

Career Paths in Urban Forestry and Arboriculture: Linking Higher Education and Professional Advancement (788)

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Urban forestry and arboriculture are tightly coupled professions whose disciplinary origins and evolution are closely interwoven. Over the past 25 years, these professions have advanced rapidly as urban forests have emerged as a key element of global sustainability. At the same time, there have been demographic shifts in the workforce and structural changes in higher education that suggest that these professions are entering a new era for recruitment and career path development. Traditional models and mindsets about professional preparation and advancement are becoming obsolete. Further nuancing our current context is the perceived encroachment of allied professions into the urban forestry realm as urban forests become mainstream environmental and cultural resources.

All prominent professions thrive on strong support mechanisms that facilitate education, mentoring, leadership, and public perception. Although arboriculture is more clearly established, urban forestry is an emerging profession that is grappling with its professional identity and requisite support mechanisms. In this symposium, we will examine the current status and challenges in urban forestry and arboriculture that are affecting recruitment of young people into higher education programs and ultimately into these professions. Additionally, we will explore professional advancement over the course of a career, drawing out distinctions in the professional preparation and career path for arborists and urban foresters. Finally, we will examine the notions of professional identity and standing, which affect the influence of arborists and urban foresters on decision-making processes in cities and towns.

We have assembled a panel of speakers who are nationally recognized in their fields and have significant first-hand experience with the issues to be examined in this symposium. Speakers will provide perspectives on vocational and undergraduate education, graduate education, workforce development, and professional development. Talks will emphasize the critical linkages among higher education, professional identity, and career success. We will also report on key research findings from several new studies conducted on behalf of the U.S. Forest Service, along with strategic recommendations being made to the Forest Service to advance the urban forestry and arboriculture professions. The two-hour symposium will comprise a 20-minute presentation by each panelist, followed by a 20-minute question and answer session.