

***Innovation in Arboriculture***  
**2026 Ohio Tree Care Conference**  
**Conference Program**

**Tuesday, February 3**

**General Sessions**

9:00 am - 10:00 am

**Before You Spray, Read the Label!**

The label is the law- RIGHT?! However, pesticide language can be challenging to comprehend. We'll examine the language closely and become familiar with the various sections of the label. Improved label comprehension will help you use these products safely and effectively!

**Presenter:** Mary Ann 'Mimi' Rose, The Ohio State University Extension

Credits: A,UF,U,BM,CORE

10:15 am - 11:30 am

**Root Collar Excavation and Compacted Soils - The Tools and Demonstration**

Andrew Freeman from Ohio Tree MD will dive into the world beneath the surface by explaining and safely demonstrating the process of root collar excavation and soil de-compaction around trees using a couple of different models of air spades. This will be an interactive session with an in-the-field feel.

**Presenter:** Andrew Freeman, Ohio Tree MD LLC

Credits: A,T,UF,BS,CORE,6A

12:45 pm – 1:45 pm

**Plant Healthcare: Tools and Applications**

Review some of the tools, treatments, and application methods of Plant Health Care. This will be an interactive session with an in-the-field feel.

**Presenters:** Keith Lambert and Rick Towe, Bartlett Tree Experts

Credits: A,T,UF,U,BP,CORE

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

**Soils: Analysis, Sampling, Tools, and Application**

We will review many of the tools, treatments, and application methods, as well as look at soils. This will be an interactive session with an in-the-field feel.

**Presenter:** Guy Fortner, Bartlett Tree Experts and John Johnston

Credits: A,T,UF,BS,CORE,6A

3:15 pm - 5:00 pm

**Urban-Compatible Tree Architecture**

Urban-compatible tree architecture is a relatively new term in arboriculture. It describes a branch architecture easily trained for structural integrity and clearance from urban and suburban structures and utilities. Unmanaged or improperly managed trees often become obstacles and obstructions in the urban landscape. Achieving a compatible architecture begins at the nursery, continues during planting, and is completed approximately 15 years later with three pruning cycles. We show you how to achieve this low-maintenance alternative to the tree architecture often encountered in our daily work. Think long-term, act tomorrow.

**Presenter:** Dr. Ed Gilman, University of Florida

Credits: A,T,UF,BS

**Research**

10:15 am - 11:30 am

**Growing Better Choices: 60 Years of Tree Evaluation at Secrest Arboretum**

Since the establishment of the Ohio Shade Tree Evaluation Project in 1965, Secrest Arboretum in Wooster has served as a vital site for cultivating and assessing adaptable, functional landscape plants. Today, Secrest's collection boasts hundreds of tree species and cultivars that can enhance and diversify our urban forests. This presentation will explore the legacy of tree evaluation at Secrest and highlight a selection of top-performing commercially available choices, including newer varieties currently under observation.

**Presenter:** Jason Veil, Secrest Arboretum

Credits: A,T,UF,BS

12:45 pm - 1:45 pm

**Modern Arboricultural Research – Branches, Biology and Paclobutrazol**

Zack will review modern methods and new research on various topics crucial to arboriculture. New research in branch biomechanics and morphology, soil biology and microbial testing, and the use of the growth regulator paclobutrazol. This presentation is not intended to delve deeply into any one category, but rather to update our industry on the research and methods surrounding these topics over the most recent years, how they apply to arborists, and how we can move forward as an industry.

**Presenter:** Zack Shier, Joseph Tree Service

Credits: A,T,UF,BP,6A

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

**The Biomechanics Behind Tree Assessment**

Our discussion will explore the newly updated Best Management Practices for Tree Risk Assessment. We will concentrate on the likelihood of failure category and time frame. Then discuss how research informs the likelihood of failure rating. The session will conclude with an audience participation discussion, where we collectively calibrate and assess the probability of failure for a selection of trees.

**Presenter:** Gregory Dahle, West Virginia University

Credits: A,T,UF,U,BM,CTSP

**Arboriculture+/CA Review**

*(Pre-Registration Required – Participants must be preparing to sit for the ISA exam in 2026.)*

8:00 am - 9:30 am

**Tree Biology - Chapter 1**

Brief overview of tree biology and anatomy for those preparing for the certified arborist exam.

