

# ETF News

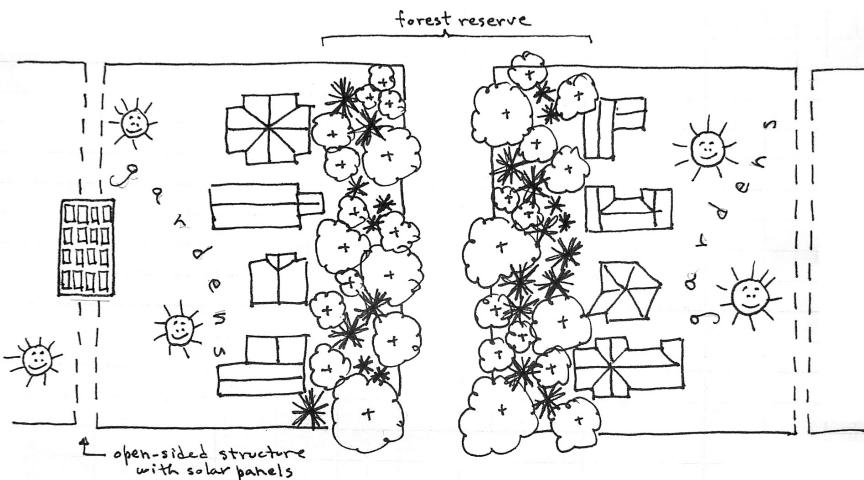
[www.eugenetreefoundation.org](http://www.eugenetreefoundation.org)

• NEWSLETTER OF THE EUGENE TREE FOUNDATION •

## Trees and Neighborhood Re-Design

By Whitey Lueck

Several years ago, I was asked to give a talk about trees and neighborhoods, and how I—drawing on my background in horticulture, ecology, and landscape design—might re-design an existing neighborhood, or design a new one, to better provide for the needs of trees as well as people.



Plan view of one block of a re-designed neighborhood.

One of my chief concerns about the current state of residential landscaping is that it is far too people-oriented and largely ignores the needs of the rest of our community: native plants and animals that once called this part of the upper Willamette Valley “home.”

To most people, the term “habitat loss” brings to mind tropical jungles being bulldozed and turned into cattle farms to grow cheap beef for North Americans. But we ignore the habitat loss that has occurred in our own yards due to the construction of our homes and the creation of landscapes—dominated by lawns, non-native trees (and other plants), and lifeless bark mulch—that attract very few of the native critters that once lived here, and displace all the rest.

My second major concern regards tree species selection and tree placement. Most trees are selected based solely on their aesthetic attributes. Pretty trees are great, but how about selecting trees based on their environmental and ecological roles in addition to their appearance?

Where tree placement is concerned, trees are very often planted where they could eventually shade a neighbor’s vegetable garden, the much-loved sunny patio, or the solar panels on the roof, again because we are so focused on beauty that we largely ignore the functions and effects of trees and how those change over time.

So what could we do? First of all, in typical valley-floor neighborhoods, we could designate front yards as a giant “forest reserve” and replant them using appropriate native trees—for example, Douglas-fir and bigleaf maple on well

drained river loam soils; and Oregon ash, aspen, and ponderosa pine on poorly drained soils farther away from the river, nearer the hills. The result would be forested corridors stretching for blocks and blocks and from front door to front door. Although mostly on private land, the forest reserves would be planted and cared for according to a City-created master plan and trees would be harvested on a sustainable basis to provide lumber and other wood products. Yes, that’s right: we would all have a productive “working forest” right in our front yards!

In some areas, oak/pine savanna with an understory of native grassland (grasses and wildflowers) would supplant the denser, closed-canopy forests with their undercanopies of native shrubs and herbaceous plants. But whatever the details, the so-called “streetscape” would be devoted to habitat restoration while simultaneously shading the street—to keep the neighborhood cooler in summer—and the front sides of all the houses.

