

working with
communities to
plant trees and
improve parks for a
healthy, resilient
future
since 1969

NEWS FROM THE PARK PEOPLE

THE PARK BENCH

Innovating To Meet Community Needs

To ensure that we're meeting critical community needs, we continuously assess the new and changing challenges faced by our communities, and leverage our programs to support them.

Much like the trees we steward, our communities and our environment are not static. The aging stands of silver maple trees that cover much of northwest Denver... The densification of growing neighborhoods... The increase in extreme heat and drought... Our communities and our environment are dynamic, diverse, and embedded in a complex context that changes over time.

Because of this, we must continually evolve in the practice of our work. To ensure that we're meeting critical community needs, we continuously assess our impact and the new and changing challenges faced by our communities and the natural resources that support them.

We've worked hard to innovate to help meet those needs.

Two years ago, The Park People launched *TreeForce*, our workforce development program preparing those facing barriers to employment for careers in urban forestry. This was a response to multiple needs: to help address the workforce shortage in the local tree care sector, to support meaningful careers and the inclusion of those facing barriers to economic opportunity, and to build our organizational capacity to plant and steward more trees.

Around the same time, in order to address tree inequity more effectively in Denver's low-canopy neighborhoods, we started expanding our *Community Forester* program. We recruited resident leaders – "Community Connectors" – to mobilize and engage neighbors in greening projects and bring to life residents' visions for greener neighborhoods. To help residents prepare for a hotter, drier future, we engaged Community Climate Ambassadors to educate and activate vulnerable residents around trees, water conservation, and low-water landscapes.

These recent innovations in our programming have helped us build out a more robust toolkit for our urban forestry and community greening work. And this past year, we realized the powerful synergies between our programs and a new ability to leverage our programming and expertise to meet new community needs and build more partnerships. For example, The Park People is working with Trust for Public Land and other partners to plant and steward trees at Denver Public Schools, which are particularly difficult sites where trees often die. We are utilizing our *Mile High Tree Champions* program to bring sponsorship dollars and volunteer groups to plant. To boost stewardship of these new school trees, we use the help of our wonderful human resources: *Community Forester* volunteers, *TreeForce* graduates, community-based groups where appropriate, and our newly hired Arborist (page 8).



Our TreeForce crew delivered trees and helped Community Connectors and Community Climate Ambassadors stage them for the Fall Tree Adoption – helpful synergy between our people and programs.

Cont'd on page 3

A Message from the Director

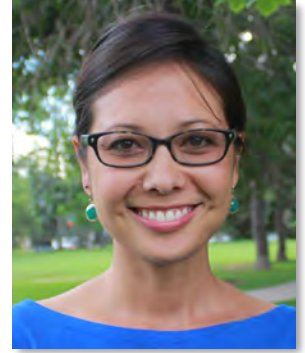
Greetings Friends!

The Park People is wrapping up an incredible year of impact and innovation.

We've continued to build and refine our organizational toolkit for engaging our whole community in growing and stewarding a greener, healthier Denver. We've grown our programs, deepened our partnerships, and are building our capacity to further mobilize, support, and collaborate with our community.

The time for this couldn't be more important.

The Inflation Reduction Act provided \$1.5 billion for urban and community forestry across the country – a historic investment in the forests that will shade, cool, and protect our cities now and into the future. These powerful funds have been granted to states, cities, nonprofits, and tribes. We are excited to be part of an award to the City of Denver in partnership with the Office of Climate Action, Sustainability & Resiliency and Denver Parks & Recreation. This funding will help us grow our work planting private property trees in some of Denver's lowest-canopy neighborhoods – a critical priority as more than 85% of Denver's plantable spaces are on private property. We were also honored to partner with Colorado State Forest Service to train the State's sub-grantees – 11 towns and cities throughout the state who will receive Inflation Reduction Act funds to grow their urban forests. It was a privilege and a joy to share our decades of learning and experience in the practices of urban forestry and of community engagement.



Our small but mighty team does what it takes to make Denver a greener place!

This role as trainer and partner of new, non-traditional, and less experienced groups is an important way that The Park People can increase our reach and impact. While we have grown substantially over the past several years, we are still a small-but-mighty organization. We anticipate additional growth to increase our direct service work – to provide more trees to Denver residents, to engage more Community Foresters in stewarding more trees, to train more people for careers in tree care, and so on. But we know that we cannot do this work alone. And one of the primary ways we can multiply our impact is by sharing our expertise and experience to help others do their work in their communities and do it well.

