

Urban Greening Intern

Intern Develops Skills for a Career in Urban Forestry

The Challenge

Starting a new career path with little or no experience can be daunting. Add to that the uncertain economic times of the last 4 years and employment prospects can seem insurmountable. During this time of economic uncertainty, the Delaware Center for Horticulture was also looking for a way to create a job opportunity for a disadvantaged person interested in entering a new career field to provide care to newly planted trees in the city of Wilmington and throughout New Castle County, Delaware.

Street trees, part of the urban forest, need more care to endure harsher conditions compared to trees in parks, yards, or forests. Restricted planting space affects root growth, and low soil volumes may lead to drought conditions. Higher local ambient temperatures caused by surrounding buildings, roads, and other hardscape compound and magnify heat and drought stresses. In addition, mechanical injuries from trucks, people, and machinery illustrate the challenges street trees face when trying to thrive in an urban environment.

The Solution

Using a grant from the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, the Delaware Center for Horticulture hired an intern to provide care to newly planted trees throughout New Castle County in Delaware. The goal of the internship position was to hire a disadvantaged, underserved, under-represented, or underemployed resident with the potential to go on to college or a career in urban forestry or related field. The intern provided much needed care to street trees, which increased the likelihood that they would survive and provide tree canopy cover. The intern worked for about one year and received professional, hands-on training in horticulture and arboriculture.

“Investing in people is one of the ways that we invest in plants. Our Green Skills and Job Training Program is committed to the human face of the greening movement, offering education for people of all ages and backgrounds.”

—Delaware Center for Horticulture
Assistant Director of Urban
Forestry Jen Bruhler



Urban Greening Intern Robert Harris waters trees planted by volunteers in New Castle, Delaware.

The intern monitored green spaces and mulched, pruned, and watered young trees in public rights-of-way, front yards, and public open spaces. He also taught residents about the importance of trees, distributed information about proper tree care, and enlisted others to become tree stewards.

Resulting Benefits

- Completed over 2,500 tree visits
- Helped a Return-to-Work program crew prepare over 600 bare-root trees
- Served as a team leader for volunteer bare-root tree planting sessions at two elementary schools
- Provided instruction to a Tree Care Club on how to prune trees

Sharing Success

- Mentored a team of youth to clean and mulch two local parks
- Provided assistance at bare-root workshop demonstrations that taught the public about the benefits of bare-root trees
- Supported the Delaware Center for Horticulture and the city of Wilmington, DE, in their partnership for a sustainable urban forest and goal of planting 20,000 trees by 2020



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry
www.na.fs.fed.us

May 2012

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

For more information, contact:

Tony L. Ferguson, Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4103
E-mail: tferguson@fs.fed.us

Robert Lueckel, Field Representative
180 Canfield Street
Morgantown, WV 26505
Phone: 304-285-1503
E-mail: rlueckel@fs.fed.us