



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

NEWS FROM THE PARK PEOPLE

THE PARK BENCH

Community Led Greening: 20 Years of Stewardship

2023 marks twenty years of an important milestone in urban forestry stewardship at The Park People. Back in 2003, we kicked off our first *Community Forester* (CF) workshop, designed to empower residents to care for their neighborhood trees and support the work of our city foresters. Developed in collaboration with Denver Parks and Recreation's Office of the City Forester, CF was grounded in partnership and best practices from the beginning. In Denver's harsh arid climate, tree survival and health requires ongoing nurturing. Over the past two decades, that little seed of a workshop has grown into a web of partnerships expanding our neighborhoods' capacity to not just plant trees, but to ensure that they grow into a healthy canopy that will shade and nurture residents for years to come.



Community Connectors Kim Ramirez (left) and Danielle Helm (right) and Community Climate Ambassador Blanca Marrufo (center) at this fall's Tree Adoption event.

Increasingly in the last decade, The Park People has channeled more and more forestry resources to Denver communities with sparse tree canopies, through events such as community tree distributions and plantings with neighborhood groups in Westwood and Globeville. Building the necessary trusted relationships takes time. "Villa Park is a diverse community with mostly Hispanic families including mine," says Kim Ramirez, a Park People Community Connector who raised her two daughters and son in Villa Park. "Residents of these communities are sometimes suspicious of programs being offered because they have experienced hardships and have rarely received any positive assistance from organizations."

Since residents typically know best what their neighborhoods need, The Park People hires resident Community Connectors and also partners with Registered Neighborhood Associations (RNOs). The city has also prioritized funding for more trees for low-canopy neighborhoods; the Denver Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency, Denver Parks and Recreation, and Great Outdoors Colorado have partnered with The Park People to execute this long-term work, the success of which depends on building those trusted relationships with community members. As Irene Glazer, an active member of the West Colfax Association of Neighbors (WeCAN) says, "[West Colfax Community Connector] Leah Rounds works relentlessly to spread the word throughout our community on the importance of trees and The Park People's low-cost tree program to bring our mission of an increased tree canopy to life in the West Colfax neighborhood. Having someone who is so entrenched in our community and has a great deal of credibility makes a big difference to our residents."

On October 14th, our Community Connectors in Globeville, Valverde, Villa Park, Barnum, Barnum West, and West Colfax teamed up with RNOs including Globeville First, WeCAN, Community Coalition for Barnum, and Valverde Neighborhood Association to adopt out and plant over 360 trees.

So what happens next, after we work with our community partners to plant trees in our arid, high-elevation environment? Ongoing stewardship! Danielle Helm, longtime Barnum resident and Barnum Community Connector, is coordinating a "Barnum Tree Team." She envisions walking the neighborhood this fall, helping residents apply tree wrap to protect young tree bark from winter sun damage.

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A Message from the Director

Dear Friends,

I send warm greetings to you as The Park People wraps up one of our busiest autumn planting seasons yet—and one of our fullest years all around.

The past twelve months have been an exciting whirlwind of growth, partnership, and impact. Ideas, relationships, and pilot efforts that we've been nurturing for several years—and in some senses, several decades—have taken root and are blossoming rapidly in the form of dramatically expanding programming, resources, and services for our communities.

Built upon the solid foundations of our tried and true programming, like *Denver Digs Trees* and *Community Forester*, and with the funding support of critical partners as well as individual donors, we've scaled up our planting efforts, we've deepened our neighborhood relationships, and we've invested in resident leadership, capacity, and livelihoods. This expansion is focused on the goal of cultivating a vibrant, green Denver that supports the health and resilience of our communities in the face of climate change, extreme heat, and tree inequity.

Since last autumn's pilot of our *TreeForce* pre-apprenticeship program, we have now graduated two additional *TreeForce* cohorts, preparing individuals facing barriers to employment for careers in urban forestry and growing the urban forestry workforce that our communities need now and into the future.

