The forest in your backyard

Ways to start thinking about native trees for your urban & suburban landscape

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Partnership building – Knowledge sharing – Communication Coordination – Training & Outreach – Urban Forestry Extension

Our path forward

Learning from literature & addressing FL Extension and education needs

1- What is an urban forest?

- Urban forests and urban forestry
- Your yard- a piece of the puzzle

2- Choosing native

- What makes a tree native?
- Why are native trees good options?

3- Paints in your palette – Species to think about (virtual tour)

4- Resources and Sharing your piece of the forest with others

- Stewarding trees
- Talking to others

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1- Do you have a favorite tree?

2- Why is it your favorite?

(Pause for sharing)

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Part of the big picture – the urban forest

What is an urban forest?

All of the trees and vegetation in a city.

- Includes densely urban areas, suburbs, towns, and villages.
- Public and private land
  - Homes, business, street trees, park trees, trees in school yards, trees in wooded patches or forest fragments, etc.
- Managed by multiple people at different levels.
- Benefits can be collective.

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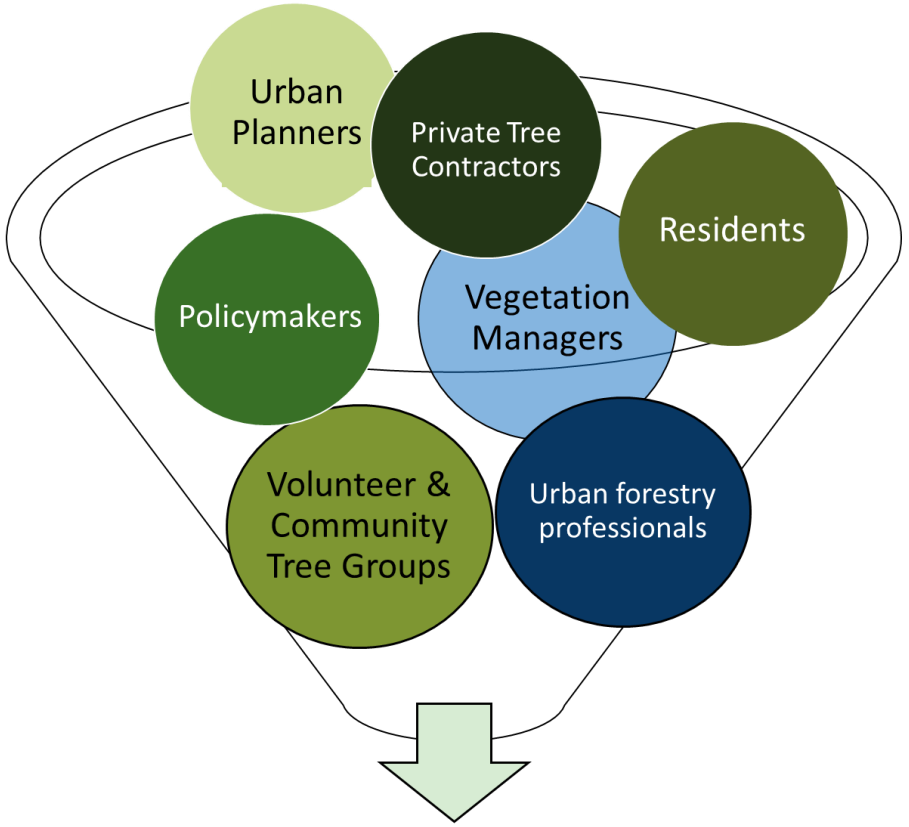


Decision-making about city trees

Your yard (site) is a piece of the big puzzle

Ecosystem services – good stuff we get from trees

- Provide aesthetic beauty and increase property values (10-20%)
- Improve stormwater management in cities
- Support energy savings & cooling
- Improve local economies
- Store carbon & reduce emissions
- Improve air quality & human health
- Enrich recreation spaces
- Support habitat for multiple species
- Contribute to overall community wellbeing

