

# ETF News

www.eugenetreefoundation.org

NEWSLETTER OF THE EUGENE TREE FOUNDATION

## Soil Volume, Tree Canopy, and the Importance of Being Vigilant

by Whitey Lueck

In Eugene's early days, you could plant almost any kind of tree anywhere and it would be assured of a relatively long and healthy life—

as long as a "parked" horse didn't chew off the tree's bark. Eugene was founded, after all, by farmers who knew good soil when they saw it. The fertile, deep, and well drained loam of the Willamette River's floodplain was ideal for growing food crops as well as trees that would shade the first streets of Eugene City.

But over the years, the wonderful loam that underlies downtown has been displaced by basements, utility trenches, gravel, rubble, and everything else that ends up underground in a modern city. As a result, the good soil that at one time seemed limitless in its extent has become increasingly scarce. And the trees that we plant downtown end up living shorter and more disease-prone lives as their roots seek—but are unable to find—the soil that trees need to develop large, healthy canopies.

Because available soil volume is now the major constraint limiting tree growth in our downtown, Eugene Tree Foundation often speaks up on behalf of soil protection and preservation, to help ensure the health and longevity of new trees planted downtown.

The best time to speak up is early in the plan-

ning process, when developers and architects are just beginning to make decisions about building placement, construction techniques, and so

forth. For most of these professionals, soil is just "dirt" which does not have value until something is built upon it. Many of these same people, however, appreciate our plant friends and include trees and other vegetation in their plans, but their drawings usually show just the plants' above-ground parts, ignoring the plants' underground needs.



Newly planted trees at The Tate on Olive Street.

A case in point is a condominium project called The Tate which is nearing completion at 1375 Olive Street. Before construction began, permission was granted to remove a half-dozen healthy, 20-year-old white ash trees growing in the publicly owned park strip in front of the development site (to allow easier access for the construction contractor) with the stipulation that the trees would be replaced upon completion of the project. A letter emphasizing the need to protect large volumes of soil during downtown projects—or else import the soil following project completion and before planting trees—was sent to Eugene's mayor and city councilors, referring in particular to circumstances at The Tate.

After the completion of the building, as the landscape contractor was beginning his work

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**To enhance  
community  
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present and future  
generations through  
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stewardship of  
Eugene's diverse  
and vibrant natural  
landscape**



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# President's Column

I couldn't have picked a better day to write these lines. It's the summer solstice and 72 degrees outside, with a gentle breeze carrying the fragrance of my late-blooming Japanese lilac to my nostrils. I'm in a good mood, and here's why.



Oregon white oak

A group of concerned citizens (the River Road Community Organization) was recently successful in appealing the application of a building project by questioning the tree protection rules! RRCO was not opposed to the development; they just had some concerns about the fate of the trees on the property in question, and through collaborative effort and intelligent

approach (and the help of ETF!) they were listened to and heard!

I wrote in the preceding *ETF News* about the "balance" in our lives and my wish to tip the scale a little more often in the direction of trees. It looks like this time, my wish came true. People working on behalf of trees can make a difference. What a great summer solstice!

Alby Thoumsin, President

*As we go to press, we have learned that the developer has gone to the Land Use Board of Appeal (LUBA) and ETF was asked to intervene again by signing—along with others—a Letter of Affidavit.*

*In short, ETF is likely to become increasingly involved in issues of this kind, as we become better known as a respected and constructive advocate for trees in our community.*

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(which was to include the planting of the new street trees), an alert passerby noticed that instead of replacing the compacted soil in the park strip with good soil, it was replaced with crushed rock, which does not grow trees. Moreover, the passerby learned that instead of large-canopy trees being planted to replace the broad-spreading white ashes, a columnar maple cultivar was to be planted, at the request of the property owners (who evidently wanted to limit the leaf-fall onto the one-story portion of their building).

The projects' owners were immediately contacted, as well as City urban forestry staff and the project's landscape architect, and a discussion followed. Most of the rock ended up being removed and replaced with loam, and the columnar maple cultivar was replaced with a green ash cultivar called 'Summit' that will eventually form a broader-canopied tree as it matures.

As is often the case, the site owners, City staff, and the landscape architect all apparently had the best of intentions before and during construction, but there were still problems. And because landscaping is usually the last task to accomplish before the deadline for project completion and final inspections, corners are sometimes cut that might otherwise not be cut. And the trees end up taking it in the roots, so to speak.

