Certified Nature Explore Classrooms

Nature Explore Classrooms are being created in private and public spaces throughout the nation. These research-based outdoor classrooms are designed to introduce young children to nature and provide positive experiences playing in the outdoors with plants and natural materials. Certification of the classroom means that standards developed by the Dimensions Educational Research Foundation and the Arbor Day Foundation have been followed. Requirements for certification include:

- Designing the space following specified principles that are based on early childhood research.
- Staff development through attendance at a Nature Explore Workshop.
- Family involvement is encouraged regularly.

Certification provides access to a special website for news, networking, and continuing education in addition to assuring high-quality planning, construction, and use of the classroom. A free Resource Guide provides more information and guidance.

A Certified Nature Explore Classroom assures that standards have been met that provide the greatest benefits for the children in a community.

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Quick links to the websites of all organizations mentioned in this bulletin can be found by visiting arborday.org/bulletins.

Tree City USA Bulletin © 2015 Arbor Day Foundation. Published by the Arbor Day Foundation; James R. Fazio, editor; Karina Helm, graphic designer. Technical reviewers for this issue: Bob Russo, Chief Program Officer, Tree Care Industry Association and Shannon Lilly, Director of Educational Goods and Services, International Society of Arboriculture.

CREDENTIALS ARE IMPORTANT

No. 79 Editor: Dr. James R. Fazio • $3.00

One would not go to a doctor or dentist who is not professionally certified. And who wants to fly in a commercial plane with a pilot who is not certified? In this modern age of increasing complexity, proof is necessary when we put our trust in the hands of those who we expect to be competent. It is now time to include the various practitioners of urban forestry in this category of professionalism.

With no pun intended, it can be said that urban forestry is a growing field. Not only do we plant and grow trees in our increasingly urbanized nation, we are also charged with keeping vegetation healthy and safe. In fact, the burdens of responsibility placed on every employee and volunteer associated with urban forestry are growing every year as society becomes more safety-conscious and — when things go wrong — litigious.

Certification and accreditation programs are one way to help prevent problems. The words stem from the Latin certificate and generally mean to attest authoritatively or to confirm that something is true as represented. Sometimes the two words are used interchangeably, but it is more accurate to use “certification” when referring to individuals, or sometimes to a specific product, and “accreditation” when applying the concept to organizations such as schools, businesses, or a department.

In this bulletin, some of the major opportunities available to individuals and communities are outlined. These are opportunities to improve, raise the bar of professionalism at all levels, and provide residents with assurance that their trees, waterways, and public lands are in good hands. That is that they are taken seriously and managed professionally.