I am excited to embark on a new year working with our passionate and talented staff and our community of volunteers, supporters, and partners toward a next phase of growth, partnership, and collective impact.

Please join us in this work engaging communities in planting and stewarding trees and improving parks and greenspaces for a healthy, resilient future.

Please consider making a donation to The Park People. **Thanks to a generous anonymous friend in the community, each contribution will be doubled, dollar-for-dollar, by a matching fund up to \$75,000!**

We welcome donations made via TheParkPeople.org, by mail, and over the phone. We also welcome gifts of stock, planned gifts, and workplace matching gifts. We value contributions of all sizes; each gift makes an impact. You may further maximize the value of your donation through the Colorado Gives Day incentive fund by scheduling your online gift for December 10th ColoradoGives.org/TheParkPeople.

Thank you for your support and for being a Park Person.

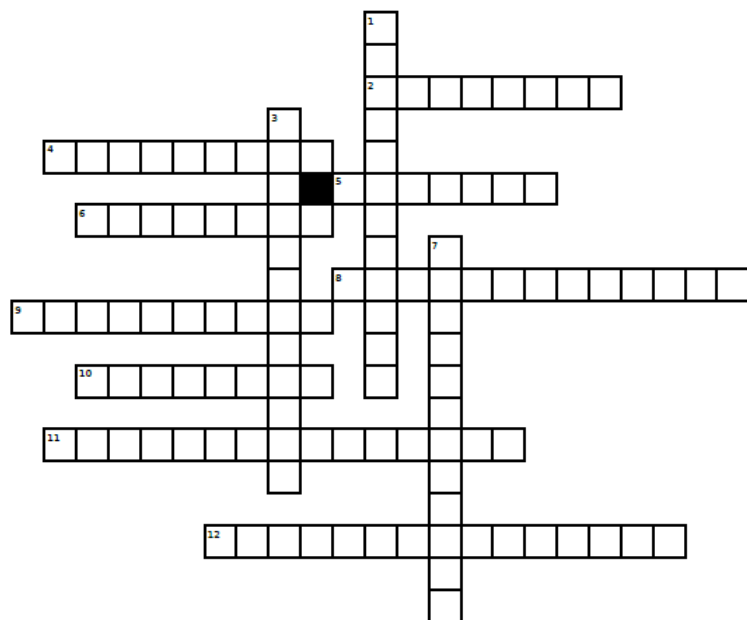
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "K. Yuan-Farrell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kim Yuan-Farrell
Executive Director



Tree Care Terminology



Answer key on back cover

Down:

1. Encircles tree trunk or other roots, constricting tissue
3. Area where a branch meets the trunk or other branch. Should be identified before making a pruning cut.
7. Embedded between a branch and trunk or between codominant trunks, creating weak structure and even tree failure.

Across:

2. This can extend 2-3 times the width of the tree canopy
4. When planting, this should be above or in line with the ground grade
5. Condition where tree branches die from the tips first
6. Imaginary line extending from the edge of the canopy to the ground
8. Water vapor loss through leaves
9. Vertical cracks caused by fluctuating winter temperatures
10. Damage caused by over-exposure to sunlight and fluctuating winter temperatures. Can lead to 9 Across.
11. Forked branches of nearly the same diameter, arising from a common union and lack of 3 Down.
12. Raised bark at the top of a branch union where the branch and trunk meet

Innovating To Meet Community Needs *cont'd from page 1*

This newfound capacity has built greater demand. Increasingly, The Park People has seen more individuals and organizations come to the cause, eager to get involved in planting and stewarding our forest, and requesting our help and guidance. While volunteerism and partnership have always been core to our work, the dramatically growing demand for trees and for our partnership have shifted our thinking...

We need to increase the numbers of trees we plant and steward directly. But we also have an equally important role to play growing our community's collective impact. We can multiply our impact by offering more of our expertise, training, resources, and partnership. We can build more connectivity between our wonderful network of partners working on different aspects of community sustainability so that we can all be better coordinated, aligned, effective, and efficient.

We need to create a community greening hub.

Still in its early stages, we are excited by this new vision for amplifying our impact through a network of mission-aligned partners and through shared resources that support our *whole* community in engaging in urban forestry and greening. We are excited to build more resources for neighborhoods, community groups, and other organizations. Resources include technical expertise and material resources and range from thought partnership to rolling up our sleeves together. We *all* have a role to play, and when working together in concert, we will have the greatest impact.