Having paid our collective debt to Nature by

Continued on page 2



Summer, 2009; Vol. 12, No. 3

ETF Board of Directors

Erik Burke

President

Doris Wimber Secretary

Jim Gent

Jeff Lanza (*planting*)

Nick Martinelli

Peter Rodda

Alby Thoumsin (*education*)

Newsletter Editor: Whitey Lueck

Newsletter Layout: Helen Liu

Bookkeeper: Jennifer Salvatore

Executive Assistant:

Mary Sharon Moore

Mission Statement:

**To enhance  
community  
livability for  
present and future  
generations through  
the collaborative  
stewardship of  
Eugene’s diverse  
and vibrant natural  
landscape**



**EUGENE TREE  
FOUNDATION**

P.O. Box 12265

Eugene, Oregon 97440

Voice Mail: (541) 284-9854

[www.eugenetreefoundation.org](http://www.eugenetreefoundation.org)

# President's Column



Hello, everyone!

This is a wonderful time of year. Garden plants seem to grow almost visibly, and blueberries and raspberries are abundant and delicious. I hope you are taking time to relax in the shade of a tree on these hot summer days or to go for a swim in one of our local waterways.

I am excited to introduce Mary Sharon Moore as a new part-time employee for ETF. A generous grant from the Phileo Foundation provided funding for the executive assistant position. Mary Sharon will be dividing her time between administrative and

*Continued from page 1*

## Trees and Neighborhood Re-Design

converting our formerly dysfunctional front yards into attractive and biologically productive wildlife habitat, we could then turn our attention to our backyards, which would be devoted largely to human needs. First and foremost is food production, which requires lots of sunshine and no competition from large trees—either above-ground (due to the trees' shade) or below-ground (tree roots take water and nutrients that your food plants need).

Another use for sunny backyards (and rooftops) is electricity production with solar panels. Mounted atop roofs, they produce a secondary benefit by shading the house in summer and helping to keep it cooler. Neighbors might also consider installing solar panels atop an open-sided structure where adjacent backyards converge to create a meeting-place beneath, perhaps with picnic tables and a storage area for shared tools.

The advantages of this proposed scheme are many:

program work, working on many tasks, including building a business membership program, improving publicity, and volunteer coordination. ETF has until now largely been an all-volunteer organization. Having a staff person will help us initiate and carry out some projects that there has not been enough volunteer time to get done. We also hope to expand our planting efforts and fund a planting coordinator position.

We would like to thank retiring board member Jason Blair for all his contributions to ETF. Jason helped ETF in many ways, including building our Access database and helping the board of directors develop and enact better procedures. Many thanks, Jason!

I hope you enjoy this newsletter. In

this and future editions, we present different views on how to care for land in Eugene's neighborhoods to contribute to the health of our community and ecosystems. We welcome your responses. Send us a letter or e-mail, or come talk with us at our booth at the Eugene Celebration.

Happy summer,

*Erik Burke*

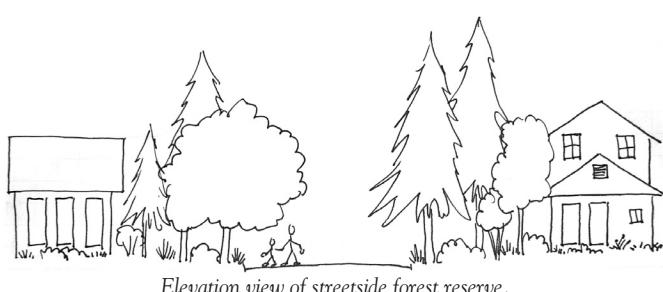
Erik Burke  
President

**Letters to the Editor** Write to us at [www.eugenetreefoundation.org](http://www.eugenetreefoundation.org), or at P. O. Box 12265, Eugene, Oregon 97440.

vidual rights so highly. Yet most of us already have a publicly owned "park strip" in front of our residences that we get to care for along guidelines determined by our community. Narrowing those guidelines—to include only those native plants suited for the forest reserve—and expanding that same management philosophy up to our front doors is not that big of a jump, is it? And most of us already appreciate the importance of habitat restoration, even if we don't yet know how to do it on our own properties.