Choosing trees- Identifying your goals matters

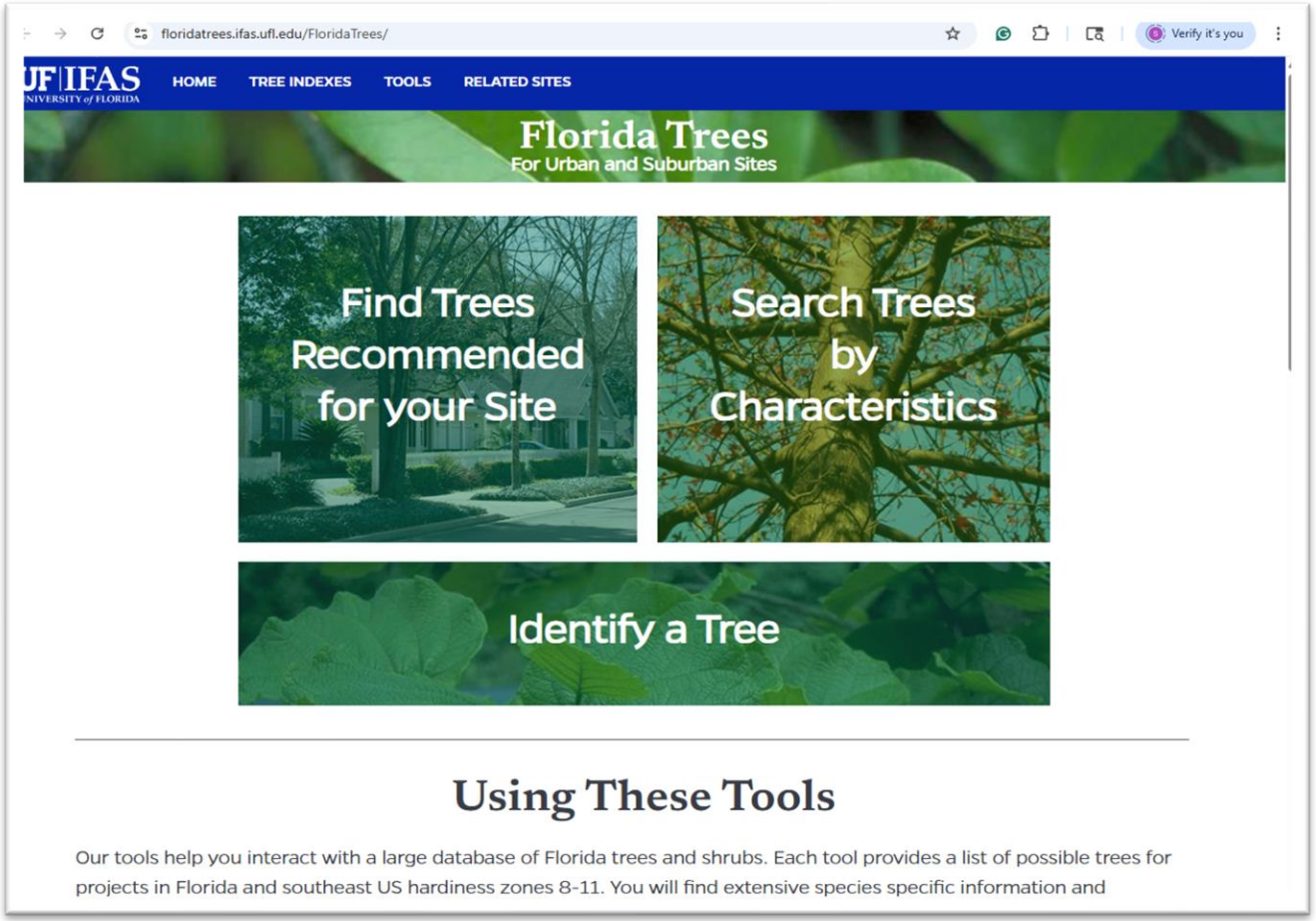
What needs are you trying to meet?
What do you want to accomplish with your tree?

