



Urban Forestry Division Update

PRESENTED TO CITY COUNCIL – OCTOBER 5, 2026

DR. JESSIE FARRIS, URBAN FORESTER



Nine Months at a Glance

- Major goals:
 - Protecting and expanding the City's tree canopy
 - Connecting forestry, education, sustainability and community
- \$30,000 in grant funding awarded
- 98 grant-funded trees planted
 - 105 total trees planted for 2026
- 100+ Arbor Day Volunteers
- 800+ students engaged through 5 school career days
- 75 trees given away to residents at Earth Day and Arbor Day events
- 5 trainings provided to Parks Maintenance team



Building a Foundation

- The first priority was creating consistent standards, workflows, and accountability around tree care.
- Developed comprehensive Forestry SOPs
- Established standardized inspection and documentation procedures
- Expanded forestry involvement in Capital projects, development reviews and Code Compliance
- Improved coordination between Forestry, Parks, and Irrigation teams
- Asset Documentation (Reports)
- Long-Term Planning
- Result: Forestry is becoming a defined City service – not a series of isolated tree issues.

Field Operations

- Routine inspections are critical to catching tree health, installation, irrigation and construction problems earlier.
- All 24 parks are on biweekly inspection schedule
- Conducted routine pre- and post-construction inspections for capital projects
- Identified and corrected planting depth, girdling roots, irrigation and mulch issues
- Evaluated hazardous, declining and damaged trees
- Improved contractor communication and tree installation standards
- Established ongoing monitoring for newly planted trees

Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness

- Established Burleson's first proactive EAB monitoring program
- Installed 8 traps at 4 parks locations
- Confirmed EAB presence at Warren Park, Cindy Park, and the Burleson Recreation Center
- All ash trees on city property have been inventoried into GIS
- All trees have been individually assessed with recommendations for treatment or removal
- Building a proactive strategy before widespread impacts occur



Tree Inventory Phase 1

- Launched Phase 1 of the City's park tree inventory
- Completed Parks:
 - Warren, Cedar Ridge, Cindy, Clark, Claudia's Playground, Elk Ridge, Heberle, Mistletoe Hill, Robert Joseph, Wakefield Heights
 - In Progress: Bailey Lake, Bartlett, Bark Park, Chisenhall Fields, Meadowcrest, Oak Valley North, Prairie Timbers, The Plaza, Veteran's Memorial Plaza
- Recording species, condition, caliper size and height
- Logging inspections, tree health assessments, and maintenance needs
- Developing a long-term asset management system
- Phase 2 will include the public-facing "Our Urban Forest" resource where residents can view inventoried trees
- Phase 2 will also move from parks to city facilities



No Mow Areas

- Established 6 no-mow locations
- Approximately 5.42 acres
- Supporting pollinators and wildlife habitat
- Reducing irrigation demand
- Supporting stormwater infiltration
- Conducted plant and insect species diversity assessments



Metric	Total
Total Area	236,347 sq. ft.
Total Acres	5.42 acres
Annual Rainfall Capture	~5.39 million gallons/year
Irrigation Water Savings	~2.06–3.82 million gallons/year
Annual Operational Savings	~\$55,800 year

Planting Projects

- Installed new pollinator gardens at the Senior Center and the BRiCk
- Added a mix of native and pollinator-friendly plants to support bees, butterflies and other wildlife
- Added plant identification tags to improve public education
- Received 6 Go N Grow pollinator boxes and reimbursed approximately \$675 for the plant materials through Tarrant Regional Water District
- Will receive 6 more boxes for free from TRWD for Russell Farm grant project
- Expanding small-scale habitat projects across City facilities



Arbor Day + Trees For Tomorrow

- Hosted Burleson's largest Arbor Day tree planting
- 25 trees planted
- More than 100 community volunteers
- 40 students participated
- Expanded the Junior Arborist Trees For Tomorrow program to the Academy of Nola Dunn, Centennial and Burleson High School
- Combined tree planting with hands-on environmental education
- Program Satisfaction Survey sent to high school students for feedback



Team Trainings

- Proper tree planting
- Native plant identification with applied field session
- Common pests and diseases
- Proper mulching and root-flare identification
- Increased staff capacity to recognize tree problems earlier



Departmental Collaborations

- Capital Projects – reviewing landscape plans, attending pre- and post-construction meetings, providing forestry input on tree protection, installation, and long-term maintenance.
- Code Compliance – assisting with tree health and hazardous tree assessments
- Recreation – partnering with rec staff on summer camp and youth environmental education, and incorporating trees, native plants, pollinators, and urban wildlife into programming
- GIS/ Information Technology – collaboration on development of the GIS tree inventory with improved mapping, asset tracking and long-term forestry data management
- Strengthening coordination across departments so trees are considered earlier in planning, construction and maintenance decisions

