



Tree Tribute Newsletter



When Lightning Strikes Twice

Frequent visitors to Theta Pond will notice that there is slightly less shade along the north side of the large pond. During an overnight storm on May 12/13, 2024, a mature Bald Cypress (*T. distichum*) was catastrophically struck by lightning. Due to the extensive damage and busy location, the tree was deemed a future safety risk and removal was scheduled. The tree was nearly 23.5” in caliper, roughly 57’ tall, with a canopy spread of approximately 57’, and was likely planted in the 1940’s during the Bennett Presidency, which is known for it’s historic, founding efforts in campus beautification and Theta Pond renovations.

Remarkably, the tree has been given a second life and a grand opportunity to continue to beautify campus. With the large trunk diameter and natural properties of Cypress wood, it made the perfect candidate for a new art piece. The process was expedited and chainsaw artist Clayton Cross was commissioned to create the piece. The art piece depicts a person reading, representing the many students who come to Oklahoma State to learn and participate in their college chapter of life.

Cross was also commissioned to create the ‘Fisher Boy’ piece after a different Cypress tree was lost to lightning in 2012. This art piece fell victim to vandalism in 2020, was removed, and placed in storage. However, with wood salvaged from this most recent lightning strike, it was repaired and now proudly sits at Theta Pond again.

In actuality, lightning has struck this area three times in recent memory. In 2020 a large, mature American Elm (*U. americana*) was lost on the northwest corner of Willard, a building that sits adjacent to Theta Pond. This stump was not a candidate for an art piece and a Buckley Oak (*Q. buckleyii*) was planted as a replacement.

Given the semi-frequent lightning issues in the area, the Facilities Management Landscape Services (FMLS) Department and the University Arborist are working with local tree contractors to identify vulnerable trees and install lightning protection system(s).

Two spring- flowering, understory Kousa Dogwood (*C. kousa*) trees were planted in the vicinity of the most recently lost tree. These trees will create visual interest and fill spatial voids near the new art piece.

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Special Points of Interest

- Enjoy Feel-Good News About Our Campus Forest
- Get Insider Knowledge About Campus Landscape Projects
- Learn How Students Interact With Our Campus Arboretum
- Meet Members of Your Tree Leadership Board

Campus Trees at a Glance

Number of Trees: 4,147

Number of Species: 387

Structural Value: \$15.8 million

Canopy Cover: 8.15%

Trees Planted: 122

Trees Removed: 55

Trees Pruned: 489

Oxygen Production: 190.7 tons/year

Carbon Sequestration: 71.51 tons, \$12,200/year

Carbon Storage: 2.401 thousand tons, \$409,000/year

Avoided Run off: 97.39 thousand cubic feet, \$6,501/year



Most Dominant Species	Percent Population
Crepe Myrtle	8.9
Shumard Oak	7.4
Bald Cypress	6.9
Holly spp.	6.2
Eastern Red Cedar	5.0
Chinese Pistache	4.8
Bur Oak	4.4
Southern Magnolia	4.0
Chinese Elm	4.0
Eastern Redbud	2.1
Osage Orange	2.0



Agricultural Hall

After approximately three years of construction, care, and planning, Agricultural Hall is complete! Unfortunately, about 30 mature and maturing trees had to be removed for this project, but it was in the name of progress. Walking the site now, you'll find an increased species diversity, as the lost trees that were nearly all Oaks, have been replaced by 35 trees across 9 species; including Dawn Redwoods, Maples, Dogwoods, Junipers, Oaks, Cypress, and Fringe Trees. While it's recognized that these mostly understory trees will never grow to reclaim the lost canopy area that the original 30 trees once created, all of the newly planted trees will be great contributions to the campus forest and will accent the building well. The department plans on mitigating some of the lost canopy by replanting large shade trees in other areas of campus. We're especially excited for the new species addition of Dawn Redwood, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*. Closely related to the Bald Cypress, it is also a unique deciduous conifer. So, when you see them lose their needle-like leaves in the winter—do not be alarmed! In addition to the trees, this landscape provides our campus's first 'living wall'. A living wall is a collection of plants arranged vertically and supported by an irrigation system. Ours is comprised primarily of *Dianthus* Early Bird Fizzy, *Juniperus procumbens* 'nana', *Thuja plicata* 'Grune Kugel', and Lirope Big Blue.