Considerations	Factors determining selection
1- Physical / environmental	Climate zone, space size, light, wind storm exposure, drainage, water availability, salt exposure
2- Ecological	Native/non-native, diversity goals, impacts on wildlife/biodiversity
3- Social factors	Cultural importance, legacy, aesthetic beauty, area use/needs, risk tolerance
4- Economic factors	Nursery availability, maintenance capacity

Ask yourself: What is important? How will this shape your choices?

Site matters – use a decision tool to help

Right plant, right place = Right tree, right place



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Choosing Native Trees

Native trees can have unique beauty!

Flowers

- Large (Magnolias, Flowering Dogwood)
- Smaller (Fringetree, Redbuds)

Fruits & cones

- Bright red berries (Hollies)
- Bright red seeds (Magnolias)
- Winged seeds (Maples)
- Fruits, pods, cones (Magnolias, sweetgum)

Leaves

- Seasonal colors (Maples, some Oaks, Pignut hickory)
- Unique shapes (Maples, Oaks, Sweetgum, Sycamores)

Bark/twigs

- Shaggy bark/textured (Eastern red cedar)
- Colorful (Sycamores, maples)
- Corky, winged (Winged elm)

Native trees can have special advantages

Value to wildlife

- food
- habitat
- resources

Tolerate our environments

- tolerance to FL conditions
- weather patterns
- different soils

Low maintenance

- Easier, cheaper to maintain once established

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Let’s take a “tree tour”!

The paints in your palette

UF Campus Tree Tour

1. Southern Live oak

(*Quercus virginiana*)

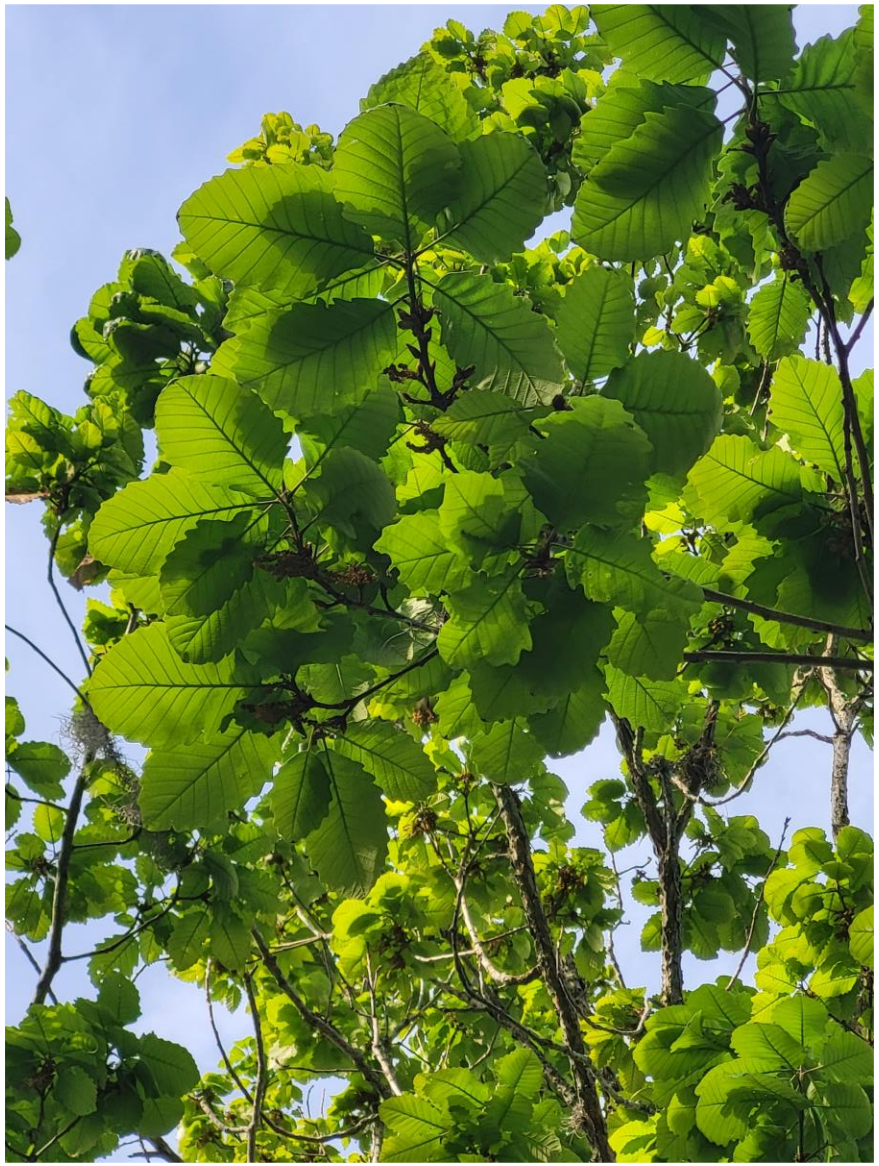
Life expectancy: 300-500 years
Height: 69-90 feet
Crown: Can spread 150+ feet
Diameter: 60+ inches