Our Program Manager Morgan Wolfe facilitates a clean-up day at Anchor of Hope Church, working with the church and neighborhood youth to plant the seeds for future planting projects.

We believe in the power of community to build a healthy, resilient future. The greening hub is a gathering place to exchange expertise and ideas, to forge partnerships, and to bring people together to form a village. As with the trees we grow, the care we invest in each relationship strengthens the village and fosters hope in the power of individual and collective action.

— Lindsay Cutler, Program Director

Community Greening: Foresters, Connectors, Ambassadors, Oh My!

For over two decades, The Park People has been working with community members to provide them with the skills and resources they need to green their communities and tend to their neighborhood forests. What began as a single-day *Community Forester* workshop has expanded to an empowering, resident-led programmatic hub for green action:

Community Forester: Our now five-part workshop series graduated 25 new full-fledged Community Foresters and saw dozens more tree stewards participate! While enrolled in the workshop series, budding foresters planted 9 trees, stewarded 15 more, and learned how to engage community members in greening projects in their neighborhoods. We are so grateful for these graduates and participants who offer Denver’s urban forest the most valuable resource there is: their time.



Community Connectors & Community Climate Ambassadors: Hard at work leading education and greening projects in their neighborhoods, Community Connectors and Community Climate Ambassadors came together to host the second West Denver Fall Community Tree Adoption, where over 400 hardy, drought tolerant trees and over 60 dryland rain garden kits found homes with residents of Barnum, Barnum West, Valverde, Villa Park, and West Colfax. The trees and native plants that were added to these low-canopy neighborhoods will increase shade and cooling as well as reduce flooding and utilize rainwater as an irrigation source. Our Community Climate Ambassadors led a four-part workshop series on rainwater harvesting, culminating in the distribution of rain garden kits to residents. Along the way, they helped residents install passive irrigation solutions and rain barrels, and remained on-call to help answer residents’ questions. Learn more about the Rainwater Harvesting Project on page 8.

Community Forester Continuing Education: Graduates of the *Community Forester* workshops returned throughout the summer to participate in the Continuing Education series, available to those who want to deepen their tree care education and volunteerism throughout Denver. They took seminars on outreach, structural pruning, and stewarding trees during Denver’s hottest months.



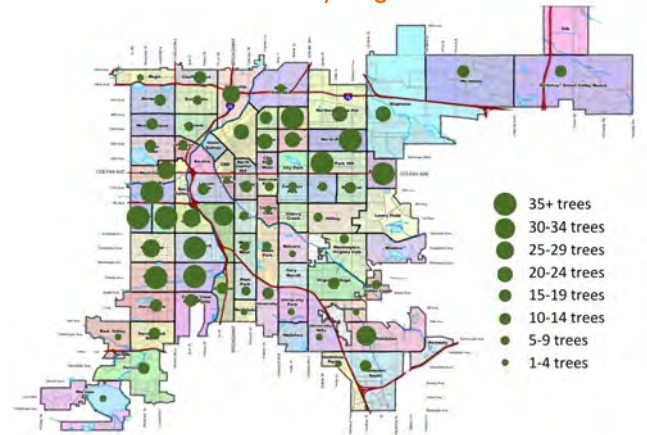
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PROGRAM SPONSORS & PARTNERS



Denver Digs Trees 2024: More Low-Canopy Trees, Same Low Cost



2024 Trees by Neighborhood



65% of the trees are planted in 28 low-canopy, heat-vulnerable focus neighborhoods, providing critical resources to these Denver residents.

Snow or shine, *Denver Digs Trees* must go on! This spring, the culmination of thousands of volunteer hours, community outreach flyers, resident applications, donations, and email-induced finger cramps came to fruition: over 1,400 shade, ornamental, and fruit trees found homes with Denverites. Park People staff, dozens of volunteer teams, and hundreds of residents braved the snow to distribute and plant baby trees throughout Denver. Of the 1,400 trees planted, 65% of these trees went to residents in low-canopy neighborhoods. With ongoing support and stewardship, these 910 high quality, drought tolerant, locally-adapted trees will provide critical functions mitigating rising temperatures, reducing flooding, providing homes to pollinators and urban wildlife, beautifying yards and streets, and providing countless mental health benefits to residents.

