



*The* Great NC Tree  
CONFERENCE

# CANOPY CONNECTIONS

SEPT 11-12, 2025  
GREENSBORO, NC



north carolina  
urban forest council

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## Indoor Education Day

September 11, 2025 | Wyndham Greensboro

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM ..... Check In and Continental Breakfast

8:30 AM - 8:45 AM ..... Welcome and Opening Remarks

8:45 AM - 9:45 AM ..... Morning Keynote

### **Disaster-Proofing Your Urban Forest**

Dr. Paul Ries, Director of Urban Forestry at Oregon State University

There is perhaps no bigger single change an urban forest experiences than extreme weather. This presentation will explore what you can do to prepare your urban forest to weather the next disaster. We will cover the "six Rs" - Risk, Readiness, Response, Recovery, Resources, and Resilience. This talk will be geared to identifying your role in maintaining the health of your urban forest no matter what position or responsibility you hold in an agency, organization, or business.

9:45 AM - 10:15 AM ..... Break with Exhibitors

10:15 AM - 11:05 AM ..... General Session

### **Recruitment and Retention in the Tree Industry**

Barrett Chow, Executive Coach with McFarlin Stanford

When it comes to building a great team, hiring and maintaining talent are equally important. Without one, you wouldn't have the other—and vice versa. We will discuss the status of employment in the industry and tips to help your company or organization hire quality employees and avoid high turnover rates.

11:10 AM - 12:00 PM ..... Concurrent Sessions

### **Ins and Outs of Urban Forestry Certifications**

Dr. Keith O'Herrin, Urban Forester with Union County, NC

Within urban forestry and arboriculture there are a multitude of certifications and licenses. Learn about the different Urban Forestry certifications and programs that might be beneficial to arborists, urban foresters, urban planners, and other tree care workers. We will discuss the unique parts of each and clarify how the different certification processes work.

### **Branching Out: Effective Communication about Trees with a Diverse Audience**

David McCauley, Urban Forestry Specialist with City of Charlotte

Jia Lin-Bothe, Board Chair of Charlotte Arborist Association

Effective urban forestry work requires more than just technical knowledge, it takes strong roots in communication to engage stakeholders across the various sectors. In this tremendously engaging session, David McCauley and Jia Lin-Bothe will ring through perspectives to navigate conversations with developers, utilities, neighborhood groups, and the broad public. Attendees will leaf away with real-world examples, creative outreach strategies, and tools to build trust, foster collaboration, and grow canopy support across diverse communities. Come ready to branch out - this session is sure to be unbeleafably useful!

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12:00 PM - 1:00 PM ..... Lunch and Awards

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM ..... Concurrent Sessions

## **Business Track**

### **Digital Communication Best Practices**

1:00-2:00PM

Angel Oak Creative

Join Angel Oak Creative to learn about how businesses and non-profits can best utilize digital communications through social media, email, and webpages for promotion and customer service.

### **Gamify Your Culture**

2:00-3:00PM

Barrett Chow, Executive Coach with McFarlin Stanford

This presentation will show industry leaders a new way to motivate a younger generation: by 'gamifying' the job at hand. 'Minigames' in the workplace encourage employees to achieve goals by making work a game that can be won. Mediocre employees or volunteers can become top performers while turnover is lowered. This method can build an enjoyable culture and keep people invested in showing up with a positive, helpful attitude.

## **Tree Preservation Track**

### **Tree Protection During Construction**

1:00-2:00PM

Jeff Kish, Southeast Assistant Division Manager for Bartlett Tree Experts

Arborists and landscape contractors too often get to trees after the damage has occurred during a construction project. We should all know that this is too late. During this talk we will discuss what a failed plan looks like compared to a successful plan. We will also discuss who needs to be involved to ensure the successful execution of a plan. There are many steps taken before, during, and after construction is completed to promote tree health. We will cover the industry's best management practices for tree preservation.

### **Large Tree Movement Instead of Replacement**

2:00-3:00PM

Brad Trentham, Managing Arborist for Environmental Design Inc.

