

VERMONT URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY CONFERENCE

Thursday, May 28, 2026
8:30 AM - 3:45 PM
Vermont State University
Randolph, Vermont

8:30-9:00am

Registration

9:00-9:45am

Welcome and Keynote

9:45-10am

Break

10-10:45am

Concurrent Workshops (Choose one)

- After the Water Recedes: Community Approaches to Reusing Buyout Land (*Judd Hall*)
- Vermont Forest Health Update (*Conant 102*)
- An Analysis of Vermont Municipal Tree Policies and Ordinances (*Conant 101*)

10:45-11:00am

Break

11:00-12:00pm

Concurrent Workshops

- How to Think Like an Urban Forester (*Judd Hall*)
- Tree Nuisance Framework (*Conant 102*)
- Cultivating the Next Generation of Tree Lovers: Lessons from Immersive High School Programs (*Conant 101*)

12:00-1:00pm

Lunch (*Provided in Judd Hall*)

1:00-1:45pm

Concurrent Workshops

- TBD (*Judd Hall*)
- TBD (*Conant 102*)
- Words Matter: Rethinking the Language of Ecological Management (*Conant 101*)

1:45-2:00pm

Break

2:00-3:00pm

Concurrent Workshops

- Lightning Round (Five 10 minute presentations) (*Judd Hall*)
- Community Management Planning (*Conant 102*)
- Outside Tree Tour, Part II: Explaining Risk (*Starts outside Judd Hall*)

3:00-3:15pm

Break

3:15-3:45pm

Awards Ceremony

Workshop Descriptions

9-9:45am Welcome & Keynote

Celebrating Vermont's Community Tree Planting Program

(Judd Hall)

Darren Schibler, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

The Community Tree Planting Grant program is a partnership with the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission to grow Vermont's urban tree canopy where it was needed most. Funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, the program awarded more than \$630,000 across two rounds of competitive grants, supporting projects in communities large and small — from downtown streetscapes and flood-affected neighborhoods to playgrounds, recreation areas, and senior housing communities across the state.

As the program draws to a close, this keynote session invites attendees on a virtual tour of the completed projects — from Barre to Bakersfield, Jericho to Jeffersonville. We'll revisit the communities that brought these projects to life, highlighting the diverse approaches grantees took to increase urban tree canopy, manage stormwater, improve public health, and build a sense of place. Whether trees were planted to shade a playground, anchor a food forest, or help a flood-damaged town reclaim its green spaces, each project tells a story of community investment in Vermont's urban and community forest.

Join us to celebrate what was accomplished, reflect on the program's lasting legacy, and look ahead to the continuing work of growing and sustaining healthy, resilient communities across Vermont.

10-10:45am Workshops

After the Water Recedes: Community Approaches to Reusing Buyout Land *(Judd Hall)*

Dr. Amy Seidl, University of Vermont; **Chris Campany**, Windham Regional Commission

In Spring 2026, senior UVM students, under the direction of Dr. Amy Seidl and enrolled in her course *Adaptation to Climate Change*, partnered with Vermont Emergency Management, Windham Regional Commission, and the Urban and Community Forest Program to investigate 4-6 municipalities and the range of approaches and landscape designs they have taken to reuse and/or restore FEMA and non-FEMA buyout properties. Using site visits, interviews, and academic research, students' objective was to complete the first phase of development of a State Buyout Guide with a focus on post-buyout land stewardship. It is anticipated that phase II will be completed in Spring 2027.

Vermont Forest Health Update *(Conant 102)*

Savannah Ferreira, VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Join this session for an update on established introduced pests — including beech leaf disease, elm zigzag sawfly, elongate hemlock scale, emerald ash borer, and hemlock woolly adelgid — as well as those not yet established in Vermont, such as spotted lanternfly, laurel wilt, and oak wilt. Attendees will learn about the threats these pests pose, current state management efforts, and how to identify and report sightings.

An Analysis of Vermont Municipal Tree Policies and Ordinances *(Conant 101)*

Joanne Garton, VT Dept. of Forests, Parks, & Recreation

Tree governance language is often buried in ordinances not explicitly titled "tree", making rules hard to find, contradictory, or outdated. This project used a large language model (AI) to analyze ordinances and management practices across 10 Vermont municipalities, extracting key information through 20 structured questions and assessing governance patterns and alignment with state statutes. The pilot explores how AI can be harnessed to examine online documents in the public realm and develop clearer, more tree-friendly policy.