Community Engagement

- Launched Leaf it to Dr. Farris tree series for Arbor Day
- Tree Value Tags
- Assisted with Pups in Parks
- Launched The Trees That Grow educational outreach
- Created Field Note Fridays
- Oak Valley Certified Wildlife Habitat
- Bat Box project with Cub Scouts



Burleson Nature Discovery

- Welcomed 200+ residents for a community nature and environmental education event
- Partnered with Keep Burleson Beautiful and local Texas Master Naturalists
- Offered hands-on pollinator and wildlife education activities
- Led an interactive tree and nature hike
- Incorporated a butterfly release at the pocket prairie to connect families with local pollinator conservation
- Distributed free school supplies to local students and families
- Created a fun and accessible way to connect residents with Burleson's parks and natural resources



Trash Bash

- Hosted Trash Bash community cleanup event with Keep Burleson Beautiful – September 12, 2026
- Engaged over 200+ volunteers combined across both events
- Estimated 3000 lbs of litter removed
- Connected environmental stewardship with hands-on community action
- Increased awareness of litter prevention and the importance of protecting our parks and natural areas



Grant Awards – \$30,000

- Texas A&M Forest Service Tree Planting Grant – \$20,000
- Tarrant Regional Water District, Save Tarrant Water, Conservation Treasures Grant – \$5,000
- H.E.B. Texan By Nature, Trees For Texans Grant – \$5,000
- Continuing to pursue external funding and complete grant projects



Texas A&M Forest Grant 2025-26

- 98 new trees planted
- Distributed across multiple parks and city facilities
- Increased species diversity through native shade trees
 - Live oak, red oak, bur oak, chinquapin oak, redbud, and cedar elms
- Expanded canopy where long-term shade was needed
- Established post-planting inspection and care monitoring
- 96% survival rate (only 4 dead trees, species and site specific conditions that have been identified and corrected)



Texas A&M Forest Grant 2026-27

- Proposing approximately 90 trees at multiple park sites
 - Warren Park, Willow Creek, Heberle, etc.
- Targeting areas with low canopy, limited shade, and high heat exposure
- Replacing canopy lost through tree removals, storm damage and future EAB impacts
- Expanding beyond large shade trees with a focus on native understory trees
- Proposed small species include Texas mountain laurel, Eve's Necklace, Possumhaw Holly, Roughleaf Dogwood, Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum, Mexican Plum
- Larger native canopy species (Bald Cypress, Mexican Sycamore, American Elm, etc.) will supplement plantings where site conditions allow
- Increasing species and age diversity to build a more resilient urban forest
- Supporting pollinators, wildlife habitat, stormwater interception and soil stabilization

Russell Farm Habitat Enhancement Grant

- Native tree planting leading to the tree trail – “Charlie’s Wildscape”
- Pollinator habitat enhancements
- Bird blind habitat improvements
- Rainwater conservation elements (Added two rain barrels – Donated by TRWD)
- Interpretative signage and plant identification tags
- Designed as a community “living laboratory”



Centennial Park Remediation

- Conducted comprehensive tree health and site assessments
- All trees inventoried in GIS
- Identified soil, compaction, irrigation and disease concerns
- Completed four fertilization and fungicide treatments
- Completed turf aeration and root-zone improvements
- Will be obtaining updated soil tests to plan for future tree and shrub planting



H.E.B Centennial Park Grant

- Pending soil results – HEB grant will be used to replace lost trees around the time capsule OR for sidewalk shade in the right-of-way.
- For ROW planting, only small trees will be selected for this option due to overhead utility and planting width constraints
- Community planting scheduled for Friday, February 12, 2027
 - February 19th as a back-up date in case of severe weather
 - Trees must be planted by March 1st per grant agreement

Leadership

- Received the Environmental Impact Award from DFW Environmental Pros on May 23, 2026
- Received scholarship funding to attend the 2026 ISA Texas Tree Conference
- Selected to speak at multiple upcoming conferences – Texas Master Naturalist Annual Conference and Southwest Parks and Recreation Training Institute
- Accepted into the Texas A&M Forest Service Leadership Institute
- Gold Leaf Landscape Improvement Award from Texas A&M Forest Service



What's Next

- Texas Arbor Day – Friday, November 6, 2026 at Russell Farm
- Tree Hike and Moth Night at Family Camp Out – Saturday, November 7, 2026 at Russell Farm
- Expanding No Mow areas across parks
- Continuing citywide tree inventory and launch Phase 2
- Continue implementing grant-funded projects
- Continue EAB preparedness and monitoring
- Leading plant and tree hikes at Russell Farm
- Arbor Day 2027 at Russell Farm for 150th Celebration
- Bioblitz at Russell Farm in spring
- Building toward a comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan

Questions / Comments

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