



Fox Point files

by Douglas H. Frazer

Trees



Forester John Gall

FOX POINT has beautiful trees. Indeed, the forest canopy is one of the defining features of the Village. The most prevalent trees include both native and non-native species: ash, American elm, white and red oaks, hackberry, crabapples, honey locust, Norway maple, a diversity of not-commonly-known native and non-native ornamentals (such as ironwood, miyabei maple, and katsuratre), and, of course, common and European buckthorn. (Buckthorn is considered an invasive species that residents should work to remove.)

Recognizing the importance of our suburban forest, the Village Board established the Village Tree Commission in 1991 [Fox Point Ordinance Ch.2.075]. The Tree Commission includes one Village Trustee, who is the presiding officer, and four Fox Point residents. The Village president makes the appointments to the Tree Commission. The Village manager, the Director of Public Works, and Village forester are members ex officio. The trustee member is appointed each April for a one year term; resident members serve for three years. No resident member may be appointed for more than three consecutive terms and the appointment is subject to confirmation by the Village Board.

Trustee F.R. Dengel currently serves as the presiding member of the Tree Commission. The resident members include Louise Petering, Judy Shirley, Nancy Warner, and Karen Grube.

In addition, the Village Board has supported a Forestry Department that engages the services of a (paid) part-time Village forester. The Village forester is John Gall. His duties include advising the Village on tree-related matters. Gall's predecessor for many years was Judy Shirley.

The Forestry Department maintains and replenishes the woody vegetation in the Village right-of-way (mostly village property alongside streets) and in the Village parks, parkways, playgrounds and civic areas. It plants new trees and shrubs, removes dead and dying trees and stumps, prunes Village trees, maintains a GIS (Geographic Information System) Village tree inventory, maintains Village flower beds in the boulevards, and provides assistance to residents on tree-related topics.

Village trees that are removed due to death or decline, storm damage, or disease or insect infestations are replaced with a new tree if the location is appropriate for replanting. The cost of the new tree and the labor to plant it

are a service provided through the Village's annual budget.

For residents interested in planting a tree in the Village right-of-way, the forester has created a "Recommended Street Trees" list permitted for planting that can be found on the Village website. Much thought has gone into this list to ensure species diversity and site adaptability within the Village. Residents should note that they need to contact the Village forester to obtain a permit for planting within the Village right-of-way prior to any planting taking place.

Our trees have both aesthetic and functional values. The former values are obvious, the latter less so. The functional values include erosion and flood control, carbon storage, carbon sequestration, pollution removal, carbon emission reductions, and by creating shade, lower energy costs.

Trees are assets. Whether on public or private land, they have to be maintained or replaced — and this comes at a cost. Various insects and diseases can infest urban/suburban forests potentially killing trees or damaging their health. This can affect the safety of residents. Recognizing this fact, the Village Board has enacted Fox Point Ordinance Ch. 26 Trees and Shrubs Infected with Injurious Insects and Disease; it requires property owners to respond appropriately to diseased trees on their property.

Dutch elm disease is maybe the most recognizable tree disease. The American elm, one of the most important street trees in the last century, has been devastated by this disease. Since first reported in the 1930s, it has



killed over 75 percent of the native Elm population in the U.S. and in our community.

Emerald ash borer, recognition-wise, may be a close second. The emerald ash borer, now identified as having penetrated into nearby municipalities, threatens to eviscerate the Village's stock of ash trees. There are currently approximately 2,300 public ash trees in the Village along with countless others on private property. Control treatments exist, but they can be expensive and require a long-term commitment. The removal and possible replacement of dead or dying trees is also expensive. Unlike other trees, diseased ash can become brittle and unsafe — so there is some urgency to staying on top of it. Computer modeling suggests that a combination of removing low condition ash and treating a percentage of healthy trees may be a more economical approach than "letting nature take its course." The Village Board is engaged in an important policy debate concerning the best way to address this issue.

Fox Point is a 23-year recipient of the Tree City USA award sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation. For us, trees are a great source of pride and, as we have seen, a long-standing object of Village resources and attention.

Douglas H. Frazer is a trustee on the Fox Point Village Board. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the Village, the Village Board, other Village Board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.