**Presenter:** Mike Long, YNDC TreeCorps

Credits: A,T,UF,BS

9:30 am - 10:30 am

**Tree Risk Assessment & Management - Chapter 12**

Brief overview of tree risk assessment as it relates to trees in the urban forestry environment.

**Presenter:** Joe Moeglin, ODNR Division of Forestry

Credits: A,T,UF,U,BM

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

**Tree Selection - Chapter 6**

Overview of tree and site characteristics that influence a successful planting.

**Presenter:** Phil Olsen, College of Wooster

Credits: A,UF,BS

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm

**Installation and Establishment - Chapter 7**

Overview of best management practices for tree installation and establishment. This presentation will cover recommendations on planting techniques, survival strategies, and prevention of longer-term issues, including identifying types of planting stocks, understanding proper planting based on tree species, and recognizing early tree care needs for newly planted trees.

**Presenter:** Phil Olsen, College of Wooster

Credits: A,UF,BP

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

**Tree Support & Lightning Protection - Chapter 9**

Overview of how tree support reduces the risk of mechanical failure and how the usage of lightning protection systems can minimize the risk of damage.

**Presenter:** Brian Goodall, Bartlett Tree Experts

Credits: A,T,UF,BP,CTSP

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

**Tree Identification - Chapter 2**

Learn about the different parts of a tree and how they can be used to make a proper identification.

**Presenter:** Brady Holko, The Davey Institute  
**Credits:** A,T,UF,U,BM

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

**Diagnosis & Plant Disorders - Chapter 10**

This presentation provides an overview of diagnosing tree disorders and problems for those preparing for the ISA Certified Arborist exam.

**Presenter:** Brady Holko, The Davey Institute  
**Credits:** A,T,UF,U,BP,6A

**Wednesday, February 4**

**Keynote**

9:00 am - 10:30 am

**Introduction to Prescription Pruning**

There is a new qualification designed to boost arborists' professionalism throughout the US. More than 1,000 arborists in over 25 states now hold the Prescription Pruning Qualification (PPQ). First, we introduce some new arboriculture language based on ANSI A-300 and ISA BMPs, combining activities and exercises. Then we bring this to life by demonstrating why some of your colleagues are calling this "One of the best arboriculture programs I've attended". We present a refined, easy-to-teach process that not only demonstrates how to prune but also how to communicate with production arborists and tree owners effectively.

**Presenter:** Dr. Ed Gilman, University of Florida  
**Credits:** A,T,UF,BP

**Aboriculture+/CA Review Continued**

*(Pre-Registration Required – Participants must be preparing to sit for the ISA exam in 2026.)*

7:30 am - 8:30 am

**Urban Forestry - Chapter 14**

Brief overview of urban forestry best management practices as they relate to managing and caring for vegetation in the urban and community forest.

**Presenter:** Joe Moeglin, ODNR Division of Forestry  
**Credits:** A,UF,BM

8:30 am - 9:00 am

**Soil Science - Chapter 3**

Participants will learn about the relationship among soil moisture, absorption of essential elements, and root growth.

**Presenter:** Andrew Freeman, Ohio Tree MD LLC  
**Credits:** A,UF,BS

9:00 am - 9:30 am

**Water Management - Chapter 4**

Participants will learn about water management and how water influences plant growth and health, identification of soil characteristics, and how they affect aeration, infiltration, and water holding capacity.

**Presenter:** Andrew Freeman, Ohio Tree MD LLC  
**Credits:** A,T,UF,BM

9:30 am - 10:30 am

**Plant Health Care - Chapter 11**

In this session, we will review the concepts of plant health care (PHC), integrated pest management (IPM), and the appropriate response process (ARP). We will review the key components of a monitoring program and the importance of preventative strategies in maintaining a healthy landscape.

**Presenter:** Andrew Freeman, Ohio Tree MD LLC  
**Credits:** A,T,UF,BP,4A,6A

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

**Pruning - Chapter 8**

An overview of the importance of understanding both the proper techniques and how the tree responds to pruning.

**Presenter:** Phil Olsen, College of Wooster  
Credits: A,T,UF,U,BM

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

**Trees & Construction - Chapter 13**

Brief overview of best management practices for working around trees during construction, such as how trees can be injured or killed as the direct or indirect result of construction damage. This session will also provide participants with a deeper understanding of the limitations of treating trees that have been damaged by construction.