Image left: One of the neatest features installed by our Landscape Services Department is the original 1928 Dairy Building Signage. These can be found on the east side of the building. Also pictured is a Kousa Dogwood (Cornus kousa) planted in a raised bed.

"We are fortunate to have new space that is as beautiful on the outside as on the inside. The trees and landscaping are the icing on the cake, and they point to the important work we do in plant sciences inside the new building."
 - Jayson Lusk, Vice President and Dean of OSU's Div. of Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources

Campus Sustainability

What a year!

In August 2023, the Office of Sustainability transitioned from Energy Services to Landscape Services, marking the beginning of a whirlwind of activity, learning, and engagement. Our office champions sustainability ideas and actions at OSU. We strive to minimize the university's environmental footprint, foster new sustainable development initiatives, and promote collaboration with OSU's academic, research, and educational programs. Additionally, we work to achieve meaningful operational cost savings through efficiency programs, helping OSU become more sustainable in both its operations and future growth.

-Katie Beitz
 Sustainability Coordinator
 Oklahoma State University

For more information on Campus Sustainability, contact Katie:
 Office: 405-744-4728

Campus Tree Report 2024

109 trees planted; representing **32 species** across **15 genera**, finding homes at **23 sites**.

Tree Removal Breakdown: 55: 38 Natural Decline, 4 General Aesthetics, 3 Irrigation Issues, 3 Storms, 2 Safety, 1 Construction, 1 Deer, 1 Disease, 1 Drought, 1 Utility Issues.

A Campus Canopy Redirection: Overall University management, improvements, and future planning has been very safety-focused this year. This theme has certainly carried over into the Arbo-retum and forest canopy. Under previous management ideologies, keeping our forest canopy looking as 'natural' as possible was prioritized. This aesthetic embraced natural tree forms, often with umbrella-like canopies that were allowed to touch the ground where possible, increased our canopy coverage, and required minimalistic pruning. However, current ideologies are shifting. While you will still see areas on campus where trees are allowed to retain their natural habit (think the large Southern Magnolia (*M. grandiflora*) north of Old Central), you may also notice a drastic increase in pruning and canopy raising. Canopy raising is a tree pruning method whereby the crown is raised via removing the lower whorl/s of limbs. Our goal with canopy raising is to create a safer environment for our campus community. One with greater night time visibility, more open daytime line of sight, and increased head room for those community members who ride bikes, scooters, and even mowers. While the work is being done quickly to ensure campus safety, best pruning practices are still being used and pruning compromises are being made where possible. We know it's not healthy for a tree to lose its entire whorl of branches and/or take more than 25%-30% of the canopy in one year or season, so this raising process may take several years to be implemented across campus. OSU FMLS's canopy raising strategy is to start with the highest trafficked pedestrian areas first. Main sidewalks, such as Greek and Legacy walk, Knoblock, University, and Monroe Streets, heavy-use parking lots, and most Tailgate areas have already been addressed. Secondary sidewalks, patios, gardens, and peripheral parking lots will be the next phase before moving into open green spaces. Check out this fact sheet on [Pruning Ornamental Trees, Shrubs, and Vines](#).

Please report all tree safety issues to the University Arborist caitlin.gipson@okstate.edu, or if you are employed with the University, use the [AiM](#) work order reporting website.



Pictured Above: Community members help plant the 2024 Arbor Day tree, a Heritage® Oak (Quercus x macdanielii 'Clemons') graciously donated from GreenShade Trees LLC. of Yukon Oklahoma. The tree is a cross between the native Burr Oak (Quercus macrocarpa) and the non-native English Oak (Quercus robur).

Arbor Day 2024

The 2024 Arbor Day ceremonial tree planting was held on Friday, March 29th and while the threat of heavy wind and potential rain kept attendance small, the planting made a large impact.

Some who were in attendance included First Cowboy Darren Shrum, OSU FMLS CFO Casey Shell, OSU FMLS Director John Lee, multi-time Cowboy Family Tree donor and retired OSU FMLS CFO John Houck, and several members of the Tree Leadership Board, among others.

