

# Tree City USA: Foundation for Better Management



from the **TREE CITY USA®  
BULLETIN**

*When a storm dropped wet, heavy snow late one spring on the city of Waukesha, Wisconsin, the damage to trees was devastating. The city forester went to the finance committee for emergency funding to conduct restoration pruning on damaged trees that survived. He reports that the response to his request was, "We are a Tree City USA; we are proud of the designation, and we intend to keep it." The vote was unanimous in favor of the forester's request.*



1. Go online to [arborday.org/treecity](http://arborday.org/treecity) to complete your application, or obtain a paper application from your state forester or the Arbor Day Foundation.
2. At a point where a community finds that it meets the standards and can proceed with the application, see Step 3 below. If, on the other hand, it discovers it has additional work to do, the next step should be to seek help from the state forester's office.
3. When your community meets the four standards, the mayor or other city official should submit the application and supporting materials to your state forester. There is no fee.
4. Verification and approval is done by staff in the state forester's office, and the application is forwarded to the Arbor Day Foundation.
5. State foresters present the Tree City USA awards in various ways. Most commonly, the awards are given at an Arbor Day ceremony in the community or at a statewide awards program, usually in the state capitol and sometimes with participation from the governor. Community officials receive a Tree City USA flag, two road signs, a plaque, and several commemorative items.
6. Recertification announcements are sent to communities annually, as well as an application for a Tree City USA Growth Award. The Growth Award encourages continual improvement of community forestry programs (See Bulletin No. 18).



## THE FOUR STANDARDS — HOW TO PUT THEM TO WORK

To qualify for Tree City USA status, a town or city must meet four standards established by the Arbor Day Foundation and the National Association of State Foresters. These standards were established to ensure that every qualifying community would have a viable tree management plan and program. Importantly, they were also designed so that no community would be excluded because of size. Two of the four standards are listed below.

### A TREE BOARD OR DEPARTMENT

Someone must be legally responsible for the care and management of the community's trees. This may be a professional forester or arborist, an entire forestry department, or a volunteer tree board. Often, both a professional staff and advisory tree board are present, which is a good goal for most communities.

A tree board, or commission, is a group of concerned volunteer citizens charged by ordinance with developing and administering a comprehensive tree-management program. Balanced, broad-based community involvement is encouraged. Boards function best if not composed entirely of tree-related professionals such as forestry professors, nursery operators, arborists, etc. Fresh ideas and different perspectives are added by citizens with an interest in trees that is entirely avocational. Limited, staggered terms of service will prevent stagnation or burnout, while at the same time ensuring continuity.

### A COMMUNITY TREE ORDINANCE

The tree ordinance must designate the establishment of a tree board or forestry department and give this body the responsibility for writing and implementing an annual community forestry work plan. Beyond that, the ordinance should be flexible enough to fit the needs and circumstances of the particular community.

A tree ordinance provides an opportunity to set good policy and back it with the force of law when necessary. Ideally, it will provide clear guidance for planting, maintaining, and removing trees from streets, parks, and other public places.

For tips and a checklist of important items to consider in writing or improving a tree ordinance, see *Tree City USA Bulletin No. 9*.

### OTHER INFORMATION IN THIS ISSUE INCLUDES

- The benefits of being a Tree City USA
- The four standards to qualify for Tree City USA recognition, and how to do it



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