The moral of this story? Speak up on behalf of trees! They cannot do it themselves; they depend on us. Sometimes, despite the best efforts of City staff, project architects, and property owners, trees still lose out. Eugene's small urban forestry staff, in particular, cannot keep tabs on every single development site.

So if you see something regarding trees that just looks wrong to you, speak first to the project manager or site owner about your concern by raising questions, rather than telling them what you think they should be doing.

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### **Here are a few tips on being a more effective Dendro-Vigilante(!) :**

- Intercede early and often on behalf of trees (project managers and site owners appreciate knowing as early as possible about these concerns).
- Be pleasant and respectful of those with whom you talk (if you're really upset by what you see, try to settle down before pursuing things).
- Follow up your "victories" as well as your "defeats" with a thank-you-for-your-consideration card (you will likely be remembered in a favorable light).

## **Sign Up for e-Newsletter**

To save trees (paper) and mailing and printing expenses, ETF encourages you to sign up to receive this newsletter in electronic format.

If you would like to receive the e-Newsletter, please contact us via our website.

Thank you!

# Doctor Tree

by Alby Thoumsin

In my job as an arborist, I'm sometimes referred to as the Tree Doctor, but I would like to turn the tables this time and tell you about trees being *our* doctors. Or, more simply, how trees provide numerous ways for us to ease our aches and pains. I just re-read an awesome book by Fred Hageneder called *The Spirit of Trees*, which gave me the idea to write about one of the ways used by our ancestors to stay healthy. (Since the future of Medicare is somewhat uncertain, you might want to hang on to this article, just in case!)

Let's take a little walk, and see what kinds of medicinally useful trees we find along the way! The ash tree (*Fraxinus*)—one species of which is a common native tree along watercourses in the Willamette Valley—was known during the Middle Ages as the “healing tree.” Its bark, leaves, and seeds are generally diuretic, laxative, and blood cleansing. The inner bark was used to heal bleeding wounds and the fresh sap acted as an disinfectant. It is said that the leaves, if put inside shoes, refresh tired feet.

Along the same watercourses where ashes often grow, don't forget to look for the alder (*Alnus*). Its leaves and bark are both astringent and antiseptic, and the bark was used to heal rashes and festering wounds.

Keep following the creek or river and you will likely find a willow (*Salix*) whose bark is famous for soothing pain, especially rheumatic pain. Medical research eventually synthesized the main component of willow bark (called salicin) to make acetylsalicylic acid, which led to the birth of aspirin.

Also along the edge of wetlands and rivers you'll find the cottonwood or poplar (*Populus*) whose healing properties are found mostly in its winter buds. They contain high amounts of essential oil and resin and their positive effects have been known for centuries.

Moving away from the water and passing through a nearby thicket, chances are you'll find a hawthorn (*Crataegus*). It will strengthen your heart and balance your blood pressure while soothing cramps. The dried berries provide a quick snack and, when mixed with apples and elderberries, make an excellent jam.

A little farther away on our walk is a nice grove of oaks (*Quercus*). Drinking tea made of oak bark or leaves will help with infections of the digestive tract, and liver and bladder problems. The same tea can be used for gargles, bleeding gums, rashes, wounds, and burns.

Ahhh! Time to go home after a nice hike. Along the way, stop by a park if it's June and pick some linden, or basswood, flowers (*Tilia*). Dry the flowers, then put a handful in a mug, add hot water and a drop of honey, and you'll sleep peacefully.

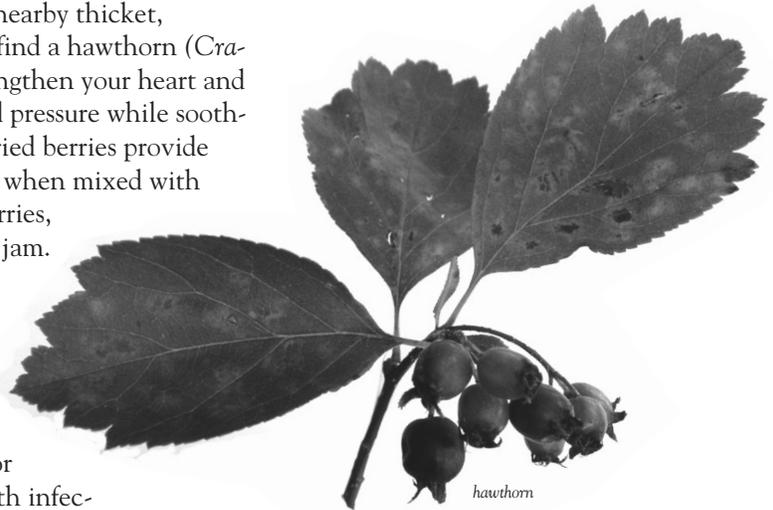
If our walk had been a bit longer, we would likely have come across elms, filberts, elderberries, spruces, pines, and yews, to name only a few who each have their own little secrets to helping you feel better. These plants have always been here for us—most of us simply aren't aware of their medicinal properties.