The early pioneers who came to the salubrious Willamette Valley thought they had found

"Eden." Imagine a visitor arriving in Eugene 50 or 100 years from now and finding neighborhoods laced with beautiful, native woodlands and, in backyards, produc-



*Elevation view of streetside forest reserve.*

I realize, of course, that the communitarian ideals expressed in this proposal may not sit well with people raised in a country that values indi-

tive gardens providing most of the fresh fruits and vegetables consumed by the happy households who live here. An earthly paradise, indeed!

# Make a Difference— Learn How to Prune Young Trees!

By Alby Thoumsin

You might have seen me working at the ETF booth sometime, or maybe at the Home and Garden Show or—my favorite one—the Good Earth Show, where I staff a booth as an arborist for the company I work for. All too often, when I ask passersby if they have trees, they respond: “Oh, yes, but they’re too small to worry about!”

For some reason, people commonly believe that a tree that cannot be climbed or is not big enough to cause damage doesn’t need any care. But that’s not at all true. In fact, timely and early intervention can avoid many future problems. The best part of all is that the pruning of young trees is easy, fun, and doesn’t require expensive tools—even large trees rarely need the use of chainsaws for proper pruning.

In an urban environment, especially where trees grow close to homes and streets, the ideal form for a shade tree is a single trunk with well spaced lateral branches. Trees that develop multiple, competing trunks or branches regularly have what we professionals euphemistically call *failures*—they break at the point where the multiple trunks or branches diverge.

But with a little understanding of tree development, and early and regular care, the tree with the worst reputation for failure can turn out just fine.

For example, one of the most common trees in the Eugene area is the red maple (*Acer rubrum*), chosen in most cases for its gorgeous fall color and its fast growth (we humans are such an impatient species!). When it leaves the nursery, a typical red maple has a straight trunk and a flurry of branches

atop its trunk, almost all originating from a single spot on the tree’s trunk. Assuming the tree is properly planted and watered, it will grow at an average pace of 15 inches per year once it’s established.

The branches I mentioned above



will compete with one another for space and food and will often starve the top of the tree of the nutrients and water needed for proper development. As a result, the tree becomes deformed and the lower branches—that get the goodies first as the sap rises in spring—will grow very aggressively to a point where they are not just competing with each other, but they become larger than the trunk itself! So pruning to limit the number of lower branches and

to space them properly will prevent future problems.

Another preventable problem is the double-leader. Some tree species have a habit of forming forks and, instead of a single trunk, they develop two. As soon as a tree begins to develop a double-leader, one of them should be removed (if they are of different sizes, then remove the smaller, weaker one). All too often I see trees I wish I could have pruned 15 years ago.

I could go on, but I would rather show you the proper pruning techniques in person. Four years ago, I approached the City of Eugene with an idea. A lot of the young trees in the public right-of-way (between the curb and the sidewalk) need to be pruned but the Urban Forestry Division has so few arborists that, to their disappointment, early pruning is not a priority.

My idea was to offer free pruning lessons to citizens and ask them to give back by pruning young trees planted all around the city. Thus were born the Tree Stewards! We have just finished training our fourth group of volunteer Tree Stewards. After initial training, all Tree Stewards meet once a month on the third Saturday morning for three hours of educational fun and pruning.

Interested? For more information, call Rick Olkowski—NeighborWoods Coordinator for the City of Eugene—at 682-4831.

My tip this time? Be a volunteer Tree Steward and make a difference in our community. You won’t regret your decision and you’ll learn to see trees in a whole new way.

Until next time!

Alby Thoumsin is a certified arborist.