A key element of the *Denver Digs Trees* program is cost. While tree costs have risen over time, *Denver Digs* prices have stayed the same: \$35 per tree for most neighborhoods, \$10 for residents in low-canopy areas, with “treeships” for free trees available for anyone unable to purchase a tree (standard retail: \$150-\$200). In order to advance tree equity and ensure that *all* residents have access to the benefits of trees, it is critical that cost is never a barrier for residents looking to green their spaces.

“I know how much trees can cost so I was thrilled to have an option to get a cheaper good quality tree. I’m thrilled with my trees and am looking at ways I can distribute flyers in my neighborhood next year to help increase our neighborhood tree canopy!” said Sara Galenbeck, Denver resident and *Denver Digs Trees* 2024 recipient.

A little snow won’t stop The Park People from distributing trees, and we hope the cost won’t stop residents from planting them. After all, an urban forest is planted and stewarded by all residents, one tree at a time.

Lifetime Benefits of the 2024 Trees



THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 PROGRAM SPONSORS & PARTNERS





TreeForce: A Year Of Expansion

This year, The Park People not only graduated our fourth and fifth cohorts, but also took significant steps to expand *TreeForce* from a 6-8 week pre-apprenticeship, to a tiered multi-faceted workforce development program, offering “Root Camp” sessions – one week introductory courses for youth and young adults curious about the field, as well as developing internships and extended learning opportunities for pre-apprenticeship graduates.

In the spring, The Park People graduated our fourth *TreeForce* cohort and sent all eight graduates out into the workforce. In order to help bridge the gap between graduation and employer’s hiring cycles while also continuing our pre-apprentices’ work-based learning, The Park People developed 3-to-6 month internships in partnership with the City of Denver’s and the City of Aurora’s forestry divisions. These paid, on-the-job, learning opportunities allow a graduate to hone their skills as a member of a professional forestry crew. Two Cohort 4 graduates, Lisa Dunnuck and Dale Ball, interned with the City of Denver for three months before being hired as forestry employees. Daniel Schultz and Douglas Blackard, also from Cohort 4, are currently with the City of Aurora, taking part in the coveted tree-climbing internship the department offers.

For our fifth cohort, we expanded recruitment to reach not only previously incarcerated individuals, but also other groups of Denverites facing barriers to employment. We also included The Park People’s first father-daughter duo: Walter Williams and Tamika Howard. Four Cohort 5 graduates were placed in internships, and the rest of the group are interviewing for positions in the industry.

Together, these incredible pre-apprenticeship graduates and Root Camp graduates planted 125 trees, stewarded nearly 500 trees, and served dozens of Denver households.

This program would not be possible without our dedicated programmatic partners: Second Chance Center, Denver Parks and Recreation, Sanctuary Tree, High Country Landscape, Altitude Arborist, Davey Tree Expert Company, Bartlett Tree, SavATree, Taddiken Tree, City of Aurora, City of Lakewood, City of Westminster, Colorado State Forest Service, and the Colorado Tree Care Sector Partnership. We are also extremely grateful to our funding partners (below) for making this important work possible.



2024 Mile High Tree Champions: Planting Trees & Taking Names



Local and national businesses and civic and environmental groups sponsored eleven tree plantings in parks and schools across Denver this year. These dedicated Tree Champions mobilized enthusiastic employee-volunteers alongside The Park People's staff and dedicated community members to add much needed canopy to Denver's open spaces.

Together, we mobilized 230 people and planted over 300 trees in Denver's public parks and schools. These newly planted trees add crucial tree canopy to these shared spaces, instantly beautifying and providing mental health benefits. As these trees grow, the children and families who live, play, and learn at Denver's parks and schools will benefit from cooler temperatures, improved air quality, and reduced flooding during storms.

The volunteers and participants who dedicated their time and effort toward planting these trees will not only experience the benefits of these trees, but share in a renewed and deepened sense of community, in knowing that they made Denver a greener, cooler, better place, one tree at a time.

We are endlessly grateful for our Tree Champions, our all-star volunteer crew leaders and community tree planters, and to our planting site partners Denver Parks and Recreation and Denver Public Schools. It takes a village to plant and maintain an urban forest.