During his portion of the ceremony, while thanking the FMLS team for their hard work, Darren Shrum graciously spoke of our campus landscape. Saying in part... *"It's an awesome campus to walk around, be a part of, be proud of."*

The Northeast corner of Whitehurst provided the perfect planting area. Located centrally on campus, this tree will grow to shade two busy sidewalks and provide beautiful deep green foliage most of the year. The 2012 Arbor Day tree was planted in this exact location, however it was lost to a windstorm in June of 2022.

The event was livestreamed via Inside OSU and is archived on its website at this link:

[2024 OSU Arbor Day Celebration - Inside OSU](#)



Campus Forest Accolades

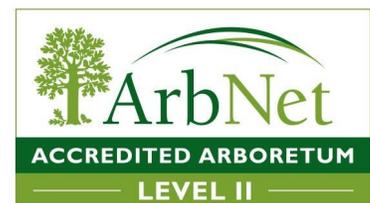
Tree Campus Higher Education:

OSU has been awarded this recognition annually since 2011! TCHE is an award presented by the Arbor Day Foundation to campuses that meet five criteria that highlight its devotion to a healthy campus forest and community/education outreach. The five criteria are: having an active Campus Tree Advisory Committee, creating and following a Campus Tree Care Plan, having dedicated annual expenditures, observing Arbor Day, and facilitating a Service Learning Project.



Accredited Level II Arboretum:

In 2022, Oklahoma State University was granted level II arboretum status through the ArbNet Foundation. This is an internationally recognized award that is reapplied for in five year cycles. There are seven criteria that must be met to obtain a level II accreditation: having an arboretum plan with collections policy, a governance group, housing more than 100 tree and woody species, employing paid management personnel, hosting public access event(s) and practicing enhanced educational programs. This award also demonstrates our university's dedication to its campus forest and related education outreach.



Tree Leadership Board Members 2023-2024

Dr. Bryan Murray: *Prof. NREM*

Dr. Tom Kuzmic: *Prof. Emeritus NREM*

Dr. Tom Hennessey: *Prof. Emeritus NREM*

Dr. Mike Schnelle: *Prof. and Extension, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture*

Jana Phillips: *University Architect, Long Range Facilities Planning*

David Hillock: *Consumer Horticulture Extension, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture*

Casey Romero: *Senior Manager, Energy Management and Sustainability*

Cristian Contreras: *Manager, Utilities Engineering (Alt.)*

Laura Payne: *Horticulture Educator Payne County Extension*

John Lee: *Director, Landscape Services Facilities Management*

Caleb Wetmore: *Assistant Manager Landscape Services Facilities Management*

Caitlin Gipson: *OSU Univ. Arborist Landscape Services Facilities Management*

Sydney Hager: *Pres. OSU SAF Student Chapter*

Hannah Dixon: *OSU NetImpact Student Chapter*



Jana Phillips, University Architect

A Stillwater native from the age of 5, Jana finds great joy in giving back to her community. After graduating from Oklahoma State University, her career took her to Tulsa and to Dallas, Tx where she spent 24 years in traditional architecture practice; 14 of which was spent owning her own private practice. Having the largest urban forest in the nation at the time, Jana learned the joys of working with trees from an architectural perspective. An experience that lends itself well to her participation on our Tree Leadership Board (TLB). Jana and her husband returned to Stillwater in 2000 and she soon landed a position working for her alma mater in the Long Range Facilities Planning. She was recruited by her former professor, Nigel Jones, and quickly worked her way from Assistant University Architect (UA), to interim UA, and finally to her existing position as our sole UA.

When Jana isn't hard at work on campus, she and her husband enjoy OSU Athletics, visiting the OSU Museum of Art (especially the sculpture collection), spending time with her dogs, horses, and three children, all of whom reside in the Tulsa area. Jana also enjoys gardening at home, both in the outdoor and indoor setting as she enthusiastically inherited her daughters' FFA houseplant propagation collection.

Jana has been on the TLB for five years. Her continued service to the campus forest and greater OSU-Stillwater community is greatly appreciated!