Iconic. Common in urban settings. Seen as a keystone species creating habitat for other plants, fungi, insects, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

Need big spaces to grow large, ample root space.

- Thrive in various sites.
- Leaves are host plants for some butterflies.
- Acorns food for mammals and birds
- Trunk & canopy contribute habitat for biological diversity

2. Swamp Chestnut Oak (Basket Oak)



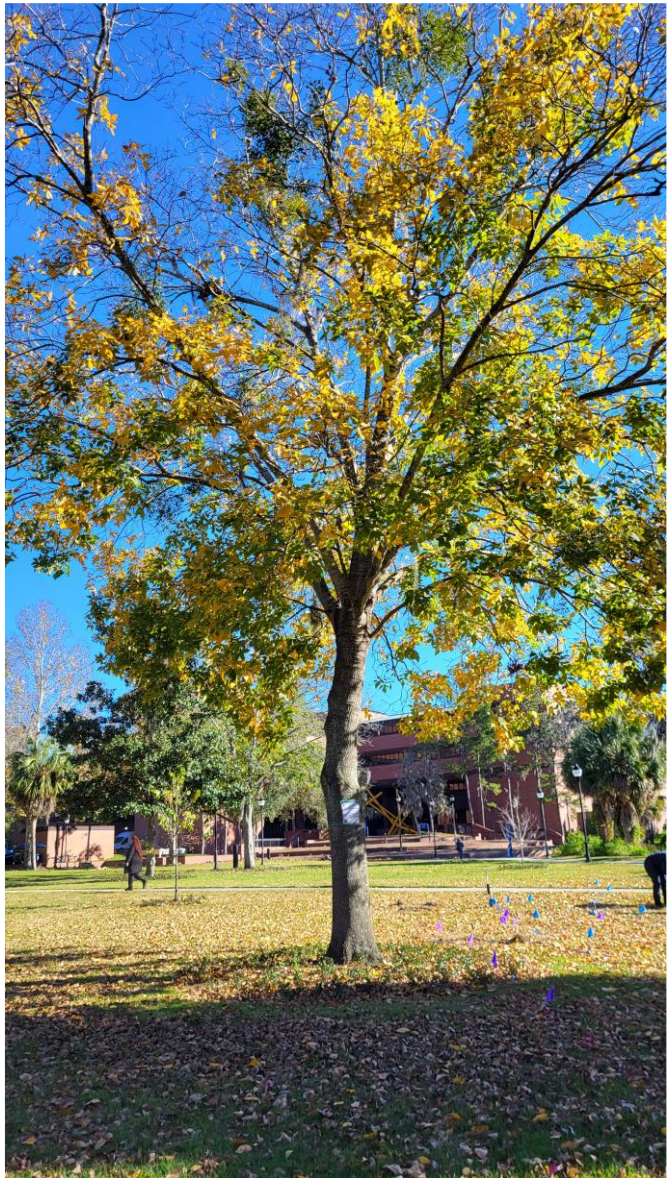
(*Quercus michauxii*)

