

ETF News

www.eugenetreefoundation.org

NEWSLETTER OF THE EUGENE TREE FOUNDATION

Some Trees Don't Get a Winter Vacation

By Whitey Lueck

Here it is mid-winter—the first week in February, which is midway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox—and many of Eugene's trees are hard at work, making the world a better place. (And you thought trees were "dormant" during the winter!)

Needle-leaf evergreen trees or "conifers" work the hardest during the winter. For example, Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) are photosynthesizing every chance they get, taking water and carbon dioxide and making sugars and oxygen whenever the temperature is above freezing. No, they are not putting out new needles or adding wood to their trunks, but they're working nonetheless.

And although spring is still nearly two months away, some conifers have already completed their reproductive activities, so to speak, for the year. The pollen cones of both coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)—which is not native to the Wil-



Incense-cedar pollen cones open in January.

lamette Valley—and the native incense-cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*) ripened during the month of January and shed their pollen which floated through the air to fertilize the future seed cones elsewhere in the tree's canopy or on another tree.

The redwood's pollen cones persist on the tree for many weeks, but those of incense-cedar

are dropped soon after completing their job. They are dull yellow in color and under some incense-cedars create a golden carpet for a few days after falling.

Some broad-leafed deciduous trees begin flowering during the second half of winter and well before their leaves emerge. Examples include red maple and silver maple, and American elm and Siberian elm. By far the showiest-flowered of these four tree species is the red maple, which is also the most commonly planted of the four.

Many people think that red maple (*Acer rubrum*) is so named for its fall color, but it's in

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2009 Tree Planting Projects

By Jeff Lanza

It's tree planting season again. Put these dates on your calendar. Come out and lend a hand in the greening of our city.

ETF tree planting projects are in partnership with the City of Eugene's NeighborWoods program. All projects are scheduled to begin at 9:00am on the designated Saturday mornings, rain or shine. Please wear appropriate work clothing and boots/shoes. Look for the ETF/NeighborWoods canopy shelter at the designated project locations on page 2.



ETF tree planting volunteers on Harlow Road.



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Mission Statement:

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



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President's Column



Hello, everyone!

It is an honor to serve as ETF's new president and to help carry on the good work of all of our past and current volunteers and supporters.

I love ETF and the work that it does. Our recent planting at Adams school brought this home to me. Kids, parents, teachers, administrators, neighbors, city employees, and ETF volunteers planted trees around the school, and talked about how to make the school a more sustainable place. It is a pleasure to help ETF make these events possible. We all got our hands dirty and had a good time, and connected a little more to nature, and to our neighborhood, school, and community.

Many thanks to Alby Thoumsin for three hardworking and successful years as ETF's president. I'm grateful for all his work and thankful he is staying

with us as a board member and education chair. Anyone who has been on a nature walk with Alby knows his humor, warmth, and passion for trees, and his rich knowledge of arboriculture and natural history. He is an excellent teacher, and his deep and personal relationship with trees inspires us all to connect with trees. I also want to thank all who have ever contributed to ETF in any way; please join us again as we strive to find how we can best serve our community and its trees.

Our annual Celebration of Trees will be at the EWEB Training Center February 25th, from 7-8:30pm. Please come and meet ETF supporters and board members, and tell us what you would like ETF to be doing in the future. We are grateful that Scott Fogarty, the executive director of *Friends of Trees* in Portland, will speak at the celebration. I am excited to hear more about this very successful group and their work in the big city down-river from Eugene. We hope to learn from them ways to improve ETF.

This is my favorite time of year. As I write this in mid-January, camas shoots are rising out of the ground, and the white alders along the river are stunning, their lovely catkins shedding pollen and lending color and life to the edge of the winter river. It's been wonderful on these beautiful, clear, and cold January days to ride through the dropped incense-cedar pollen cones on the bike path, and watch the sunset from an orchard ladder while pruning apple trees. Soon the osoberry with its white blossoms will be covering wooded hillsides in Hendricks Park and around Eugene. This coming spring seems special and unusually hopeful. I hope you'll continue to work together with us for the health of our urban forest.

Best wishes,

Erik Burke
ETF President

2009 Tree Planting Projects

Campus Re-Leaf

March 7

Meet near East 14th Avenue and Alder Street. Fourth year of replanting efforts near the University of Oregon. We will plant 15-20 new street trees.

Replacement Tree Planting

February, March and April

Meet the first Saturday of each month at City of Eugene Public Works, 1820 Roosevelt Boulevard. We leave at 9:00am. Transportation provided for a limited number of volunteers. Please RSVP to Rick Olkowski, NeighborWoods Coordinator at 682-4831. We'll 10-20 replacement street trees in dispersed locations.

Arbor Day

April 11

Trees-for-Concrete Project
Meet at West 13th Avenue and Olive Street (former Eugene Public Library building). We'll plant 10-15 new street trees.