Our Community Connectors and Community Climate Ambassadors—resident leaders we've hired over the past year—have deepened our relationships in their low-canopy neighborhoods and are mobilizing neighborhood-focused tree planting and care efforts that are dramatically increasing trust, engagement, and the numbers of trees we're planting in these critical heat-vulnerable areas.

Looking forward, we are excited to continue this important growth and innovation, and we're preparing ourselves to advance and support even more partnership with community. This means more investments in trees, in stewardship, and in staff (we're soon to have our own Arborist!). We're also assessing critical infrastructure, including our office and storage spaces for trees, tools, and

trucks. The expansion of our programming and the growth of our team from three to nine in a few short years has overwhelmed our current space.

I am excited to embark on a new year and a next phase of growth, working with our passionate and talented staff and our community of partners, supporters, and volunteers who amplify and make possible our work and impact.

Please join us in engaging communities to plant and steward trees and improve parks and greenspaces for a healthy, resilient future.

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

We welcome donations made via TheParkPeople.org, by mail, and over the phone. We also welcome gifts of stock. 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 5th ColoradoGives.org/TheParkPeople.

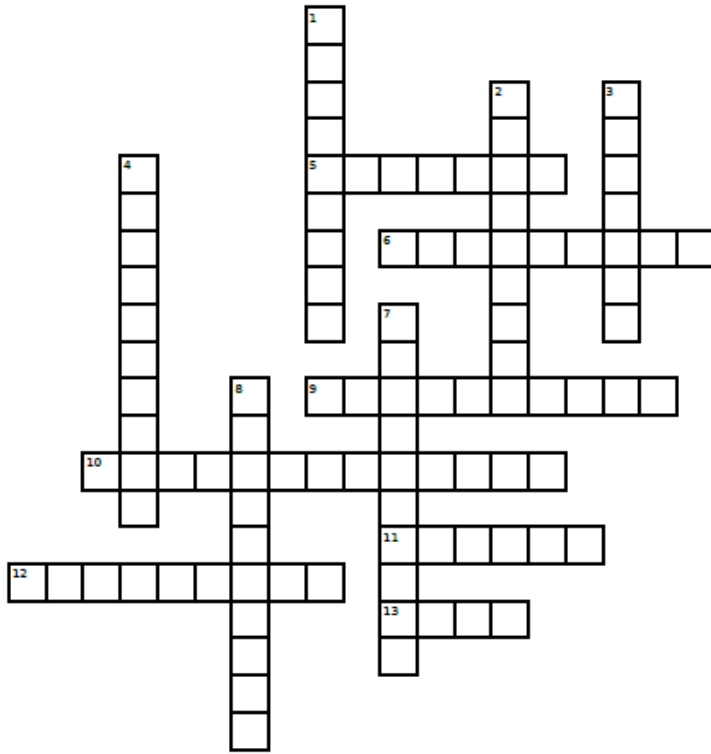
Thank you for your support and for being a Park Person.

Sincerely,

Kim Yuan-Farrell
Executive Director



Test Your Tree Knowledge



Down:

1. The best groundcover to put at the base of a tree
2. The condition often seen in maples that appears as yellow leaves with green veins
3. The shady side of the street is ____ degrees cooler
4. The most it will cost you, per month, to water a tree
7. The 'Autumn _____' has great fall color but may be prone to breakage and is not suited for Denver's soils.
8. How much water a tree needs per inch of trunk diameter

Across:

5. How often a tree needs water in the winter
6. Plant these kinds of trees along the north side of the house
9. Term for higher temperatures experienced within urban areas as compared to outlying areas
10. Planning and planting and caring for trees in the city
11. The cooling effect of 2 trees replaces 1 of these
12. It heats up the soil and dries up tree roots, don't use
13. Landscapes with more mature trees use ____ water

