

Weston Tree Advisory Group (TAG)

2021 Goals : Year-end Summary of Results, December 2021



Context

Weston is treasured by its residents for the semi-rural character that trees help provide. Weston is also notable for its extraordinary green heritage. As times change, and conditions threaten that heritage, thoughtful strategy, maintenance and replanting is needed, so that Weston's unique character is preserved.

The Tree Advisory Group's 2021 goals will focus TAG's core mission—promoting community tree health-- in response to ongoing pressures including the climate crisis and development.

We will accomplish our work of education, planting/stewardship and municipal support through collaboration with town boards, committees, community organizations and individuals.

The proposed projects and actions for next year and beyond, are intended to support our Tree Infrastructure as it faces current and future pressures of climate change. Fostering a healthier tree population will provide two main benefits to Weston:

- 1) Less risk of injury, road closures and power loss due to tree failure.
- 2) Increased ability to locally mitigate and manage the consequences of climate change and the increases in impervious surfaces such as street flooding, lower air quality, rising temperature and loss of habitat.

The goals are organized into two main sections: Community-facing and Town-facing.

New Members: In 2021, TAG welcomed Members Carol Lee and Nicole Seddon as well as Associate members Anne Benning, Denis Wu, and Tom Szekely.

COMMUNITY-FACING GOALS

1) Create an online information resource with a local emphasis about trees using the TAG page on the Town Website, including standards, best-practices, how-to's and external resources.

- TAG's new 2021 Associate member, Anne Benning, wrote 4 articles since she joined: Tree Concerns, Town Center Trees, Color in the Landscape and Leaving the Leaves. Anne's Tree Concern article makes it easy for residents to know who to contact when there is a tree question or issue.
- Right Tree, Right Place was published in Spring, 2021. It outlines 7 questions for better tree selection for the person who is new to planting trees. Lori Hess wrote this piece.
- TAG articles and more can be found on the Town Website at <https://www.weston.org/599/Tree-Advisory-Group>

2) Create an educational, living example of landscaping best-practices in the age of climate Crisis.

- TAG interviewed 3 Ecological Landscape Architects and selected Tom Benjamin from Wellnesscapes for the project. A prior Chair of the Ecological Landscape Alliance and Adjunct Professor in Sustainable Landscape at UMass Amherst, Tom has completed a diverse array of sustainable landscape design and restoration projects, including the Fresh Pond Reservation in Cambridge, MA. His work emphasizes low-cost, low-maintenance design and he understands the unique needs of projects in public, municipally-maintained spaces.
- Design concepts are currently being reviewed. Public input sessions and planting is anticipated in 2022.
- A new Case Park Dedication plaque was purchased to replace the original one which was stolen some years ago.

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3) Continue Arbor Day planting tradition by creating a multi-year planting plan and maintain Tree City USA status.

Weston received its 19th Tree City USA award from the Arbor Day Foundation. Special thanks to Nina Danforth for her herculean Arbor Day coordination efforts. Despite the pandemic and tree supply issues, Weston celebrated Arbor Day by planting native trees in highly public locations for all to enjoy:

- At the **Country School**, native trees and shrubs were planted including: Eastern Redbud, Viburnum, Highbush Blueberry and native Dogwood. Thanks to the Country School Parents and staff who initiated the plantings, Ben Pollimer, Jackie Jackson and their crews, and Eversource for donating the trees.
- At the **Case Estates**, 3 Hawthorn and 1 Tupelo Tree were planted.
- Successfully tested an innovative tree hydration product for the Tupelo tree, which could not be reached by the watering truck. TAG will test the product again in 2022.
- At the **Rt. 30 Fire Station**, 2 Maple Trees and 1 hybrid Dogwood were dedicated to First Responders.

Additionally, an Eastern Redbud tree was donated by the Flemming Family and planted on the Town Green by Jackie Jackson and crew to commemorate the efforts of Nancy Flemming— one of the first TAG members and the person who literally wrote the book about Weston’s Town Green.

This Fall, Nina Danforth and Lori Hess worked with Jackie Jackson to plant more native evergreen, understory trees and shrubs at the Town Green slope in front of the Town Hall. Arrowwood Viburnum, Eastern Redbud, Canadian Hemlock, Maxi Rhododendron, and Summersweet were among the planting list.

