

“The arches of elm trees that we’ve cultivated here are just as much a construction as the streetlights, as the layout of the streets, their strange grids and confusions. Our communities of trees are as deliberate as the communities we build among ourselves.”

“Treed” by Winnipeg author Ariel Gordon

The Tree Committee is comprised of eight members: Teresa Cavett, Iain Day, Kayla Maxwell, Ivan Sabesky (chair), Vivian Sullivan, Gareth Thiessen, Paul Turenne, Melva Widdicombe

“In recognition of the high value in which the Armstrong’s Point neighbourhood holds the preservation of its urban canopy, the Tree Committee’s mandate is: to protect and enhance the parks, riparian forest and boulevards; to liaise with the City and residents of Armstrong’s Point; to serve as a conduit of information to residents regarding trees in public spaces.”

Our committee has been actively preserving the integrity of our tree canopy by initiating a number of projects in our neighbourhood over the last few years.

Our initial step was to research the state of trees and the natural environment in the Gates. This included a walkabout with an arborist to learn about specific species and trees of note in the neighbourhood; two research projects into riverbank species and invasive plant life encroaching on the area; and developing a collaborative partnership with the City of Winnipeg.

Based on these findings, we embarked on four initiatives in the community: Tree Speak, East Blanchard Park Riverbank Restoration Pilot Project, West Blanchard Park Riparian Forest, and boulevard canopy tree replenishment.

Tree Speak:

Initiated last year, from time to time the Tree Committee publishes an on-line newsletter which features news about our projects in the neighbourhood, and current information about the importance of our tree canopy and timely concerns such as Dutch Elm Disease, Emerald Ash

Borer and other tree predators.

Additionally, from time to time a community bulletin may be sent out by email about topics such as the importance of watering in a drought, reminding homeowners to keep weedwackers away from the base of the trees or promoting the Re-Leaf program for homeowners who have lost trees and wish to replant in their backyards.

East Blanchard Park:

This area is a City of Winnipeg Adopt-A-Park which means that we have an obligation towards the park to keep it looking good. Right now, we have begun a pilot project where we have planted a number of native species on the riverbank which include cottonwoods, saskatoons, pincheries, cranberries, creeping grapevines and more. The objective of this project is to protect the riverbank from further erosion and provide a model for homeowners with riverbank property to consider doing the same. Higher up in the park, along the south side, we have planted a variety of trees and shrubs and continue to expand these beds. Last fall, after bare root cuttings of pagoda dogwoods were provided by the city, we nurtured them on site and planted them into the south beds. This summer, we will continue our planting initiative with the support of the City of Winnipeg.

West Blanchard Park:

This project has been on-going for a few years. It began with a dialogue with the City to reclaim this area for this project. The first step required surveying the area. The second step involved fencing. The third step was removal of invasive species buckthorn, and the fourth was the replanting with native trees and shrubs. Every year something new is added to the understory. Last fall we planted three hazelnut shrubs. This park is an ongoing odyssey because there is always something needing done. Biannually, the wood chip path needs restoration, and the invasive species are always encroaching. We have been fortunate to have some of Winnipeg's Green Team help us from time to time. There is always clean up to do to keep manmade trash out of the park. Because this is a natural park, a tiny piece of wilderness riparian forest in our midst, we keep much of the fallen debris of tree branches that become incorporated in the forest floor and provide delineation of the walkway as well. For the visitors to the park, there is a small sign at the entrance giving a definition of a prairie riparian forest.

This area is one of the few inner city strips that still exist. If you listen intently, you may find it provides habitat for some wildlife. including a barn owl.

Boulevard Canopy:

We noted that our streetscape was becoming rapidly defoliated and replanting was not taking place. In the last five years, Armstrong's Point has lost 200 mature elm trees to Dutch Elm Disease. Over 100 of these lost trees were from the boulevards. Private donations and contributions from the Armstrong's Point Association have enabled us to replant the canopy. To date, we have planted over 100 trees – varieties of linden, oak, alder, maple, hackberry and ironwood. We are making an effort to diversify the canopy so that we are not creating a disease corridor which happens when one species creates a monoculture and a disease prevalent to that species can wipe out the entire canopy. This diversity is especially important during this time of climate crisis when our trees combat many stressful factors like air pollution and severe on-going drought conditions. This summer we will be planting 10 more alders on the community boulevards.

In conjunction with planting tree, the committee is busy providing care information for homeowners, helping with watering when necessary and pruning in the spring and fall.

Although our committee's focus has been on the boulevard trees, we know that over 100 trees have been lost from private property. We are entering extraordinary times due to climate challenges. It is becoming more and more evident that our trees play a crucial role in salvaging our urban environments. And yet, we are seeing our Winnipeg urban forest disappear at an alarming rate.

You can plant trees in your own yard to restore the aging and vulnerable canopy in our community. As the quotation states, ***"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now"***. The City's Re-Leaf Program can be of assistance.

Possible Future Project:

We are exploring the viability of developing the river end of Middle Gate as a pocket park.

Hope you can help:

You can help by contributing to the cost of a tree for the boulevard. Each tree we plant costs approximately \$160.00 to purchase. It is the Tree Committee that makes all the arrangements, including the planting of the trees. We have planted well over 100 trees. However, in order to continue planting trees, your donations are vital. To date, our funding has come from homeowners, Tree Committee members, and APA fundraising efforts.

Thank you everyone:

The Tree Committee would like to thank the community for supporting these community initiatives. We are making a difference! Please contact us if you have questions, suggestions or would like to make a donation.

See you in the neighbourhood under the canopy!