Life expectancy: 100 – 200 years
Height: 60- 80 ft, up to 100 ft
Crown: 40 ft
Diameter: 24-36 in

Large leaves. Large acorns. Prefers moist soils/well-drained flood plains

- Acorns valuable to wildlife as food.
- Often used in urban spaces.
- Deciduous, leaves will fall
- A large species

3. Pignut Hickory



Pignut Hickory (*Carya glabra*)

Life expectancy: 200 years on average, up to 300 years !!
Height: 80-90 ft (120 Max)
Crown: 30-40 ft
Diameter: 36+ in

Bright green leaves in the summer, red, orange, yellow tones in fall.

- Shade tree in the summer/early fall.
- Not recommended near walkways or cars
- Nuts feed many species (turkeys & wood ducks) (squirrels, foxes, raccoons)
- Often used in restorations

4. Southern Magnolia

(*Magnolia grandiflora*)

Life expectancy: 80- 120 years
Height: 60-80 ft
Crown: 30-40 ft
Diameter: 24-36 in

Provides valuable shade and aesthetic beauty. Grows well in urban areas. Drought and shade tolerant – adaptable to many conditions.

Evergreen. Shiny leathery leaves. Dark green tops, golden brown and pubescent bottoms.

- Large, fragrant white flowers that bloom during late spring and summer. Bright red seeds are eaten by both birds and small mammals

*Precaution with sidewalks: Leaf, fruit litter

5. Winged Elm

(*Ulmus alata*)

Life expectancy: Up to 100 years
Height: 45-70 ft
Crown: Can spread from 30-40 feet
Diameter: Up to 24 inches

A hardy small to medium tree. Adaptable to many sites, works well in urban environments!

Dark green, serrated leaves and corky bark.

- Not uncommon in nurseries
- A small and tough tree

6. Florida Maple

(*Acer floridanum*)

Life expectancy: Up to 130 years
Height: 50-60 feet
Crown: Can spread from 25-40 feet
Diameter: Up to 35 inches

Prefers drier sites (compared to the Red Maple)

Bright green leaves in the summer, red, orange, yellow tones in fall.

- Early spring flowers → nectar for bees & other pollinators
- Seeds from the samaras feed birds, squirrels, and deer
- Trunk & canopy habitat for small animals

*Is your site wetter? Try Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*).

7. Eastern Redbud

(*Cercis canadensis*)

Life expectancy: about 30 years
Height: 20-30 feet
Crown: Can spread from 15-25 feet

3-5” green heart-shaped leaves. Yellow in the fall. Deciduous.

- Early spring flowers → important nectar source for bees
- Seeds of fruit used as food for some birds and mammals

8. Flowering dogwood

(*Cornus florida*)

Life expectancy: Up to 125 years
Height: 20-30 feet
Crown: Can spread from 25-30 feet

Tipped green leaves with wavy edges. Red in the fall. Deciduous.

Full sun to partial shade. Well drained soil, moderate drought tolerance.

- Mid spring flowers
- Red fruit ripens in fall, food for wildlife.

9. Fringe Tree

(*Chionanthus virginicus*)

Height: 18-20 feet
Crown: Can spread from 10-15 feet

Prefers full sun to partial shade. Well drained, occasionally wet soil, moderate drought tolerance

Bright green leaves in the summer, red, orange, yellow tones in fall.

- Spring flowers, white and slightly fragrant
- Fruit is food for birds, leaves are host to rustic sphinx moth
- Trunk & canopy habitat for small animals
- Slow growing

10. Yaupon Holly

(*Ilex vomitoria*)

Height: 15-25 feet
Crown: Can spread from 15-20 feet

Adaptable, full sun to full shade. Wet to well drained soil. High drought tolerance.

