Champions of Nature in Parks

Frederick Law Olmsted was America’s pioneer of park design, envisioning nature as a central theme. Olmsted, a landscape architect, is best known for designing Central Park and other city parks that have set the standard for parks and public green spaces across the United States and Canada. His innovative approach to designing with nature provided a helping hand to restore the native system. By providing a home for wildlife and preventing deterioration from abuse and neglect, they need active management to survive in the nooks and crannies of our cities and towns. These unique communities of life provide protection from the invasions of development. Even more, they need active management to prevent deterioration from abuse and neglect.

Henry David Thoreau once wrote, “A town is saved, not more by the righteous men in it than by the woods and swamps that surround it.” A township where one primitive forest waved above while another primitive forest rots below — such a town is fitted to raise not only corn and potatoes, but poets and philosophers for the coming ages.”

Philosophy aside, wooded areas in and around our communities offer practical benefits as well. They prevent soil erosion, cleanse the air, buffer noise, counter the heat-absorbing effect of buildings and pavement, and offer the kind of recreational opportunities that new industries and savvy home buyers look for in selecting a new location. They also provide a home for wildlife and can be a lifesaver for migratory birds. Woodlands are clearly an attribute, but as part of an urban forestry program, they also present a number of challenges.

One challenge is the need to gain broader public appreciation for these little strips and odd lots of nature among the concrete and asphalt of our busy society. Another — and closely related to the first — is to ward off the invasion of development. Parcels of woods on public property are often the first to be eyed for building affordable housing, expanded parking lots, or other often-unsavory projects. ‘Uplandized land’ is the term sometimes used by decision makers.

Finally, there is the question of keeping natural areas truly natural. All wooded areas offer educational, recreational, and environmental benefits to some degree. But to the ecology-minded, there is the beauty and value of fine art in seeing a forest of native vegetation function on its own through successive generations of trees and understorey. This challenges the manager to first understand the ecology of the site, then root out weedy invaders, and finally, to provide a helping hand to restore the native system.

Managing natural areas may sound like a contradiction of terms. But your help is needed if remnants of woodlands are to survive in the nooks and crannies of our cities and towns. These unique communities of life need protection from the invasions of development. Even more, they need active management to prevent deterioration from abuse and neglect.

How to Manage Community Natural Areas

1. How to Prune Young Shade Trees
2. When to Prune Shrubs
3. Preventing Tree-Sidewalk Conflicts
4. The Right Tree for the Right Place
5. Living With Urban Soils
6. How to Hire an Arborist
7. How to Save Trees During Construction
8. Don’t Top Trees!
9. Writing a Municipal Tree Ordinance
10. Plant Trees for America!
11. How to Prevent Tree/Sign Conflicts
12. What City Foresters Do
13. Trees for Wildlife
14. How to Kill a Tree
15. Tree Risk Assessment – Recognizing & Preventing Hazard Trees
16. How to Recycle Shaed Tree Materials
17. How to Landscape to Save Water
18. Tree City USA Growth Award
19. How to Select and Plant a Tree
20. A Systematic Approach to Building With Trees
21. How Trees Can Save Energy
22. Tree City USA: Foundation for Better Management
23. How to Conduct a Street Tree Inventory
24. Trees and Parking Lots
25. Tree Line USA
26. Understanding Landscape Cultivars
27. How to Manage Community Natural Areas

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