

THE GLEN RIDGE SHADE TREE COMMISSION YEAR-END REPORT FOR 2023

Respectfully submitted to the Mayor and Council by:

Elizabeth Baker

Robert Baum

Joan Lisovicz

Tina Seaboch

Julie Zichelli



Although the Commission has been in existence for 13 years, this was a consummate year when all the pieces seemed to fit seamlessly, particularly in terms of planting. It helped, of course, that there were no catastrophic storms and that the summer was temperate. But the key ingredient was the proven development within the DPW of a professional shade-tree crew – with the expertise, training, and proper equipment to undertake most of the town's tree work.

The STC Year in Review

Management Cost

The total tree management cost for 2023 was \$120,305.

Planting

The total cost of planting was \$25,660:

- \$24,602 for 114 trees.
- \$1,058 for mulch and gator bags.

The replanting of 51 trees along Hillside Avenue in the spring was arguably the most successful planting the Commission has ever undertaken. That project had been delayed for well over a year, meaning that Hillside was acutely in need of trees. And, because it is extremely well traveled, its replanting was visually stunning.

Another success factor was that all the planting was done in-house. This not only saved the town money (some \$16,074 for the year), but it also allowed the Commission to react more successfully to issues as they came up. In addition, the DPW took over the watering of the trees. We used to ask homeowners to do that, but with limited success. So, having the trees reliably watered was a vast improvement. Only a single tree planted in the spring failed to thrive.

Our fall planting focused on Snowden and lower Clark, two other well-traveled streets in dire need of trees. Again, the planting was in-house. As luck would have it, however, our efforts on Snowden drew the attention of the producers of “This Old House,” and they decided to film a segment on the Commission’s efforts to replace dying maples with climate-change-appropriate species. Although the filming was somewhat marred by a bizarre resident, it was essentially a gratifying testament to the Commission’s efforts, as well as those of the DPW.



Tree Removals

The total cost of contractor removals was \$62,665.

Glen Ridge had an epic number of tree removals this year: 55 by a contractor and 63 by the DPW. The vast majority of these were, of course, maples. So, we planted 114 trees, but removed 118.

Pruning

The total cost of contractor pruning was \$27,840:

- \$13,400 for zone maintenance pruning.
- \$14,440 for elevation pruning.

When zone maintenance pruning was begun in 2018, the town was preliminarily divided into 5 zones. The plan was to cycle from zone to zone, year by year, so every tree was maintenance pruned every 5 years. However, because this was the first time around, the trees on certain streets were in particularly dire condition, making it impossible to stick to a single zone. Consequently, 38 trees were maintenance pruned in 2023. The hope is to complete one full cycle throughout the town in 2024, allowing for a zone-by-zone approach henceforth.



Interestingly, the lion's share of the pruning budget in 2023 went toward the elevation pruning of 537 trees. As a tree grows upward in a forest, the lowest branches die off for lack of sun. But those lower branches on a street tree merely grow out, obstructing the sidewalk, while giving the sapling a poor growth structure and bush-like appearance. This



elevation pruning was, therefore, timely and essential.

Proactive Treatments

The total cost of needed supplies was \$1,140.

A total of 22 ash trees were systematically treated against the potential ravages and death from the emerald ash borer. In addition, 3 trees were trunk sprayed for nuisance spotted lanternflies, more as an experiment than a necessity. And this was at no cost to the borough.

DPW Development

The total cost was \$3,000 for required chain saw safety training, both classroom and hands-on.

Community Outreach

The Tree Service Request form on the town's website, which generates an email to the Commission, has become a very popular way to respond promptly to the tree concerns of residents. Indeed, these email requests average about 10 per month.

However, our most successful outreach tool remains the Commission's e-newsletter, *GReen Flash*. Our opening rate averages 60%. More to the point, we hear many enthusiastic comments from residents.

We also continue to upgrade our small Glen arboretum. In 2023, we added informational signs. We also posted information about the spotted lanternfly invasion and featured a lanternfly trap.

Looking Forward

A special project planned for 2024 is the development of a step-by-step guide to sidewalk repair. Many residents feel the need to make repairs, but don't know how to go about them. Too often they trust contractors who are reckless and slipshod. Unfortunately, tree roots are often the casualty.

Otherwise, the Commission will continue its mission to plant, maintain and promote the arboreal splendor of the borough.