**Presenter:** Brian Goodall, Bartlett Tree Experts  
Credits: A,T,UF,BM

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

**Tree Nutrition & Fertilization - Chapter 5**

Overview of the relationship between tree nutrition and fertilization.

**Presenter:** Andrew Freeman, Ohio Tree MD LLC  
Credits: A,T,UF,BP

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

**Tree Worker Safety & First Aid - Chapter 15**

A brief overview of climbing and working in trees by using the industry's best management practices, ANSI, and OSHA guidelines.

**Presenter:** Brian Goodall, Bartlett Tree Experts  
Credits: A,T,UF,U,BP

4:30 pm - 5:30 pm

**Climbing and Working in Trees - Chapter 16**

A brief overview of climbing and working in trees by using the industry's best management practices, ANSI, and OSHA guidelines.

**Presenter:** Brian Goodall, Bartlett Tree Experts  
Credits: A,T,UF,U,BP

**Climbers' Corner**

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

**Clip It, Check It, Don't Wreck It**

A walkthrough of climbing gear inspection, including PPE, textiles, hardware, harnesses, and the tools and equipment that will aid in cleaning these items.

**Presenter:** Jacob Nau, Russell Tree Experts  
Credits: A,T,UF,U,BP,CTSP

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

**Knot Your Average Anchors**

Choosing the right tie-in point and anchoring technique for MRS or SRS. A demonstration of a variety of options to safely anchor into the crown of a tree.

**Presenter:** Harry Carter, Russell Tree Experts  
Credits: A,T,UF,U,BM,CTSP

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm

**No Swing, Just Bling**

A discussion and demonstration of static lifting techniques for rigging and craning applications and the hardware and textiles that are involved and available.

**Presenter:** Jacob Nau, Russell Tree Experts  
Credits: A,T,UF,U,BP,CTSP

4:00 pm-5:00 pm

**Anchor Down, Rescue Up**

A discussion and demonstration of aerial rescue from a lowerable basal anchor, exploring options for lowering an injured climber from the ground.

**Presenter:** Harry Carter, Russell Tree Experts  
**Credits:** A,T,UF,U,BM,CTSP

## Commercial

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

### **Assessing Establishment Success of North American Oaks**

In 2024, three community gardens were established, each featuring 20 oak species native to the northern and southern regions of North America, in Hamilton, OH, Lisle, IL, and Berryville, VA. These common gardens will serve as long-term monitoring sites for assessing how oak species adapted to different parts of North America respond to climate change in the various areas in which they are planted. Over the next five to ten years, we will measure the survival, growth, and health of each sapling monthly during the growing season to quantify establishment success. Our findings will provide planting and management recommendations for oaks that are adapted to current and predicted warming across North America.

**Presenter:** Erika Wright, Ohio State University  
**Credits:** A,UF,BS

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

### **Latest Safety Equipment**

Overview of new tools coming out in the industry.

**Presenter:** Scott Brenner, Endor Rope Arborist Supply  
**Credits:** A,T,UF,U,BM

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm

### **Guidelines for Managing BLD**

This talk will provide an overview of Beech Leaf Disease (BLD), a growing threat to American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) caused by nematode *Litylenchus crenatae* ssp. We will review the latest research on effective management strategies, including early detection, treatments, and other practices that promote tree health and resilience. Recent findings offer promising approaches for long-term management.

**Presenter:** Cory McCurry, Rainbow Ecoscience  
**Credits:** A,T,UF,U,BS,4A,6A

4:00 pm - 5 pm

### **Rooted in Excellence**

Learn about the carefully curated collection of plants that Secret Arboretum gives the designation Secret Select. These plants must be easy to grow, have multi-seasonal interest, be readily available in the trade, and have been grown at Secret for years. (There are specific time requirements for each type of plant.) What a great tool when selecting plants for your home landscape!

**Presenter:** Paul Synder, Secret Arboretum  
**Credits:** A,UF,BS

## Municipal

11 am - 12:00 pm

### **Cincinnati's Urban Forest: Past, Present, Future**

Join us as we take a deep dive into the history of urban forestry in Cincinnati, from its humble origins to the present day, and explore our plans. We'll discuss how we have used our urban tree canopy assessment (UTC) to inform forest management decisions; the challenges of developing in-house crew capabilities in the face of rising contractual costs; updates to our risk management program; and efforts to begin production of biochar from wood waste generated by our tree care operations. Finally, we will look to the future and consider how our program will contribute to mitigating some of the anticipated impacts of climate change and creating more climate-resilient neighborhoods.