2024 Mile High Tree Champions

Accenture
Greenway Park &
Village Place Park

**International Paper
& Arbor Day Foundation**
Prairie Meadow Park

Mile High Rotary Club
Greenway Dog Park

POWER Engineers
Rocky Mountain Prep Westwood

Preparis
Cheesman Park

Swire Coca-Cola
Cheesman Park

Trust For Public Land
Marie L. Greenwood Early-8

**United Airlines
& Arbor Day Foundation**
Greenway Park

UPS & Arbor Day Foundation
Central Park

Become a Mile High Tree Champion!

We help companies grow our urban forest by sponsoring and staffing planting projects. These projects offer a turnkey team-building activity and an opportunity to make a tangible impact. Any excess sponsorship dollars support our work planting trees throughout the city. Have a suggestion for a prospective partner company? Or a potential planting site?

Please contact Morgan@TheParkPeople.org

Rainwater Harvesting: Utilizing All Resources

This spring, we piloted a 4-part workshop series on rainwater harvesting to educate West Denver residents in low-canopy neighborhoods on collecting rainwater, a free resource that can be used to irrigate trees and plants for cooler, greener gardens and yards. The courses included Rainwater Harvesting 101, Rain Barrels 101, Downspout Redirects 101, and Rain Gardens 101. In addition to classroom learning, The Park People provided rain barrels and downspout redirect solutions to West Denver residents, including power drill attachments, connecting hardware, and bilingual instruction guides. Our Community Climate Ambassadors worked with Groundwork Denver to install rain barrels for residents in need of assistance.

"We are so grateful to work with specialists from Groundwork Denver and Colorado Water Center through Colorado State University," said Brenda Negrete, The Park People's Bilingual Program Associate. "It really ties in our work around tree care and our overall vision and mission of having accessible greening. With all of the trees that we distribute through our programs, it's nice to provide solutions to water and care for them. We couldn't do this without our communities. And as our communities transition to water-wise landscapes, it's important that we channel our valuable water resources where they're most important – to the trees that help cool and protect our communities." Thank you to our funding partners: Denver's Office of Climate Action, Sustainability, and Resiliency and Denver Water.



The Park People partnered with Tournament Director Alex Dove to host a fun and lively 2024 Colorado State Open at Gates in September.

Gates Tennis Center

The Gates Tennis Center is a public-private partnership between the City of Denver and The Park People, made possible through the foresight and generosity of Charles C. Gates and the Gates Family Foundation in 1975. It is a novel model that other U.S. cities seek to emulate, and with the professional expertise from an innovative concessionaire – Hitman Sports Management, Gates has developed first-class programming and events in service of our community and is an award-winning facility.

Over the past 49 years, The Park People, Hitman Sports, and the City of Denver have been committed to making Gates Tennis Center an exceptional public facility. We are honored to be the steward of this welcoming and affordable public facility that supports the

health and wellness of our community with the quality of services typically reserved for private clubs. And we look forward to celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Gates Tennis Center in 2025.

The Park People's Arborist: The Ultimate Steward

Let's welcome The Park People's new Arborist: Amanda Westendorf. Arborists are specialists in the care and maintenance of trees. With Amanda as Arborist, The Park People can more frequently offer expertise and support to increase active greening projects, deepen our community work, and expand our stewardship work, such as: green the I-70 corridor, steward Denver Public School trees, establish a Park Legacy tree health check system, conduct clearance pruning and structural pruning of young trees, train the Colorado State Forest Service's Inflation Reduction Act grantees entering community forestry, and make house calls with residents when capacity allows. While the position is new, Amanda and her love of trees is not. Amanda began her journey with The Park People as a Community Forester volunteer in 2022. She quickly joined staff as a Field Crew Supervisor for *TreeForce*, where she helped develop the workforce development pre-apprenticeship curriculum and saw the first cohorts graduate. As Arborist, Amanda is hoping to lessen barriers for residents. "I hope that, in this position, I can provide advice and access to information for residents. Expense is one the limiting factors people experience with tree care, so if I can go to a resident's house and provide tips on tree care to help with establishment and health, then I am doing my part in improving Denver's urban canopy."



Amanda is certified by the ISA: International Society of Arboriculture

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Tribute Trees, Tribute Pavers, & Gifts to The Park People were made In Memory of:

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*We are honored to be home to
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Answer Key:

1. Girdling Root
2. Root Zone
3. Branch Collar
4. Root Flare
5. Die Back
6. Drip Line
7. Included Bark
8. Transpiration
9. Frost Crack
10. Sunscald
11. Codominant Stems
12. Branch Bark Ridge