What's your favorite thing about your role here at OSU?

"My favorite thing about my job is being able to make a positive impact on my hometown and alma mater" –Jana Phillips

Hannah Dixon, NetImpact President and Tree Leadership Board Member

Hannah is a Management major from Cleveland, Oklahoma, whose dream job is to "...own or run a business that creates a positive impact on the community. I want to lead an organization that not only achieves success but also makes a meaningful difference in the lives of others, contributing to the communities the business affects." She chose to pursue a degree in Management because she's always aspired to be a leader and in her words, Management offers "...the flexibility to explore my passions while equipping me with the skills to lead and make an impact in any business setting. ... This path allows me to combine my love for leadership with a focus on fostering meaningful change." Hannah is deeply passionate about working with people and is committed to making a positive difference everywhere she goes. This is evident in her service to our community as the NetImpact President and through her role on the TLB. Concerning the TLB, Hannah says: "What I've enjoyed most about being on the tree leadership board is the opportunity to contribute to the beauty of our campus. Being part of a team that enhances the natural environment and helps make the campus a more vibrant and welcoming place is incredibly rewarding."

Hannah is a self-proclaimed Marvel nerd and most enjoys the newly landscaped area north of Edmon Low Library.

Sydney Hager

Society of American Foresters Chapter Chair and Tree Leadership Board Member

Sydney is a Forestry major from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, and has served one year on the Tree Leadership Board.

After spending several years in the United States Navy as a Submariner, Sydney became bored with being "stuck in a tin can underwater" and decided to build a different career for himself. One where he could be outside. He chose forestry because there's no better place to be than taking a long walk in the woods! Eventually, Sydney aspires to be a forester and is very motivated to do anything but sit at a desk.

Sydney's favorite tree is the Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). This tree is appreciated for its unique four-lobed leaf and large, aromatic, yellow and orange flowers that bloom in June. Tulip Poplars can be found on campus in a couple of places, one being the north side of Classroom Building. Making this area of campus Sydney's favorite!

In his time on the Tree Leadership Board, he helped to facilitate one Service Learning Project, promoted other projects, and enjoyed discussing future campus forest plans.

Left: Sydney presents his research, involving prescribed fire in Cross Timbers Forests following mechanical eastern redcedar removal, to private landowners,

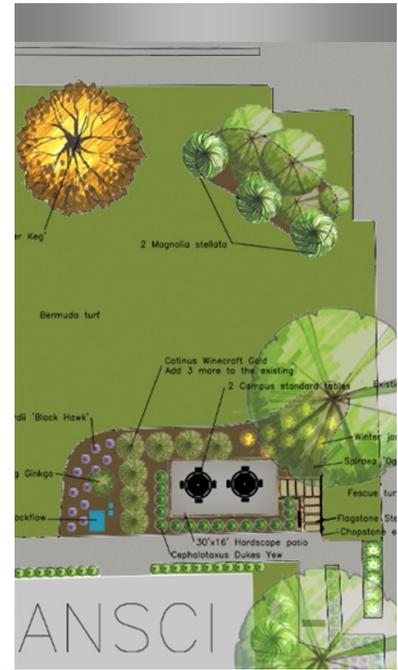
Head, Heart, Hands, and Health

One of the first stages of building a new Ag Hall, as detailed on page 3, was demolishing the old 4H building for a construction laydown area. On the southwest corner of Monroe and Hall of Fame, 11 trees were protected and retained through the demolition and laydown area process. Including the 4H Centennial honorary Eastern Redbud (*C. canadensis*). While a new building could be placed here in the distant future, today the area is being transitioned into a parking lot.

Still, the history of the area has not been lost. In keeping with traditional 4H themes, a Landscape Architecture Class is going to assist in building a patio, seating area, and landscape beds adjacent to the future parking lot. Students will put their heads, hearts, and hands together to build a beautiful space that will undoubtedly contribute to the overall health of campus and it's community members.

