stephanie Miller. In March 2012, we will be hosting a Young Tree Care and Pruning workshop and in May 2012, we will complete a Master Planting Design for Bluffton.

It has been asked, How does belonging to Tree City, USA, benefit Bluffton? The Tree Commission members' answer:

Tree City, USA, is not an organization that one belongs to; it is a nationwide award sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation and supported by the USDA Forest Service (including Ohio urban forestry divisions). To be eligible for this award 4 criteria must be met:

- a. a committee of 5 community citizens must meet at least 6 times a year
- b. \$2.00/ community citizen must be spent annually on tree purchases/ care/ volunteer hours/ mulching of yardwaste/ administrative hours
- c. community must have a tree ordinance
- d. community must have an Arbor Day proclamation and public observance

The members of a community tree commission work under the guidance of a local urban forester (Stephanie Miller) designing tree plantings (street trees on tree lawns as well as parks and other public areas), reporting hazardous trees to village administrators, alerting community citizens to tree problems affecting the area (bagworms, Emerald Ash Borer), and educating homeowners as to proper tree planting and care. If it was not for this guidance and knowledge and a dedicated tree commission, planting /care of trees would not develop into a planned / beneficial product for Bluffton, but rather a haphazard placement of trees which are often not suited for their planted location and over the years become hazardous due to the lack of proper care/pruning.

Villages annually spend well over \$2.00/citizen keeping public trees/landscaping healthy anyway, when you take into account the initial cost of the tree/landscaping material, maintenance costs (pruning and removals), cost of mulching yard waste, administrative hours and the value of volunteer hours. Each year, the Bluffton Tree Commission completes a recertification report to the Arbor Day