Answer key on back cover

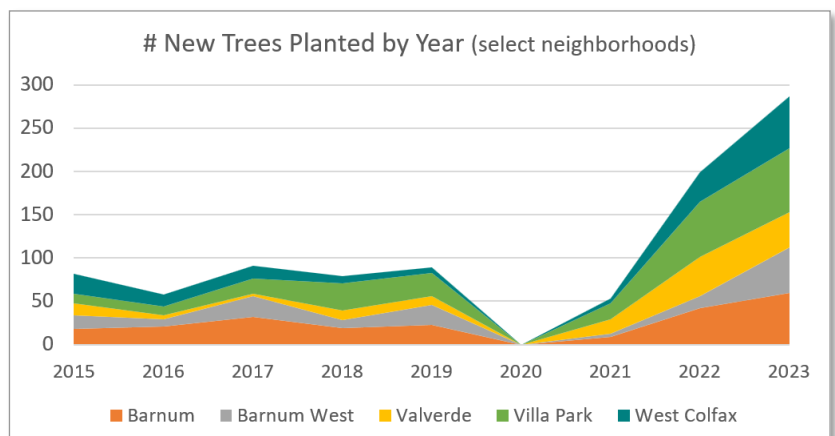
Community Led Greening *cont'd from page 1*

Meanwhile, our Community Climate Ambassadors, Blanca Marrufo, a Barnum resident, and Kerry Kramer, a Valverde resident, are preparing to distribute rainwater harvesting tools next year that will help their neighbors irrigate trees while conserving water. Denver's Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency, which funds this project, recently highlighted the effective community outreach work of our Community Climate Ambassadors as a model for other community-based organizations.

In addition to these growing programs, The Park People has spent years building community-level tree care volunteerism. In collaboration with Denver Parks & Recreation, we've trained more than 800 Community Foresters and Tree Stewards, who contribute many hundreds of hours of volunteer time for our neighborhood forests every year. Many of these volunteers serve crucial functions such as inspecting and permitting for "street trees" (i.e. trees planted in the Public Right of Way) for our *Denver Digs Trees* and community tree adoption programs.

Increasingly, these skilled *Community Forester* volunteers are partnering with our Community Connectors to provide neighborhood-level tree care, in response to residents' needs. "I grew up in Valverde and returned with Irma three years ago," says Valverde Community Connector Nick Gonzalez, referring to his wife. "Many things have changed, but not the need for trees. Our neighbors know where. The Park People have the tree knowledge. We're proud to be part of a great community team."

We can't think of anything more hopeful and rewarding than teaming up with neighborhood leaders who are passionate about the health of their communities and who want to guide us in caring for vibrant forests. We'll keep working with our city partners toward communities' visions of forests that cool, calm, clean, and feed us into the future.



The added capacity, energy, and leadership of our Community Connectors and Ambassadors in the most recent years has dramatically increased the number of trees planted in their low-canopy, heat-vulnerable neighborhoods.

Park Legacy: When A Tree Is More Than Just A Tree

For many, planting a Park People Tribute Tree is the perfect way to celebrate a special occasion, honor a family member or friend, or remember a loved one. As our year comes to a close, we want to honor some of the incredible community members who have chosen to contribute to our *Park Legacy* program.

When Shelley Baillie was diagnosed with a terminal illness, she asked her sorority sisters—and still close friends 30 years later—Lisa Heule, Liz Mosley, and Sharon Wynde to plant a Tribute Tree in memory of her. Shelley knew of the *Park Legacy* program because of her role as The Park People's bookkeeper; she was a cherished, spirited member of our community, integral to our work. To honor her Canadian father, Shelley chose a maple, and asked that it be planted in Washington Park. The tree was planted in October, and her friends planned a gathering at the site for November. As Lisa explained: "Shelley valued the life-giving aspect of a tree, and how it could be a continuing gift to the community she's leaving behind. For all of us who loved Shelley, it [symbolizes] her loyal shelter for us amid challenges, often freshening the air, and providing color to our activities!"



Meanwhile, planting Tribute Trees struck James Iles and his husband Wayne Johnson as a "cool thing to do and a way to memorialize our parents." Iles and Johnson's condo overlooks City Park, and so the pair planted two oaks and two Vanderwolf pines there in memory of their parents: Robert and Phyllis Iles, and Ken and Claire Johnson. They frequent the trees often, stopping to visit them on their walks through the park.