The FMLS department is partnering with student groups now more than ever. If you are in a student group who'd be interested in helping with landscape projects on campus, please contact Caitlin Gipson caitlin.gipson@okstate.edu or Nick Ouellette nick.ouellette@okstate.edu

As it relates to trees, you should expect to see some new plantings in the area this coming spring. While species selections could change slightly, we intend on planting three more Winecraft Gold Smokebushes (*C. coggygria*) to match 4 existing ones. Deciduous magnolias will be planted closer to the intersection. And large, overstory trees will be planted along Hall of Fame.



"This service-learning project provided a chance for Net Impact and the campus community to come together and collectively make a positive impact. Net Impact is a chapter organization focused on spreading awareness on sustainability on campuses all over the US."

- Miranda Escobedo, student SLP participant

Service Learning Projects

With increased student interest and participation, OSU FLMS was able to facilitate three Service Learning Projects this year! SLPs give the student body the opportunity to care for the Campus Arboretum in direct, hands-on ways. They learn about tree planting, new tree care, and acquire a sense of pride and ownership in the landscape. A quick synopsis of this years SLPs:

Earth Day, April 22, near Old Central. Partnered with the student chapter of Society of American Foresters (SAF). About 25 student volunteers. Three trees: two American Dream Oaks (*Q. bicolor* 'JFS-KW12' PP 23632) and one Green Whisper Bald Cypress (*T. distichum* 'JFS-SGPN')

October 1, Central Dining. Partnered with the School of Global Studies with several SAF students also in attendance. About 25 student volunteers. Seven trees: two of each Osage Orange White Shield, (*M. pomifera* 'White Shield') Exclamation! London Plane Tree (*Platanus x acerifolia* 'Morton Circle'), Shantung Maple (*A. truncatum*), and one Flamethrower Redbud (*C. canadensis* 'NC2016-2' PPAF).

October 10, Life Sciences East and West. Partnered with the student chapter of NetImpact. About 14 student volunteers assisted. Four trees were planted: two Chinkapin Oaks (*Q. muhlenbergii*), one Kousa Dogwood (*C. kousa*), and one Oregon Trail Maple (*A. saccharum* 'Hiawatha 1').



Chinkapin Oak, October 10
Photo Credit: Miranda Escobedo, NetImpact



Green Whisper Bald Cypress, April 22



Exclamation! London Plane Tree, October 1

Oklahoma State University

Facilities Management

Landscape Services

The Facilities Management Landscape Services Department is responsible for the overall design, installation and maintenance of 870-plus acres. We serve the university by providing skilled landscape services to help the OSU community achieve educational success. By doing this, we help our organization develop a dynamic outdoor learning environment through campus beautification.

Thank You to our 2024 Donors

How to Donate

Please visit <https://osugiving.com/your-passion/campus-tributes>

Or from www.osugiving.com > Your Passion > Program Support > Campus Tributes > under 'Areas of Impact' click "Campus Tree Planting and Maintenance Fund" > From here, you may donate any amount.

For a donation of \$1,800 or more, a metal plate in the shape of bark will be placed on the tree statues adjacent to the Cowboy Family Tree art piece located at Theta Pond. See statue below.

To fill out information for the plaque, scroll down to the bottom of the same web page listed above and select "Download our Campus Tributes order form here."

Please direct any donation questions to:

Pam Higgins, Director of Annual Giving, Pipeline Readiness and Student Foundation
phiggins@osugiving.com | 405-269-0822

Tree Spotlight, Basswood *Tillia americana*

American Basswood is an incredibly beautiful ornamental shade tree that pollinators love, and is sadly underused in the greater urban landscape. It's native to a large area of the US, including Oklahoma, and does relatively well in the urban setting. The crown is ovate in shape and often grows to 50-80' tall. The leaves are beautiful, deep green and heart-shaped. But the most unique thing about this tree is arguably the fragrant pale yellow flowers that bloom in the spring and ripen into a visually interesting fruit. Cymes droop from a showy, papery, narrow, leaf-like bract. While they aren't extremely common, they can be found in the greenhouse/nursery and tree sale industries.

You can find three American Basswoods on campus, one at Theta Pond, one in Centennial Grove, and one on the southeast corner of the Bartlett Center. Will you be able to identify them in the spring?



Oklahoma State University

Facilities Management

Landscape Services

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