11:00am-12:00pm Workshops

Managing the Urban Forest: Challenges and Solutions *(Judd Hall)*

Alec Ellsworth, Montpelier Tree Warden

How do you grow big trees in a human dominated environment? Join Montpelier Tree Warden Alec Ellsworth in an interactive workshop that will look at some of the common mistakes, best practices, and forward thinking planting methods for growing big trees in your downtown. We'll look at tree planting practices from around the world and talk about what works and what doesn't. After this presentation you'll never look at a street tree the same way again.

Tree Nuisance Framework

(Conant 102)

Adam McCullough, VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation

When does a tree cause a problem without posing a risk? When the issue stems from healthy growth rather than the threat of failure. Corridor obstructions, unwanted shade, fruit debris, and sidewalk buckling can all be caused by perfectly healthy trees- ones that many community members may value highly. The Tree Nuisance Framework is a new system for assessing the severity of a tree's impact on people's lives, so that targeted maintenance can reduce the nuisance while preserving, and even enhancing, the tree's benefits.

Cultivating the Next Generation of Tree Lovers: Lessons from Immersive High School Programs *(Conant 101)*

Courtney Mulcahy, Shelburne Farms; **Kathleen Robbins**, Woodstock Union High School

This presentation explores successful models for integrating basic forestry topics into high school curricula, drawing on examples from 2 of Vermont's innovative educational programs: the Champlain Valley Union High School Field & Forest semester and Woodstock Union High School's CRAFT (Community and Climate Resilience Through Agriculture, Forestry, and Technology) program.

1:00-1:45pm Workshops

TBD *(Judd Hall)*

TBD *(Conant 102)*

Words Matter: Rethinking the Language of Ecological Management *(Conant 101)*

The words we use to describe the natural world carry meaning beyond science - they shape perception, influence policy, and reflect our values as a society. This session explores a growing conversation in the ecological and conservation fields about moving away from terms like "invasive" and other potentially exclusionary language in favor of terminology that is more accurate, neutral, and inclusive. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about what this shift looks like in practice, why it matters, and how it might be incorporated into the communications and day-to-day work.

2:00-3:00pm Workshops

Lightning Round (*Judd Hall*)

Learn from five short, impactful presentations on key topics in urban and community forestry.

- Green Your Tree Care, **Glenn Johnson**, GoGreen Tree Care Products
- *When the Trees Came Back: The Great Battle to Save Vermont's Forests*, **Bob Mello**
- Creating Community Forest Connections through Nature Journaling, **Rebecca Roy**, VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation
- Community Tree Fund, **Jeff Disorda**, VELCO
- Forest Resilience Program **Tricia Bhatia**, Nature Conservancy Vermont

Community Management Planning

(*Conant 102*)

Rebecca Roman, Vermont Land Trust; **Bob Heiser**, Vermont Land Trust

This workshop will focus on the importance of laying solid groundwork within a town forest committee, so that the team can work effectively and collaboratively. We will do a light review of the existing tools that support communities through a management planning process for a town forest, but the bulk of the session will be spent discussing ways to set the committee up for successful group work. We have worked with many towns and communities to create town forest management plans, and our goal is to share some of that learning with you.

Outside Tree Tour, Part II: Explaining Risk

(*Starts Outside Judd Hall*)

Tim Parsons, Landscape Horticulturist, Arborist, and Visiting Professor, Middlebury College

Many people find trees large and scary, believe it or not. A little bit of tree biology, a little bit of tree preservation, and some understanding of risk concepts may help all of us to preserve and defend our leafy friends. Come for a walk on the grounds here on campus as we look at some trees and get a preliminary understanding of tree risk in urban and suburban landscapes.

3:15-3:45pm Awards Ceremony

The Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program and Council recognizes Vermont 2026 Tree Stewards and the recipients of national Arbor Day Awards for Tree City, Line and Campus USA.

CONFERENCE SPONSORS

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors for their generous support of this year's Urban & Community Forestry Conference. Your commitment to urban and community forestry strengthens our shared efforts to grow healthier, more resilient landscapes. Thank you for investing in Vermont's forests, communities, and future!

TREE LEVEL



SEEDLING LEVEL