For further details and up-to-date information, you may contact Rick Olkowski, City of Eugene NeighborWoods Coordinator, at 682-4831, or Jeff Lanza, ETF Planting Coordinator, at 342-2183.

ETF tree-planting volunteers at Pearl and 18th.



Letters to the Editor We invite you to write to ETF about the contents of this newsletter or any other tree-related matter at www.eugenetreefoundation.org, or at P. O. Box 12265, Eugene, Oregon 97440.

The Afterlife of Trees, Part 1

By Alby Thoumsin

Tree lovers like us have a tendency to see the death of our “one-legged” friends as dramatic and sad. Although it’s true that the presence and shade of dead trees disappear when they die, it would be unfair to them to ignore the benefits they continue to provide to countless other living organisms long after they’re dead. Just walk in any mature forest and you’ll see that dead trees are crucial for the life of the forest. Ironic, isn’t it?

Alas, the materialistic world we live in encourages us to see trees as useful only until they die. But a still-standing, dead tree—known as a *snag*—also provides a host of important services for the planet! Even as they die, trees send out signals called “pheromones” to insects such as bark beetles. From then on, the slow process of decomposition kicks in: fungal spores colonize the trees, breaking down the wood; larvae feast on the decaying wood; and the larvae provide food in turn for woodpeckers, salamanders, and other wildlife that depend on that precious source of protein. The cavities excavated and then abandoned by woodpeckers subsequently provide nesting sites for small owls—western screech owl, northern saw-whet owl, and northern pygmy-owl—and sometimes even for small raptors like the American kestrel. Other, even smaller cavity-nesting birds also enjoy the shelter. Nuthatches and chickadees, for example, are likely to visit any hole found in a dead tree!

After they fall to the ground, dead tree trunks provide food and shelter for a whole different group of animals. We’ve all seen pictures of raccoons coming out of a hollow log—or out of a cavity in a standing trunk, for that matter. But even the tiniest hole



will satisfy some wild creature. Yes, that includes spiders as well as other invertebrates, but also rodents and batrachians (salamanders, frogs, and toads) that hibernate in the heart of the trunk, insulated from colder outside temperatures.

Then, slowly but surely, the trunk leaches nutrients and minerals back into the soil, and disappears into the forest floor, all the while becoming a perfect growing medium for all sorts of plants such as mosses, ferns, lichens and small shrubs and trees. Fallen and decaying trunks also maintain humidity that will help plants growing on and around them. Consider adding a few large branches or small trunks to your flower beds, and you’ll both conserve water and add character!

Next time you have to remove a beloved tree, and if your property allows it, consider keeping a portion of the trunk standing. Remember that the tree can become unstable as it decays, so try to identify the closest potential target. If, for example, a tree is located 25 feet from a picnic table, patio, Jacuzzi or Ferrari, have it cut down to a maximum height of 20 feet. Keep some of the tree’s branches, too, and have them cut off at different lengths so this man-made snag looks more natural. Such snags also become good perching spots.

My tip this time? If you have a tree that fits the mold, consider keeping a journal of what you see happening around it. You’ll be surprised!

Until next time!

Alby Thoumsin is a certified arborist.



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FOUNDATION**

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**Celebration
of Trees**

Wednesday
February 25
2009

•
7-9pm
EWEB

*Look for your
invitation in the mail.*

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fact the color of its late winter flowers that gives the tree both its species name (*rubrum*, from the Greek for red) as well as its common name. Most of the red maples we plant in our area are cultivars—that is, *cultivated varieties*, or mutations that occurred naturally and that are propagated by grafting—with foliage that turns red in fall, such as ‘October Glory’ red maple. But where the trees grow wild, east of the Great Plains, fall foliage color ranges from yellow through orange to red.

In the wild, flower color is usually a muted red or pink. But most of the red maple cultivars we plant in our area have deep red or even scarlet flowers that are difficult to miss when in bloom—unless you happen to be color-blind, which many men are.

Although red maples are common throughout our community—and elsewhere in the maritime Northwest—there are exceptionally large concentrations of them in downtown Eugene around the Hult Center and along both sides of Olive Street between 8th and 10th Avenues. (It is interesting to note that the trees along Olive were planted in 1993 inside cylindrical metal “root barriers,”



Red maple in flower.

the purpose of which was to force the trees’ roots to grow deeper into the soil, to prevent the roots from lifting sidewalks and curbs. The roots of some of the trees have been able

to escape through the bottom of the barriers and develop into decent trees, but most of the maples have not been so fortunate. Compare for yourself the relative vigor of the red maples in these two blocks and be thankful that these cursed corsets of corrugated metal are no longer used in Eugene.)

So keep your eyes open for the signs of spring in the tree world, even though it is still winter until March 20th. And remember: Although some trees do truly “sleep” through the dormant season, others are diligently engaged in very important work, whether or not it’s noticeable to casual passersby.