The best news is these “drugs” are free, and you don't have to go to Canada to get them!

Until next time,

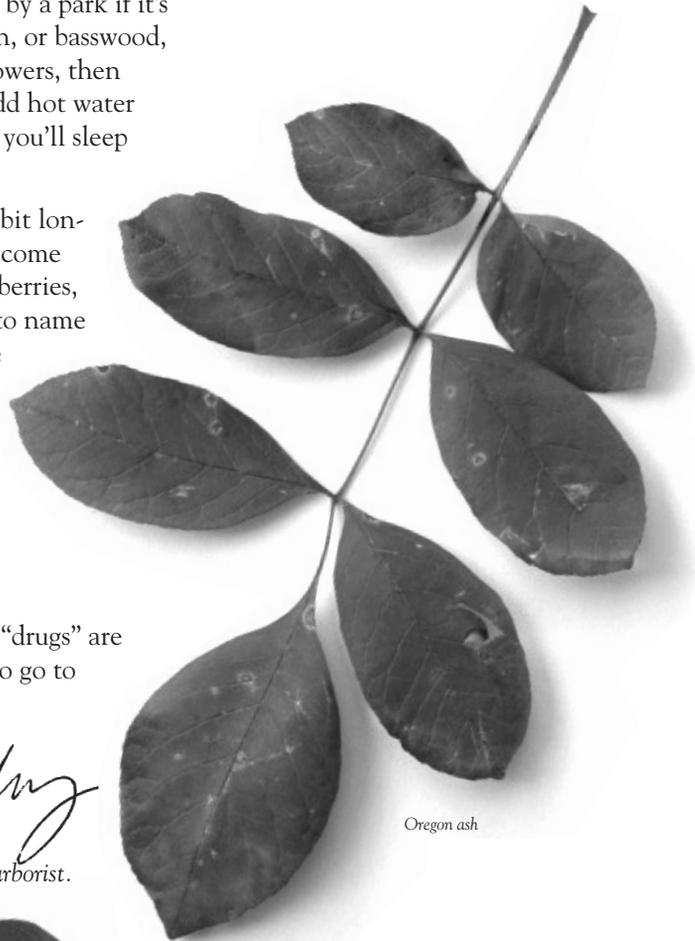


Alby Thoumsin is a certified arborist.



hawthorn

Note: Natural remedies can be potent and may interfere with other drugs you are taking. You should consult a naturopathic physician before taking home-brewed remedies.



Oregon ash



willow



EUGENE TREE FOUNDATION



It's a Parade!



Support ETF by walking with us at the **Eugene Celebration on Saturday, Sept. 9th.**

Interested? Leave a message for Lisa at 284-9854.

We will contact you about **costume design** and other parade details.

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## What's in Bloom?

by Whitey Lueck

There is a small tree originally from China and Japan that blooms in late summer in our area and



Whitey Lueck

The harlequin glorybower is a suckering, small tree that seldom exceeds 10-12 feet in height.

has escaped the notice of most people. Its name alone—harlequin glorybower—merits attention! “Harlequin” because of the contrasting colors of its flowers (white), ripe berries (turquoise), and fleshy sepals that surround the berry (magenta). And “glorybower” because, well, it makes a gloriously fragrant bower when it’s in flower which is usually late July through September.

The tree’s heart-shaped, fuzzy leaves also deserve a closer look and smell. The new leaves, just as they are developing, smell like peanut-butter when they are gently rubbed. What a treat!

This species (*Clerodendrum trichotomum*) is unusual around here, but you can see a small group of them on the University of Oregon campus, across the sidewalk from the southwestern-most corner of the main Knight library.

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If their answers fail to satisfy you, call the City urban forestry staff (682-4800) who depend on the eyes of the rest of us out in the community to see the violations or shortcomings they cannot see. They are very good at following up citizens’ tips.

You don’t have to be an arborist, a landscape architect, or a community activist to speak up on behalf of trees. All you need to be is someone interested in the welfare of our community’s trees. And that’s a perfect description of you, isn’t it?