**EUGENE TREE FOUNDATION**  
P.O. Box 12265  
Eugene, Oregon 97440

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
EUGENE, OR  
PERMIT NO. 335

**EUGENE TREE  
FOUNDATION**

## **Thank you, ETF donors!**

*Donations since summer 2008*

### **Vine Maple: up to \$25**

Berglund, Connie  
Bressen, Tree  
Burrowes, Anne  
Burton, Donald  
Devine, Leona  
Edblom, Greg  
Kelley, Joan  
Kyle King Tree Service  
Liguori, Helen  
McDaniel, Deborah  
Meares, Glenn  
Moore, Mary Sharon  
Reed, Janet & Richard  
Romm, Richard  
Smith, Jane and Jerry  
Tracy, Bill and Marjorie  
Turring, Donna

### **Madrone: up to \$35**

Adler, Stu  
Baker, Gail  
Barr, Beverly  
Bennett, William  
Burke, Erik & Jessyca  
Duhrkoop-Galas, Arica  
Hebert, Dennis & Larena  
Heintz, John E.  
James, Annah  
Jones, Doris & Bob  
King, Tim  
Liu, Sue Chung  
Meacham, Jack  
Oltion, Jerry & Kathy  
Orum, Marriner  
Pueschner, Alice  
Reiter, Morgan  
Robertson, Margaret  
Sandall, Diane  
Singer, Ellen  
Sorensen, Nancy  
Streisinger, Lotte  
Turner, Jack and Anne  
Vallerand, Pat  
Wooddell, Pam

### **Oregon Ash: up to \$50**

Aspren, Bill and Christie  
Brink, Larry  
Bryan, Keiko  
Busby, Hal  
Carroll, Phillip  
Cowan, Barbara  
Delgado, Rosemary  
Erickson, Audrey  
Flesch, Nancy  
Gent, Jim & Mary  
Holm, Jim & Carol  
Holtzapple, John B.  
Kelsay, Dorris  
Kubacke, Cathy  
McCartney Tree Surgery  
Mello, Vicky  
Olsgard, Georgie  
Phifer, Bob & Nan  
Prentice, Margaret  
Rodda, Peter

### **Ponderosa Pine: up to \$100**

Anonymous  
Austin, Fred & Sandra  
Bascom, Ruth  
Bingham, Bing  
Cameron, McCarthy, Gilbert  
& Scheibe  
Diethelm, Jerome  
Edwards, Jeannie  
Giudici, Kirk  
Graef, Monique & Robert  
Lane Forest Products  
Sabin, Vic  
Sorenson, Allan R.  
Streight, Tina  
Von Hippel, Josephine

### **Oregon White Oak: up to \$250**

Anonymous  
Forgatch, Marion

## **California Buckeye —A harbinger of summer**

By Whitey Lueck



the tree is in full bloom in June, you can't miss it with its long clusters of sweetly scented white flowers.

Although rarely planted locally—and virtually unavailable in nurseries—this species deserves more attention. A native of California's Coast Range and the Sierra foothills, where it typically grows as a gawky shrub or small tree, it develops under cultivation into a pretty and symmetrical little tree. A superb, two-trunked specimen grows near the southeast corner of East 15th Avenue and Walnut Street in the Fairmount Neighborhood. Although planted in the backyard, its canopy is fully visible from the street.

The California buckeye should grow well most anywhere in Eugene, including areas with poorly drained soils such as the lower parts of Amazon

Journey Tree Financial  
Planning and Investments  
Schroder, Heidi  
Turner, Olga

### **Douglas-Fir: up to \$500**

UO Athletic Department

Wade, Louise

### **Bigleaf Maple: up to \$1000**

Dr. John E. Villano D.D.S. PC

One of the more spectacular flowering trees that can be grown in our area is the California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), a close relative of the common European horsechestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) that blooms here in April and May.

For most of the year, the buckeye's green canopy goes largely unnoticed, but when

Neighborhood east of Amazon Park—where another tree of this species grows in the 2500 block of Kincaid Street. Because of its relatively small stature and spreading canopy, it also deserves consideration as a streetside tree, even where there are overhead electrical distribution lines. The tree is drought-tolerant, cold-hardy, and an absolute knockout during the first few weeks of summer!