- 4) **Explore the creation of a Tree Donation program and process.** Brief discussions were held on this topic and it was felt that staffing resources were not available at this time to work on this program.
- 5) **Write quarterly articles in the Town Crier highlighting information from Goal 1.** Changes at the Town Crier have made article publishing more difficult. Anne Benning submitted articles for publication. However, none were published that we are aware of.
- 6) **Continue to partner with DCR on listing “State Champion” trees.** Lori Hess submitted the Butternut Tree for consideration. Nina Danforth has also submitted trees.
- 7) **Participate in Annual Community Activities, as needed.**
 - TAG undertook weekly inspections of the newly planted Town Center trees for health while the utility poles and wire were removed.
 - Conducted a week-long Garlic Mustard and invasive removal blitz along the Town Green slope. Many contractor bags full of the invasive plants were removed. Thanks to Nina Danforth, Barbara Fullerton, Nicole Seddon and Lori Hess for their picking skills!

TOWN COMMITTEE AND DEPARTMENT-FACING GOALS

1) Support Select Board Initiatives

- a. **Public Tree Working Group**

Lori Hess is the TAG representative in this working group which also includes members from the Select Board, DPW, Town Planner and Planning Board. The group is currently drafting an RFP to develop a Tree Management Plan for Weston in 2022. The Tree Management Plan will include Risk Mitigation, Preventative Maintenance and Planting Strategy. The group has also applied for a State Grant to fund the work.
- b. **Private Tree Working Group** Barbara Fullerton and Lori Hess are the TAG representatives in this working group which also includes members from the Select Board and Town Planning. This Fall, the group

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launched a survey which was designed to gauge concern over the clear-cutting of trees in town and to determine the level of interest in better protecting trees on private property. Nearly 500 responses were received. A summary of the findings will be published in December. Special thanks to Denis Wu for his help in developing this survey.

2) Collaborate with Conservation Commission on Case Estates support.

a. Butternut Tree and Persimmon Tree Preservation

After successfully applying for Community Preservation Act funding and receiving voter approval for the project at May's Town Meeting, Lori Hess coordinated with Tree Specialists, Inc. to complete the tree preservation work on these two living examples of Weston's agricultural legacy.

A video about the work can be found on Weston Media.

<https://weston.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=bb7192ae-ced6-4934-884a-4d332852455d&nav=search%2FButternut%20tree>

b. Establish a cross-functional team including community groups to improve the Case Estates: Examples: Overlook Planting plan, Legacy Trail clean up including: Rhododendron Garden and Holly Grove. While this initiative had a lot of support, it was put on hold until the Conservation Commission's new hire could be brought on board.

3) Partner with DPW

a. Support DPW's Tree Inventory follow-up

The Pubic Tree Working Group is addressing this through the Tree Management Plan work. Tree Inventory was a critical step that enables the Tree Management Plan development.

b. Tree inventory data analysis (personnel dependent)

Thanks to Amit Fernandes for combing through the data.

c. Explore grant opportunities to develop "Ash Street Charette" as described by Tom Cullen

This will be addressed in the Planting Strategy from the 2022 Tree Management Plan.

d. Database building (ex: size, type, location and cause of downed trees, GIS data maintenance and heritage tree tracking) Thanks to Balaji Krishnamoorthy for researching and interviewing services in support of this goal and presenting the proposal to Town Staff.

4) Support town board, department and committee work that involve trees, as needed.

- TAG members participated several efforts, including: Route 117/Eversource Tree removals and Specimen Tree Preservation at Land Sake.
- TAG members and Master Gardeners, Carol Lee and Nicole Seddon created a Water wise planting list to support Water Working Group, Planning Board and Conservation Commission new policies and goals. Special thanks to Denis Wu for his tech support.

5) Continue to explore funding opportunities with local groups and organizations.

Community Preservation Act funding enabled one initiative in 2021 and State Grants have been applied for this Fall for 2022 projects.

OTHER:

1. Using iTree Canopy, track changes to canopy by neighborhood over the last 10+ years.

Not pursued.

2. Participate in the Multi-Town Gas Leak Tree sub group

Lori Hess participates periodically, attending meetings when possible.

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