Join Brad Trentham to learn about Tree Transplanting methods (multiple types, spade, roundball, ball/burlap, arborlift), pre-transplant diagnostics, and post transplant care/preservation considerations during development projects. To truly encompass the topic of conserving large trees, we will also cover pre-development tree inventories, contract/custom grow methodologies, custom grow best practices, and custom grow benefits

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## Operations Track

### **Insights on Pollinators and Wildlife in Rights-of-Ways**

1:00-2:00PM

Scott Fletcher, Manager of Natural Resources with Duke Energy Corporation

Join Scott Fletcher to learn about how proper tree care and management is vital to pollinators and wildlife and the importance of utility right of way management in NC wildlife protection. This presentation will share insights on pollinators and wildlife in rights-of-ways. Scott has decades of experience and information gathered from utility sources which will be valuable for industry professionals' work.

### **Incidents and Injuries in Arboriculture**

2:00-3:00PM

Celeste Hardy, Trainer for NC Department of Labor

Tree care is one of the most dangerous careers on the planet. Join Celeste Hardy to learn about the most up to date statistics on arboriculture injuries and fatalities in North Carolina, what factors play major roles in incidents, and how to prevent incidents from occurring within your team. Learn about the most recent fatalities we have had in the state (7-8)- the causes of the accidents, counties where occurred, and ages of the employees along with the most frequent citations for arborist work.

3:00 - 3:30 PM ..... Break with Exhibitors

3:30 - 5:00 PM ..... Closing General Session

### **One Year After Helene: Making Connections and Moving Forward**

Panelists:

Max Alff, Appalachian State University Arborist

Mike Dale, Forester for Town of Biltmore Forest

Mark Foster, City Arborist for City of Asheville

Sara Millar, Asheville Greenworks

Greg Zickgraf, Duke Energy Vegetation Manager for the Western NC Region

Moderator:

Amy Smith, Professor with Perdue Global

**Informal Conference Meet and Greet**

**All Welcome!**

**5:30-7:00 PM**

**Ale House | Wyndham Greensboro**



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## Outdoor Field Day

September 12, 2025 | Country Park, Shelter #1

8:30 - 9:00 AM ..... Check In

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM ..... Walking Tour and Discussion

### **Different Tree Care Priorities within the Battlegrounds Park District**

Greensboro Parks and Recreation Staff

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park Staff

Join us on an interactive, 2-mile walking tour throughout Greensboro's Battleground Park District. Participants will learn how tree care professionals collaborate across multiple divisions to maintain four diverse parks, including:

- Greensboro's Country Park
- Greensboro Science Center
- Guilford Courthouse National Military Park
- Forest Lawn Cemetery

Participants should dress appropriately. Water stations will be available.

12:00 - 12:45 PM ..... Lunch

12:45 - 2:00 PM ..... Handling Injuries on the Job

### **What to Do Before First Responders Arrive**

Medical Professionals from Winston-Salem and Greensboro

When a crew member, volunteer, or passerby is seriously injured on a project, every second matters. Participants will learn what to do for electrical burns, heavy bleeding, head trauma, and broken bones in the key moments *before* first responders arrive on scene. Local medical professionals will perform demonstrations and participants will have the opportunity to practice and ask questions after the training. Participants will also receive additional information on how to set up more in-depth safety training - Stop the Bleed, Red Cross CPR and First Aid, etc. - for their companies or organizations.

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## Conference Speakers



### Paul Ries

Paul D. Ries, Ed.D. serves as the Director and Senior Instructor of the Graduate Certificate in Urban Forestry program at Oregon State University and is the Principal Consultant with Insightful Nature LLC. He holds BS and MS degrees in Natural Resources and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and has over 35 years of experience in the natural resources and urban forestry fields, working at the state, local, non-profit, and academic levels. Previously he served as the Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager for the Oregon Dept. of Forestry, as the Executive Director for the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, as an urban forester for the city of Cincinnati Ohio, and for 15 years he held a national type 1 qualification as a Public Information Officer for wildfire incidents in the western US. Paul has been an ISA Certified Arborist since 1988, and served as ISA's President during 2017-18.