Finally, Hannah Craig and Nate Koch wanted to commemorate their engagement "in a way that was vibrant and communal," so they planted a Bosnian Pine in Cheesman Park. They "look forward to visiting the tree, observing changes and marking the passage of time alongside it." They hope that others will also enjoy the tree, and they delight in imagining "the conversations and moments that might transpire beneath the tree as it grows and matures."



Thinking of Someone? Celebrating a Milestone?

Tribute Trees are planted in March and October. Each tree has a tag bearing the name(s) of those being honored, and donors receive a personalized Tribute Tree certificate. Inscribed brick memory pavers are also available and are placed at the Tribute Garden at the historic Eugene Field Cottage on the eastern edge of Washington Park.

To learn more about our Park Legacy program, please contact Laura@TheParkPeople.org, or visit our website: TheParkPeople.org

Denver Digs Trees 2023: Oh, The Places You'll Grow



2023 marked *Denver Digs Trees*' 40th year of offering high quality, locally-adapted trees to all Denverites. This year, 1,500 new shade, ornamental, and fruit trees went out into the world to cool and beautify homes, schools, and streetscapes across the city. Our staff and Community Connectors' tireless work was supported and amplified by our partners, funders, and 230+ volunteers. With their ongoing support, the long-term work of stewarding the growth of these trees continues.

Since 1983, we've broken barriers to accessing trees—barriers of cost, physical ability, and knowledge. Our prices still range from \$0-35 (typical retail: \$200+), and we offer planting assistance to those unable to plant for themselves. Our long history of learning and honing our expertise in the field has helped to break through knowledge barriers. Growing trees can seem hard—from accessing free and affordable trees to choosing the right tree, from learning how to properly plant to having a reliable expert to turn to with questions along the way. This is where our years of experience, vast volunteer and *Community Forester* network, strong partnerships with Denver's foresters, and knowledgeable staff come into play. These elements combine, enabling us to knock on thousands of doors in low-canopy neighborhoods, host informational workshops and demonstrations, provide on-site experts, trustworthy guidance, and best practices, and be available via phone, in-person, email and text year round, for the decades to come. For 40 years we've served Denver's communities. We look forward to growing together for the next 40 and beyond.

Lifetime Benefits of the 2023 Trees



10 million pounds
of Greenhouse Gas Offset



74,460 pounds
of Air Pollutants Removed

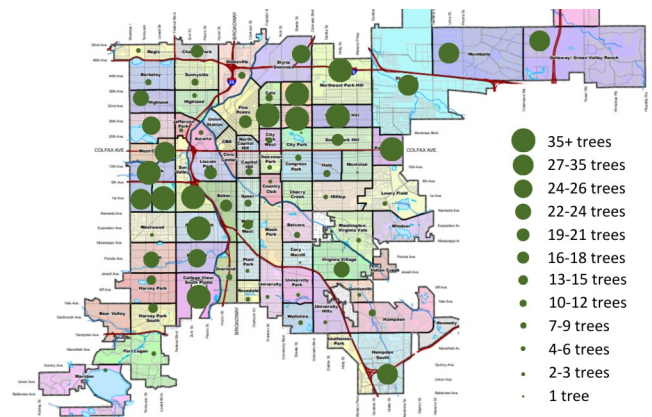


61+ million gallons
of Water Managed



\$268,260
in Energy Costs Saved

2023 Trees by Neighborhood



More than 60% of the 2023 trees are planted in 28 low-canopy, heat-vulnerable focus neighborhoods where they'll grow to mitigate increasing temperatures, clean the air, reduce flooding, and bring beauty.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 PROGRAM SPONSORS & PARTNERS



Several generous community members contributed major gifts to this year's program:

Jane King

Katharine C. Kurtz

Rose Ann Chavez

An Anonymous Donor



TreeForce: May The Force Be With Us

TreeForce, The Park People's workforce development program, has just completed its third cohort. We are thrilled to have provided our 8-week urban forestry pre-apprenticeship training to groups of previously incarcerated individuals in both spring and fall this year. How time has flown since our pilot program a year ago! With each cohort, we have seen exciting personal growth in our pre-apprentices, deepened our programmatic partnerships, learned valuable lessons, and refined the program. Having honed our recruitment process, we saw an exciting increase in graduation rates in our second cohort, and our third cohort included an age-diverse group (from early 20s to mid-50s) and our first women participants, another exciting programmatic goal and milestone.

