



Re-tree Westfield, Village Invests in Tree Program

Visitors often describe the Village of Westfield as a quaint community with historic homes and tree-lined streets. The many varieties of trees that grace our streets play an important role in defining the character of our village while providing comfort and shade to our yards and homes.

Over the past few years, it has become obvious in certain areas that as a community we are doing a good job with necessary tree removals, but not with replacing lost trees. Historically, Westfield had always been well known for its tree lined streets and beautiful tree canopy, but over the past few decades we slowly began losing many as they reached the end of their life spans. While the Village has done some planting over the years, it was not according to an organized, planned program and not with species that could replace the canopy trees we lost.

Recognizing this, in 2016 the Village of Westfield began a tree-planting program based on a tree management plan created in conjunction with forestry consultant, Bruce E. Robinson, Inc. The program called for planting 20 to 25 trees along Village streets every spring and fall. This resulted in 80 trees being planted over the past four-years. In 2018, the Village applied for and was awarded a \$50,000 Urban and Community Forestry Grant from the New York State

Department of Environmental Conservation, underwriting the planting of approximately 290 trees, and permitting us to greatly speed up the planting program.

In 2019, as part of the grant, the Village Board approved the creation of a Village Tree Board, tasked with advising the Village on all tree-related matters. To help implement the grant program, the Tree Board has been meeting regularly to study and discuss the issues and has been providing recommendations for planting sites, tree types and species.

One of the things the Tree Board has learned is that planting of Street trees, trees planted within the public right of way typically between the sidewalk and road, requires a significant amount of planning; that because only certain species will thrive in this setting, the type of tree that should be planted depends on the size of the planting area and the presence or absence of overhead wires and sidewalks. A tree that may have a 40 to 50 year life in a forest may only have a 10 to 15 year life in a street side setting as a Street tree because it is subjected to more stress. However, with proper planning, tree selection and care, even the life span of Street trees can be greatly extended.

An example of the need for proper tree planning and selection are the Callery Pear trees that are in the Main Street Business District. Planted in in the sidewalk in small planter boxes in 2006, these trees struggle to get adequate water and nutrients. While they would thrive for many years in other settings, many of the Main Street trees are beginning to show signs of significant decline, and one has already died and been removed. Although some of the problems are not noticeable, if you look closely, it is apparent. Other species that are more drought and salt resistant, planted in specially designed soil, can do well in the same environment and last for many years.

To date, utilizing both the grant program and Village's tree program, 145 trees have been planted, 80 prior to the grant award, and 65 using the grant funds. We still have funds available to plant another 200 plus trees. If you would like to be considered for a tree planting along a Village Street, or have any tree related questions or issues, please email the Village Tree Board at Treeboard@villageofwestfield.org