- Spring flowers → nectar for bees & other pollinators
- Summer fruiting → attractive to birds
- Suitable in urban spaces

Many cultivars available: drooping/cascading to shrublike, yellow or red fruits

*Dahoon Holly – longer leaves, also has red berries

Complementary management choices

Think of the whole ecosystem

Leaf litter – keep as much onsite as possible (FFL has great tips)

- Remove nuisance litter (sidewalks→safety)
- Beneficial to insects (fireflies, frogs, some bees)
- Free mulch; We like “doughnuts” not “volcanos”

FFL Tips: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/SS722

Complementary management choices

Think of the whole ecosystem

Leaving deadwood – returns nutrients to soil, habitat for insects, small reptiles, amphibians, fungi

Standing “snags” habitat for woodpeckers and others

Always safety first.

Feature it in the garden, make it intentional. Add a sign, a bird house or flowers.

To learn more about dead wood and the dead wood movement, visit the NeighborWood Watch website: www.neighborwoodwatch.org

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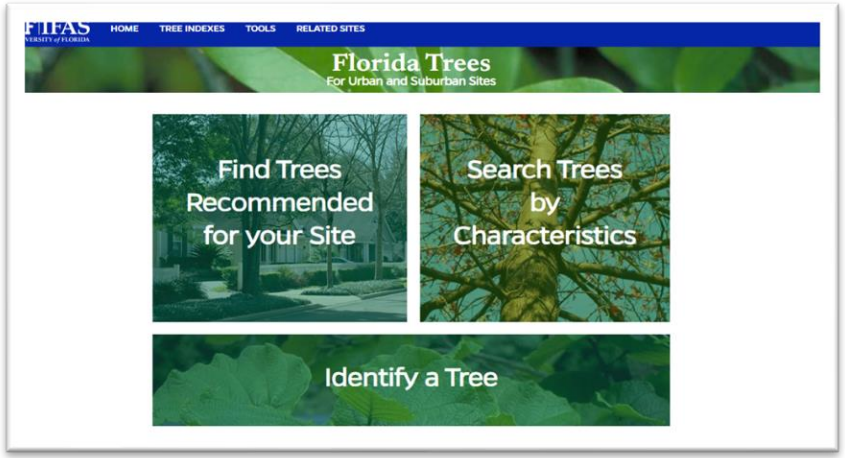
Resources and Stewardship

Resources

Will *all* of these species work for you? – No. But there are *many* tools to help you find what works for you



Resources

To learn about invasive species

- UF/IFAS Invasive Species Council,
  visit: https://invasivespecies.ifas.ufl.edu/

- **Engage or volunteer with the UF/IFAS Invasive Species Survey group,**
  visit: https://invasivespecies.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/invasive-species-survey-group/

- For monthly webinars from the Florida Invasive Species Partnership: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX9DmdcCYIb47wX7DUnkaWg/videos

- To learn more about the Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas in Florida,
  visit: https://www.floridainvasives.org/cismas/

Urban Forestry Extension Council (UFEC)

Scan to visit the UFEC webpage

SCAN ME

- UF Faculty and Staff
- Florida Forest Service
- Florida Urban Forestry Council
- Florida Chapter - International Society of Arboriculture
- Municipal and County arborists, urban foresters, program coordinators, mangers & staff
- Community organizations
- Volunteers





Mission

To facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices on urban and community forest management through science-based extension programming.

By building partnerships and engaging communities, we enhance awareness of urban forestry’s benefits, support the expansion of urban canopies, and help maintain sustainable urban ecosystems in Florida.