"Sometimes women don't want to work in urban forestry because it is a fairly male-dominated field," said Field Crew Supervisor Amanda Westendorf, who helped pilot the program. "But Erica and Katrina are used to being the only women in a room."

TreeForce pre-apprentices have planted more than 200 trees, pruned dozens more, and supported other projects of The Park People and our partners, learning and gaining experience while getting good, green work done.

"This is one of the most attentive and excited groups of people we have worked with," remarked Brian Sawyer with Denver's Office of the City Forester, a key training partner. "Working with *TreeForce* is always a pleasure."

Prior to Cohort 3's graduation ceremony, three participants already received interview invitations with urban forestry leaders, including Denver's Office of the City Forester, ArborScape, and the City of Aurora. We look forward to seeing these pre-apprentices' next steps. And we plan to expand the program to three cohorts in the upcoming year.

Our deep gratitude to our funding partners who made *TreeForce* possible (see logos below). The program would also not be possible without our dedicated programmatic partners: Second Chance Center—our outstanding recruitment and supportive services partner, and our training partners: Denver Parks and Recreation, Sanctuary Tree, High Country Landscape, Altitude Arborist, Davey Tree Expert Company, Taddiken Tree, City of Aurora, City of Lakewood, City of Westminster, Colorado State Forest Service, and the Colorado Tree Care Sector Partnership.





2023 Mile High Tree Champions: New and Returning Champions

The Park People partnered with over a dozen dedicated companies and other groups to engage employees and community members in planting trees. Nearly half of these groups were returning champions, having planted in years prior, and with dedication like this, we can't help but feel the urge to make a bracket. The newcomers, however, were just as passionate, and looking at the stats, every group here is a winner. Together, we engaged 200 volunteers and planted nearly 300 trees throughout Denver. These projects added beautiful and vital canopy to Denver parks and communities with low tree canopy cover, creating a wonderful sense of community amongst volunteers and participants. Throughout these trees' lifetimes, they will cool their sites and surrounding neighborhood, improve air quality, absorb carbon, and reduce flooding during storms. Thank you to these incredible champions, our all-star volunteer leaders and community tree planters, and to our planting site partners, Denver Parks and Recreation and Denver Housing Authority.

2023 Mile High Tree Champions

AdCellerant Bow Mar Heights Park	Mile High Rotary Club City of Cuernavaca Park	POWER Engineers & Nolan Transportation Group Columbine Homes	Agility Recovery Washington Park
UPS & Arbor Day Foundation Washington Park	Meritage Homes & Arbor Day Foundation Harvey Park	Salesforce & Slalom Consulting Barnum Community Garden	
United Airlines & Arbor Day Foundation City Park	The Law Offices of Snell & Wilmer Barnum Park	Cairn Roofing & Crescent Communities Washington Park	

Become a Mile High Tree Champion! We help companies support 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



Thank You, Mrs. President: Laurie Chahbandour's 7 years of service



Second from left, Laurie Chahbandour at our 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2019 alongside other great friends of The Park People.

The Park People is grateful to have a dedicated working Board of Trustees. As longtime Board President Laurie Chahbandour, stepped down, our incoming President, David Hammond, sat down with her to discuss her lifetime of commitment to The Park People mission, and the important impact she has had on the Denver community.

Through exciting program growth and impact, increasing organizational capacity, and the COVID pandemic, Laurie served seven years as The Park People's President, turning over the office's duties to her successor on July 1.

Laurie started preparing for the presidency when she was seven by accompanying her mother, Gene Koelbel, to Board meetings. She joined the Board in 2007 and became President on July 1, 2017. Although the organization's bylaws provide for three-year officer

terms, Laurie graciously agreed to stay on to help The Park People through the COVID pandemic.

She decided to join the Board because the organization's capital projects appealed to her. A self-described "project person," Laurie considers the Cranmer Park Sundial project the "most pleasing event" of her presidency. She looks forward to future park improvement projects.