**Presenter:** Garrett Dienno, Cincinnati Park Board  
**Credits:** A,UF,BM

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

### **Data-Driven Decision-Making with Smart Tree Inventories**

Make the Right Decision, at the Right Time, on the Right Tree. Tree inventories have evolved from the early days of pen & paper and are now in the world of artificial intelligence (AI) & machine learning (ML). By combining AI & ML, we can transition our tree inventories from a snapshot-in-time updated once a decade to a 3D digital twin

updated biennially. The climate is changing faster than our trees can adapt. Our methodologies for assessing and monitoring our public trees must keep pace. This presentation will introduce the idea of smart tree inventories, provide an update on current AI technologies in the urban forest environment, demonstrate the current methods, outcomes, and the future of smart tree inventories, and explain how smart tree inventories provide practitioners the ability to better manage their urban forest for tree equity, risk management, and urban heat island.

**Presenter:** Josh Behounek, The Davey Tree Company

Credits: A,UF,BM

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm

### **Growing Potential through Land Banks and Urban Forestry**

This session will explore how land banks can support urban forestry efforts by working with stakeholders and communities to utilize vacant land for green reuse and community benefit. Presenters will highlight land banks, their operations, partnerships, and practical examples that have had a lasting impact on communities. This includes a regional initiative in the Mahoning Valley focused on tree planting and environmental stewardship, as well as the Western Reserve Land Conservancy's collaboration with land banks to advance reforestation efforts.

**Panelists:** Shawn Carvin, Ohio Land Bank Association; Lydia Lynch, Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership; Isaac Robb, Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Credits: A,UF,BM

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

### **The Buckeye State Tree Nursery**

The Buckeye State Tree Nursery will distribute its first round of native seedlings for conservation projects across Ohio in spring 2026. This presentation provides a look at how the nursery uses advanced container systems and precision irrigation to produce high-quality, resilient trees for reforestation and habitat restoration. Production is expanding toward over one million seedlings annually to meet statewide restoration needs.

**Presenter:** William Barnhill, ODNR Division of Forestry; Brigitte Hisey, Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District; and Chad Hoff, City of Columbus

Credits: A,UF,BM

## **Utility**

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

### **FirstEnergy Green Teams and the Community Tree Program**

The session will focus on the FirstEnergy Green Teams and our extensive tree planting program, known as the Community Tree Program. Jessica will provide information about the program, including historical data and current accomplishments, such as the number of trees that have been planted. She will briefly discuss the community pollinator garden program that evolved from the highly successful tree program.

**Presenter:** Jessica Schaffer, FirstEnergy

Credits: A,UF,U,BM

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

### **Avoiding Off-Target Issues**

Participants will examine examples of off-target Herbicide movement. Determining what possibly went wrong and how it may have been prevented. We will discuss application methods, advantages, herbicide selection, and other strategies to minimize the potential for off-target movement.

**Presenter:** Dewey Goss, Townsend

Credits: A,T,UF,U,BS

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm

### **The Future of Vegetation Management: Digital, Smart, & AI Powered**

Utility vegetation management is shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach. In Westerville, paper maps and guesswork are a thing of the past, replaced by AI-enhanced satellite insights and tablet-based work orders. Crews now go exactly where they're needed first, reducing outages, boosting efficiency, and making every dollar count. The lesson is simple: you can only manage what you can see, and now, they see it all.

**Presenter:** Joe Delong, City of Westerville

Credits: A,UF,U,BM

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

### **Succession by Design: Linking Leadership Development to Employee Retention Outcomes**

Employee retention is no longer a byproduct of satisfaction—it's the result of intentional investment in leadership growth and career pathways. This session explores how structured leadership development and succession planning can directly influence workforce stability. Autumn Dickerson will detail the frameworks behind Planting the SEED, an internal leadership development initiative built to identify future leaders and reduce turnover across critical operational roles. Attendees will gain an understanding of how Team Talks and internal pipelines were used to strengthen communication, reinforce culture, and align development with organizational goals.