### Barrett Chow

Barrett Chow, Executive Coach with McFarlin Stanford, is a visionary leader with over a decade of professional experience, the last seven of which were dedicated to serving as a small business executive. Throughout his dynamic career, Barrett has successfully navigated and transformed businesses in various industries, including professional sports, private travel, software, civil engineering, and landscaping, demonstrating a consistent commitment to scaling enterprises for sustainable growth.

Boasting a robust background in human resources with over 12 years of hands-on experience, Barrett has honed his ability to identify opportunities and implement strategic solutions. Born and raised in the scenic town of Vail and a graduate of CU Boulder, Barrett's deep connection to the local community is reflected in his values and leadership style as he continues to serve as a mentor for the Leeds School of Business.



### Keith O'Herrin

Dr. Keith O'Herrin is the Urban Forester for Union County where he focuses on tree preservation during development for 10 municipalities. His current position is also 50% NC State Extension where he focuses on arboriculture and urban forestry school enrichment. He is also the co-founder and ex-officio board member of TreesUnion. He received his B.S. from University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, M.P.A. from Texas State University, and Ph.D. from Virginia Tech. He has worked as a city forester for 17 years in rural Indiana, Austin, TX, the Chicago suburbs, and now metro Charlotte, NC. Keith has conducted research in tree preservation, municipal capacity, student recruitment, workforce development, credentialing, and assessment of the urban forest profession.

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## **David McCauley**

David McCauley is an experienced municipal arborist with a strong background in tree inventory, plant healthcare, and urban forestry strategy. He currently serves as an Urban Forestry Specialist for the City of Charlotte, where he supports tree preservation and planting initiatives across one of the fastest-growing urban regions in the Southeast. He holds a Master's Certificate in Environmental Law and Public Policy from Loyola University Chicago and a Bachelor's degree in Forestry from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. David is the Education Chair for the Charlotte Arborists Association, where he helps shape inclusive, high-quality professional development opportunities for tree care professionals at all stages of their careers.



## **Jia Lin-Bothe**

Jia Lin-Bothe is a community-centered leader with deep roots in nonprofit strategy, education equity, and environmental advocacy. She received her Bachelor of Architecture from Woodbury University and her MS in Educational Studies from Johns Hopkins University. Outside of work, Jia is the Board Chair and Acting President of the Charlotte Arborists Association (CAA), where she has guided the organization through a remarkable period of growth, doubling membership, launching a scholarship access program, and expanding its educational offerings. Under her leadership, CAA has become a vital hub for affordable, local arboriculture training and cross-sector collaboration across the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region.



## **Angel Oak Creative**

Angel Oak Creative is a marketing and communications group based out of Raleigh, NC. They specialize in Non-Profit marketing and have done extensive work in branding, digital and physical design, website design, campaign assistance, fundraising, and strategic planning.



## **Jeff Kish**

Jeff has more than 25 years of experience with Bartlett Tree Experts. He started in the field right out of college and worked his way up the company. As Assistant Division Manager, he helps manage 13 offices throughout the southeast; visiting local offices and arborists providing coaching and mentorship. He is a former Chairman of the North Carolina Urban Forest Council. He is a ISA Board Certified Master Arborist and received his B.S. in Forestry/Outdoor Recreation from Virginia Tech University.

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## **Brad Trentham**

Brad Trentham is the Managing Arborist at Environmental Design, Inc., a global leader in the growing and transplantation of large specimen trees. With over two decades of experience in arboriculture, he began his career as a wildland firefighter - gaining firsthand experience with forest dynamics and natural systems. He later earned a degree in civil engineering, which now underpins his work in integrating science-based diagnostics, soil science, and environmental restoration into tree management strategies. At EDI, Brad leads initiatives focused on optimizing tree health and performance in urban environments—leveraging custom soil solutions, precision diagnostics, and a deep understanding of tree physiology. His passion lies in creating resilient urban forests by combining practical field knowledge with cutting-edge arboricultural science.