Laurie credits a 2018 strategic review for "catapulting" The Park People's programs. Community greening gained traction after the review. And *TreeForce*, the "so fantastic" urban forestry pre-apprenticeship program with "so much potential," was launched. During Laurie's presidency, program growth necessitated increasing The Park People's staff from one full-time and one part-time employee to the present nine person staff.

What's next for Laurie? She says she "enjoys the people" and plans to stick around.



Laurie's son, Becks (front), and a friend at the Cranmer Park Sundial, a Park People renovation project. The Park People continues to hold the Sundial Preservation Endowment Fund to support maintenance needs of the site.

Park People Board Transitions

A warm welcome to new Trustee and Board President, **David Hammond**. Beginning his journey with us as a dedicated volunteer and Community Forester, we are excited for his passion for our mission and the Board leadership experience he brings to his new role and are thrilled to have him with us as a Park Person.

Our hearts are with the family and friends of Board Trustee, **Bill Cook**, who passed away this year. Bill was - and will remain - a cherished member of our Park People community. He was an amazing leader and force of nature. He left an impactful legacy for our organization, in our communities, and in the hearts of so many of us. Read more about Bill in our [Autumn 2021 newsletter](#).

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Kathleen & Jay Rust	Mark Bailey & Julia Olson	Rebecca & Ken Gart	Marsters	
Kathleen Piaskoski	Mark Doyle	Rebecca O'Brien	Stephen & Ginger	



*Warm thanks to
Living Room Real Estate
for donating a tree
with each closing.*





The team behind the Park Legacy Program, from left: staff member Laura Prickett and super-volunteers Jan Winkler and Leah Jean Shafer

IN CELEBRATION & MEMORIAM

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

Shelley Baillie Daniel M. Barkey Patrick Barron Robert Bauer Charles Alphonzo Brown Doris Brown Jackie Brown
 Lewis Eklund Butler Jean Wood Churchman Michael Churchman Bill Cook Jeff Cook Robert Connery
 Patrick Crowley Ann Scarlett Daley Chris Dircks Della Jean Dufau Jeannette Ekstrand Josh Fraites Saira Hanninen
 Dennis A. Hanson Marjorie Hayner Bob and Barbara Henry Mildred Hiebert Robert and Phyllis Iles Ken and Claire Johnson
 Jane King Tom Maestas Frank and Mike McNeill Michael Stanley Montoya Judith K Morgan Natalie Murray Cathy Pfeifer
 Nancy Nupnau Phetteplace Barbara R. Reed Reed and Chris Roberts Dorothy Rodosevich Liam Simonet Schoeneringer
 Robert Thomas Spear De'Jaun Terrell Stevenson Irvin Joan Sullivan Torin Thorsgard Keith Thornton Nikki Van Heuvelen
 Marilyn Watson Bill and Jo Wilbur Bruce Wolin Sherman Woo Heather Young Olaf

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

Mattie Barreau Ryan Begin Melissa Benavidez Nick Bither Emma Carillion Laurie K. Chahbandour Rose Ann Chavez
 Bob Christensen Susan Eslick Gertie Grant Victoria Hellmer Hannah Craig and Nate Koch
 Dan & Melissa Loan Jim Loan Nance Maguire Bob & Sandy Righter Hank Saipe Frank and Letha Steed
 Alexandra and Ruthann Theriault Jani Tomski Courtney Winn Cary Yuan The Yuan-Farrells



*We are honored to be home to
 The Tim Buchanan Kindness Fund.*

*Set up by his children, gifts may be made in
 Tim's honor and will support the planting and
 care of trees in low-canopy areas throughout
 Denver's neighborhoods.*





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www.TheParkPeople.org



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communications.

To sign up for the
e-Park Bench, email
info@TheParkPeople.org
with subject line:
"Green me up"



Answer Key:

1. Wood mulch
2. Chlorosis
3. Fifteen
4. Two Dollars
5. Monthly
6. Evergreen
7. Blaze Maple
8. Ten Gallons
9. Heat Island
10. Urban Forestry
11. AC Unit
12. Rock Mulch
13. Less