The session will also explore measurable impacts, including employee engagement trends and retention improvements, illustrating the tangible business value of growing leaders from within.

**Presenter:** Autumn Dickerson, The Davey Tree Company

Credits: A,UF,U,BM

### **Thursday, February 5**

#### **Climbers' Corner**

10:00 am - 11:00 am

##### **Talk the Talk, Cut the Cut**

Discussing the standards, options, and available technology that pertain to efficient and safe jobsite communication.

**Presenter:** Jacob Nau, Russell Tree Experts

Credits: A,T,UF,U,BM,CTSP

11:00 am -12:00 pm

##### **Spar Me the Drama**

A demonstration of a spar aerial rescue, discussing technique options and additional hazards in this complicated scenario along the way.

**Presenter:** Jacob Nau, Russell Tree Experts

Credits: A,T,UF,U,BM,CTSP

#### **Commercial**

10:00 am -11:00 am

##### **Ohio Forest Update**

This presentation will cover the identification, biology, distribution, and management options for various insect, disease, and abiotic stressors of trees and forests that tree care and natural resource professionals should be aware of in 2026.

**Presente:** Tom Macy, ODNR Division of Forestry

Credits: A,T,UF,U,BS,4A,6A

11:00 am -12:00 pm

##### **Setting Up for Success: Remediating Urban Soils Ahead of Planting**

Prescribing soil amendments for successful urban tree planting.

**Presenter:** Lizzie Sords, The Davey Tree Company

Credits: A,UF,BS, 6A

#### **Municipal**

10:00 am - 11:00 am

##### **Tiny Farmers, Massive Impacts: The Hidden Life of Ambrosia Beetles and Their Role in our Urban Landscapes**

**Presenter:** Tom Paul, The Ohio State University

Credits: A,UF,BM,4A,6A

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

##### **Buttressing Beneficial Bugs**

Trees in urban settings support a diverse array of beneficial and non-harmful insects. These frequently overlooked and/or unwanted species often play a crucial role in the health and functioning of urban ecosystems. This talk will introduce groups of “non-pest” insects, discuss considerations for managing these species, and help enable informed decision-making that promotes both tree and broader environmental health.

**Presenter:** Sam Ward, The Ohio State University

Credits: A,UF,BM,6A

## Utility

10:00 am - 11:00 am

### **UAVs In Utility Arboriculture**

This session will cover the barriers to entry into UAV/drone applications, examine the efficacy and efficiency of the different models available, and finally discuss some of the unique challenges in day-to-day UAV/drone applications.

**Presenter:** Dustin Polasek, Nutrien Solutions

Credits: A,UF,U,BM

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

### **Advanced Vegetation Analytics Tools (AVAT)**

This session will introduce AVAT – Advanced Vegetation Analytics Tool, a machine learning solution developed by FirstEnergy to quantify system conditions and assess the probability and risk of tree-related outages across distribution rights-of-way. Attendees will gain insight into how AVAT supports strategic decision-making in scheduling, budget planning, and field operations. This session is ideal for utility professionals, data scientists, and vegetation managers interested in the intersection of forestry and emerging technology.

**Presenter:** Jacob Wolfgang, FirstEnergy

Credits: A,T,UF,U,BM,CORE,6A

## **All Tracks Combined**

12:45 pm - 1:45 pm

### **Tree Breeding for Resistance to Pests and Pathogens: Ash & Elm Updates**

**Presenter:** Kathleen Knight, USDA Forest Service

Credits: A,UF,BS,4A

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

### **Year in Review: Plant Pests, Pathogens and Problems**

The Tree Amigas want to engage you in buggy banter, deciduous discourse, and of course treeful talking points and also hear from you about what problems have you concerned the most in the landscape?

**Presenters:** Ashley Kulhanek and Ann Channon, OSU Extension

Credits: A,UF,BS,4A,6A

## CEU Legend

ISAA-Certified Arborist, T-Tree Worker, UF-Urban Forestry Specialist, U-Utility Specialist,

BM-BCMA Management, BP-BCMA Practice, BS-BCMA Science

Ohio Commercial Pesticide Recertification and CTSP as listed,

CFE: 6.0-2/3, 5.5-2/4, 4.0-2/5, OCNT: 8.0-2/3, 8.0-2/4, 4.0-2/5 (self-report)