



*Helping our citizens to protect, manage and enhance our unique treescapes*



**Trees bring many benefits**

*Good treescapes can increase property values 10, 15 or more %.*

*Shade trees can reduce energy bills 30-50%.*

*A large tree can absorb the CO<sub>2</sub> from two or three households.*

*Well placed trees can buffer up to 50% of nearby noise.*

*Trees help calm densely populated housing areas.*

*To care for nearby trees can be a great way to build neighborhood spirit.*

# The Newport Tree Commission

*March 2008 update*

## What the Commission is & does

We've been appointed by the City Council of Newport, Rhode Island, to help the City's Tree Warden (Scott Wheeler, who is also the Tree and Parks Supervisor) protect and improve our public and private tree stands. We are a panel of citizen volunteers, some with specialized backgrounds, who:

- ❖ Help guide overall policies and plans for the City's treescapes.
- ❖ Review major tree removal and planting proposals.
- ❖ Encourage cooperation among key groups and leaders.
- ❖ Educate the public about trees, their benefits and needs for care, via the annual Arbor Day event and other initiatives.
- ❖ Hear appeals, if any citizens feel that City tree actions have not been appropriate.

## Why our trees need special attention

Few places have treescapes that match Newport's. They are not only on mansion grounds and historic sites but also along streets and in parks where many people live, work, travel and relax. Our rather mild climate fits an unusually wide range of native and introduced species.

But these are in jeopardy: Many of our elegant beeches, oaks, chestnuts, lindens, London planes, pines and others are reaching old age and need to be replaced. Their limbs are brittle and easily blown down when there are windstorms. Newly arrived insect and disease pests are threatening them. Some trees are being weakened by road salt and exhaust fumes. Street widening, utilities work, commercial and public construction, car parking and even pedestrian traffic can seriously damage trees' sensitive root systems.

Even with better care, more than 200 trees will need to be replaced each year in Newport.

## Some things that we all can do

With arborists' guidance, much can be done by Newporters, our leaders, and our organizations. Here are some important ways to help:

- ❖ Take good care of your own trees, with arborist help if need be. Take part in the City's street tree planting program, to help replace declining trees and fill in gaps.
- ❖ Sponsor memorial trees for public places via the Tree Society program.
- ❖ Tell the Tree Warden about dead limbs, low overhangs, protruding roots and other tree-related public hazards.
- ❖ Insist on a good treescape to enhance plans for a new facility or public way. The Tree Warden and Commission can be a good sounding board.
- ❖ During construction, minimize tree losses and damage.

Newport's Tree and Parks Supervisor, and Tree Warden, Scott Wheeler can be reached at [swheeler@cityofnewport.com](mailto:swheeler@cityofnewport.com) and 401-845-5802. He offices at the Cottage in Aquidneck Park, 280 Spring Street, next to the Newport Public Library.

Tree Commission members are:  
Dave Brown  
Marilyn Bunnewith  
Robert Currier (Vice Chair)  
Lois Vaughan Eberhard  
Audrey Grimes  
Susan Ruf (Chair)  
William Steeves, Jr.  
James Sullivan  
[One vacancy]  
Scott Wheeler (ex officio)

We invite interested citizens to attend our meetings at City Hall. Jan 8, Feb 12, Mar 11, Apr 8, May 13, Jun 10, Aug 12, Sep 9, Oct 14, and Nov 18 are our scheduled meeting dates for 2008. Agendas, recent minutes and the City Tree Ordinance (Ch. 12.36) are on <http://new.cityofnewport.com>.

We can be reached c/o Scott Wheeler, 845-5802; or the Mayor's Office, City Hall, 43 Broadway, Newport RI, 02840, 845-5437; or the Commission Chair, Susan Ruf, at 849-0296 and [ruf@cox.net](mailto:ruf@cox.net).



## Our tree ordinance reinforces improvements

The Newport, RI *Tree Preservation and Protection Ordinance* (Chapter 12.36) was enacted in 1991. It was a progressive step to protect valuable trees, safeguard the public from damaged or badly placed trees, enhance our natural environment, and disseminate more knowledge about trees.

The Ordinance provides for a master plan for tree management and planting; tree inventories; coordination with other government bodies, businesses and citizen groups; regulating tree removal, care and plantings in both public and private areas; and keeping trees from becoming safety hazards.

The Tree Warden and the Tree Commission implement the Ordinance. If necessary, legal authority under the Tree Ordinance can be used to reduce dangers to Newport's tree stands, property or human safety. But for the most part, we operate in a helping mode. For instance, we have been conducting a campaign to inform the public about good tree-planting methods, the bad effects of topping trees, and need to clear low branches and hedges from walkways, streets and traffic signs.

## Results are starting to show, thanks to many

As you go around Newport, improved treescapes can already be noticed. You'll see recent plantings near America's Cup Avenue and Memorial Boulevard, many side streets, Fort Adams, Donovan Manor, the Park-Holm senior center, Thompson Middle School, and Newport Heights. Earlier plantings at other sites are becoming very visible.

A memorial tree program and spring/fall street tree planting campaigns are ongoing. With our tree warden's guidance, older trees are receiving better care, and new plantings better chosen and sited. Newport has been designated a "Tree City USA."

The U.S. Forest Service via RIDEM, Newport Tree Society, Newport Garden Club, and several tree-care and landscaping firms have been providing funds, plants and other helps. Interested residents are enhancing their neighborhoods with new trees and other plantings, and involving young people in this. The Preservation Society, Newport Restoration Foundation, Salve Regina University, and the Newport Housing Authority are giving high priority to good management of their treescapes and to educating the public about tree care.

## New needs & opportunities for careful attention to trees

Pressures for business expansion, housing, redevelopment of old estates, and road space are threatening some of our most valued trees and wooded areas. New tree pests are coming here.

But we have important new "tools" for protecting our urban forest—better scientific knowledge about tree care ... workable legal ways to guard notable trees and open spaces ... more interest at neighborhood, city and regional levels in tackling natural resource and scenic concerns in the midst of development. The Tree Commission welcomes collaboration with individuals and groups who share these concerns and who seek solutions in behalf of the community.