## **Scott Fletcher**

Scott Fletcher is the Manager of Natural Resources within Duke Energy's Environmental Health & Safety-Environmental Sciences department. Scott holds a Bachelor of Science in wildlife biology from the University of Maine and a Master's degree in environmental management from Duke University. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist and was a Professional Wetland Scientist. Scott has 36 years of experience in wildlife, endangered species, wetlands, habitat restoration, general environmental impact analyses and assessments, and federal, state, and local natural resource policy and permitting activities. Scott has been an advocate for wildlife resources and habitats through his service with several organizations, local conservation organizations, and land trusts.



## **Celeste Hardy**

I have worked with the North Carolina Department of Labor for 6 years, one year in Compliance and five years as a trainer. Prior to coming to the Department of Labor I worked for 15 years as Safety Consultant and Technical Consultant Trainer for a major insurance company. Then I took some time off to have two beautiful children who are grown adults now. With my children grown, I did part time work as an independent safety consultant specializing in Logging, sawmills, property and workers compensation audits. I have my MESH in GI, IH, and Construction. I have been on our Logging Special Emphasis program that targets loggers and arborists. I am currently working with several people to develop Arborist guidelines for the state. I am originally from South Carolina and graduated from Clemson University.



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## **Max Alff**

Max Alff is a passionate horticulturist and arborist with a background in municipal arboriculture and residential landscape design. Currently he works at Appalachian State University as the Campus Arborist, caring for trees on over 300 developed acres. A long term member of the NC Urban Forest Council, he serves on the Board of Directors as Chair, following terms as Vice Chair and Secretary. Max is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist with Tree Risk Assessment Qualification, an SAF Candidate Certified Urban & Community Forester, and an NC Licensed Pesticide Applicator. He earned Associates and Bachelors Degrees from the Department of Horticultural Science at NC State University.



## **Mike Dale**

Mike Dale is the Public Works supervisor for the Town of Biltmore Forest. Mr. Dale is a Professional Landscape Architect and Certified Arborist in charge of maintaining the town's day-to-day needs, including public spaces, trees, and parks. Mr. Dale has been a practicing professional in Western North Carolina since 2002 and has over 40 years in the plant, landscape, and design industry. In his spare time, Mike likes to go camping with family, listen to music, build fly rods, and go fishing.



## **Mark Foster**

Mark Foster is the City Arborist for Asheville, NC. Mark Foster is an ISA Certified Arborist, TRAQ Qualified and a licensed Public Pesticide Applicator. He has been the City Arborist for Asheville, North Carolina for nearly 25 years where he has gained extensive experience juggling competing citizen needs and wants, fighting exotic tree pest invasions and managing exciting storm cleanups. Mark is a longtime past board member of NCUFC and two time Board Chair. When he's not at work, Mark enjoys mountain biking, snowboarding and reading historical fiction with one or more cats in his lap.



## **Sara Millar**

Sara Millar serves as the Community Forestry and Nursery Manager at Asheville GreenWorks, where she advances the organization's mission of environmental resilience and climate equity through reforestation, education, and community-based initiatives. She earned both her Bachelor of Science degrees in Animal Science and Horticultural Science, as well as a Master's degree in Horticultural Science, from North Carolina State University. With over two decades of experience in research, teaching, public garden management, nursery production, and landscaping, Sara brings a strong foundation of technical expertise and a deep commitment to environmental stewardship. She leads efforts in regional native tree distributions, community planting programs, and nursery operations, fostering long-term environmental stewardship and green equity in underserved areas.

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## **Greg Zickgraf**

Greg Zickgraf is Senior Vegetation Program Manager with Duke Energy in Western NC Mountain Zone. Supervising tree trimming, hazard tree removals, herbicide application, and aerial saw work. His previous experience spans from outdoor education and leadership to reforestation specialties in North Carolina, Tennessee, and beyond.



## **Amy Smith**

Amy Smith is a Professor for Purdue University Global teaching courses in Sustainability and Science. She specializes in Forest Ecology, Urban Forestry, and Environmental Policy, for which she holds two master's degrees. Amy formerly served as the Chair of the Urban Forestry Commission in Asheville, is a current member of the Society of American Foresters Committee on Accreditation, and a Board member for the NC Urban Forest Council. She lives and plays in Asheville.