Canopy Connections – the UFEC Newsletter

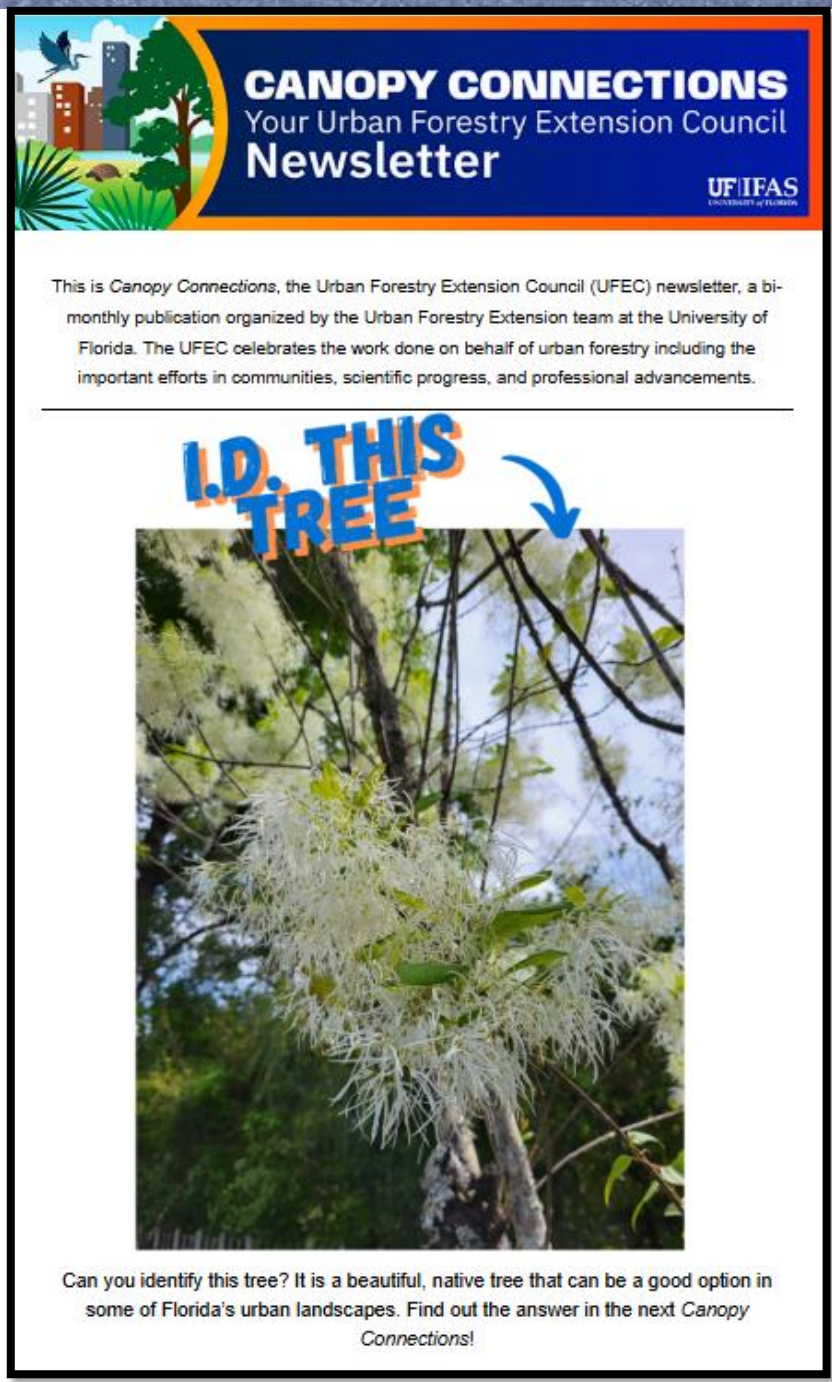
Stay connected & get the newest UFEC news

- **Goals:** Engagement, Knowledge Sharing, Communication, Marketing Programs & Activities, Celebrate Wins & Build Community

- **Learn about:** Who's who, Projects and news, Blog posts from members, New publications, tools, workshops, and guides, Podcasts, Calendar of events

SCAN ME

Scan to subscribe and view the archive



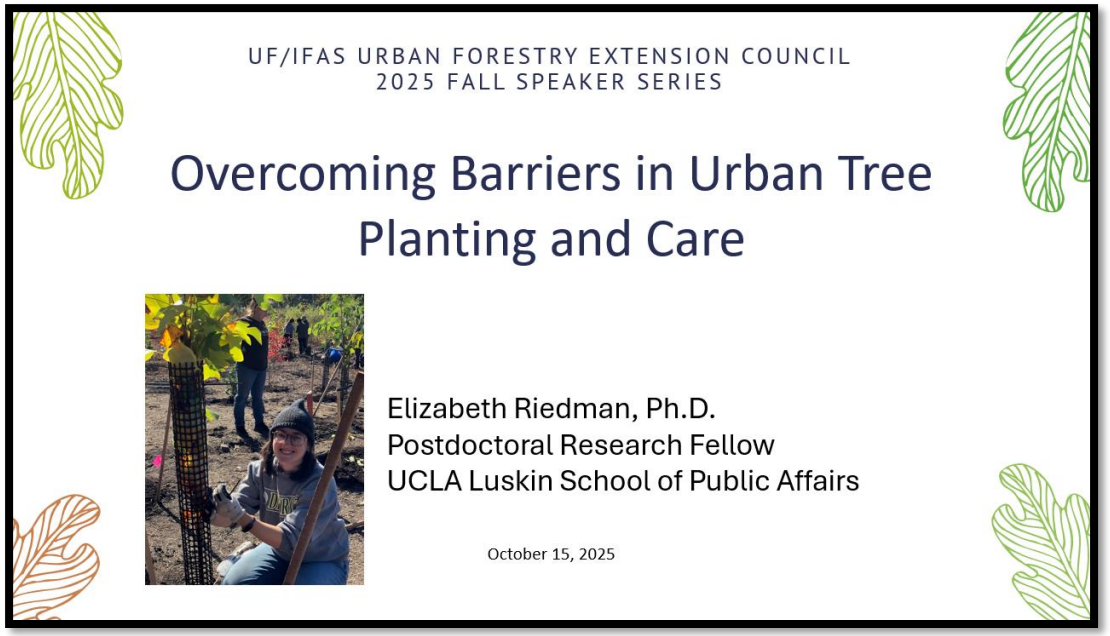
Shared Canopy, Shared Ground – An Urban Forestry Virtual Lunch and Learn

Engage with others & explore interdisciplinary topics with experts

- **Goals:** provide access to experts, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, highlight and communicate new research & innovation, build community

SFFGS YOUTUBE FOR RECORDED EVENTS

Scan for recordings: “Urban Forestry Series”



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Stewardship – inviting you to be a part of it

The Florida Tree Stewardship Program

Florida Tree Steward Manual – At-a-Glance

Program Purpose

- **Build foundational knowledge** in tree care and understanding about urban forest management
- **Empower volunteers** to educate, advocate, and support community tree initiatives
- **Encourage engagement** with local partners to safely participate in tree care and civic activities
- **Adaptable activities** to meet the needs of diverse Florida communities

Anyone can use this manual.

The Florida Tree Stewardship Program

Overall Objectives for the Florida Tree Stewardship Program

- Increase statewide awareness of urban forestry and urban trees
- Increase public knowledge of urban forestry
- Increase public understanding of the benefits of trees to Florida communities
- Increase statewide engagement with urban forestry

Share a memory of a tree.

(Pause for sharing)

Taking a Bark/Leaf Rubbing

Use crayon, chalk, shading pencil
Paper should be lightweight but sturdy to avoid tearing

Pressing Leaves/Flowers

Place between sheets of newspaper or wax paper

Sandwich between two very heavy books
Or..
Buy/make a plant press

Wrapping up

Keeping our urban forest growing

- Urban forests include all trees in our communities
  - even in your back yard

- Social and ecological factors that influence how we choose trees

- There are many ***native*** trees to choose from to fit your goals,
  natives can add color, texture, habitat and other sensory benefits to gardens

- Resources and tools can help you learn about trees and management: FL Native plant society, UF Native plant nursery, UF Invasive species council, many UFEC resources

- Sharing about trees helps to increase our engagement with them. Once you've planted your new native treeS you can invite others to learn about them.

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Thank you!

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SCHOOL OF FOREST, FISHERIES, AND GEOMATICS SCIENCES

FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE