



# Joining Together

*Creating the capacity  
for NeighborWoods*

## Inventory your trees

**D**o you know how many trees you have in your yard, *exactly*? Does your local park know the specific number of trees under their care? By simply taking an inventory of the number, species and condition of the trees around us, we become better equipped to appreciate and maintain our local canopy.

**Directions:** Draw a map of your property with a box representing your house. Number and identify each tree in its approximate place surrounding your house. For a school, park, or street this can be done on a larger scale or with multiple pieces of paper. You also can request a campus, or park or parcel map.

**Choose useful data.** Some suggestions are:

- *Number of trees in a designated area*  
Count the number of trees in your designated area.
- *Location of each tree, defined by*
  1. street address
  2. location relative to property lines, buildings, streets, and other trees
- *Species of each tree*  
Using a tree identification guide, identify the species being inventoried.
- *Condition/health of each tree*  
Look for signs of disease or of hazardous conditions, such as pests, mistletoe, rot, missing bark, damaged limbs, or dead/missing leaves during non-dormant seasons. Note if the tree is young, mature or in decline.
- *Special needs of certain trees*  
Identify tree needs such as watering, pruning, mulching, fertilization, staking or stake removal.

Areas of Interest:

Looking Around, Thinking & Investigating, Walking, Writing

Ingredients:

Pen & paper, Map, Tree identification guide



## Know who manages your trees

**O**ur city and county governments are responsible for the planting and stewardship of hundreds and often thousands of trees. These public trees are maintained with our tax dollars. Recreation and park districts are responsible for well-canopied parks and school districts ensure the shading of our children. Too often these agencies are understaffed, under funded and looking for help.

**Directions:** Begin by choosing a community organization caring for your trees. Your options include city or county government, a local urban forestry group, a local school or school district or a recreation and park district. The first challenge is learning which trees are “owned” by the organization. In the case of cities or counties, these trees will commonly include commercial and residential street trees, median trees, public park trees and trees living at other city or county facilities.



Call the organization’s central office and obtain the name and title of the person responsible for the trees. Contact that individual in person or by phone and thank them for maintaining the urban forest. Learn more about the organization by asking:

- *How many trees are under their care?*
- *How many staff care for those trees?*
- *What are their funding sources? Are they sufficiently funded? If not, what tree-related areas are in greatest need of funding?*
- *What role does the community play in their work?*
- *How could the community be of greater support?*

Areas of Interest:

Networking, Thinking & Investigating

Ingredients:

Telephone, Pen & paper, Phone directory



## *Landscape your church or school*

**O**ur local schools and churches manage vegetated and canopied lands totaling thousands of acres. Sometimes these grounds are excellent models of quality planting and stewardship...too often they are not. Whether the location is for learning or prayer, the mind and the spirit benefit from a well-maintained, landscaped environment.

**Directions:** Call your local principal or spiritual leader's office to determine whether they have a Building and Grounds Committee. Assuming one exists, attend one of their meetings or meet individually with committee members to identify their current projects. If you have the opportunity, become a member.

In addition to working towards quality care of the grounds, create opportunities to publicize the Committee's work. A tree planting project on your site offers participants terrific educational benefits. As a volunteer landscaper or steward, you will gain first hand experience caring for your environment and your community.

If a Building and Grounds Committee does not exist, solicit support for the creation of one. Most likely the principal or spiritual leader will support the idea as long as someone else assumes the responsibility. Speak with others to assess the degree of interest. The more vision and imagination you bring to this, the more excitement and support you will elicit from those around you. Focus on one initial project. When you have some success, expand your efforts.

Areas of Interest:

Looking Around, Networking, Physical Labor

Ingredients:

Ideas to share, Flowers, Shrubs,  
Young trees, Gardening tools, Irrigation



## *Meet with and support your municipal arborist*

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any cities and counties have an arborist, a professional expert on tree care and maintenance. The care of your street and park canopy is their full-time responsibility.

**Directions:** Call your local government office and obtain the name of your arborist. Telephone or visit their office. Inquire about their current projects. Take them out to lunch! Most likely their hard work goes unappreciated. Other conversation topics might be your vision of the urban forest, your projects or little known facts about your local forest.



**Areas of Interest:** Connecting to Government, Networking,

**Ingredients:** Telephone, Lunch for two



## Identify and protect heritage and landmark trees

**H**eritage trees are mature native trees, often majestic and revered. Landmark trees are mature, non-native trees with historical value. Cities and counties nationwide often have ordinances protecting heritage and landmark trees.

**Directions:** Contact your city or county<sup>1</sup> and request information regarding tree protection laws. If there are none, you might consider creating such an ordinance. Hopefully there are current ordinances describing the types and sizes of trees protected by law. Generally municipalities have a minimum tree size to qualify for heritage or landmark status and a procedure for registering a tree.<sup>2</sup>



Measure the circumference of each tree four feet above the ground to ascertain the *Diameter Breast Height* (DBH). Note the species of each tree and any other information required by the municipality. When you have completed the data, send all information to the appropriate municipal office. Once the trees are identified, monitor them to be sure public and private interests respect these heritage and landmark trees.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B: Helpful Organizations

<sup>2</sup> In Sacramento, you can contact the Sacramento Tree Foundation to request a Heritage Tree form.

Areas of Interest:

Looking Around, Thinking & Investigating, Writing

Ingredients:

Comfortable shoes, Telephone, tree circumference-measuring tape, Tree identification guide



## *Spread the word about not topping trees*

**T**ree topping is a detrimental practice commonly found across the United States. Topping,<sup>1</sup> or heading, is the act of severely pruning the top branches of a tree, drastically reducing the size of the tree. People often top trees because they have always done it, they fear branches falling down or to remove mistletoe. This practice, performed with good intentions, actually damages the tree physically and aesthetically. Once a tree is topped, decay sets in, new branches are structurally weaker and more prone to break, and the tree has lost its symmetry and integrity.

**Directions:** The purpose of this activity is to deter the unhealthy and costly practice of tree topping. Begin by determining how common tree topping is in your area. It may not be present at all or it may be the community norm. You will not know without looking. Select an area, your street, block or neighborhood, and take a walk. Look for trees that have many cuts on high branches. Tally the number of topped trees. Alert your newspaper to the damages caused by topping or create a flyer promoting the elimination of tree topping in your community.

***To exist as a nation, to prosper as a state, and to live as a people, we must have trees.***

—Theodore Roosevelt

As fall approaches, people often prune their dormant trees. Keep your eyes out for a person beginning to prune and remind them that topping is detrimental.

<sup>1</sup> See National Arbor Day Foundation pamphlets number 8 & 14 or ISA standards on proper pruning.

Areas of Interest:

Networking, Looking Around, Teaching

Ingredients:

Comfortable shoes, Pen & paper.  
A good eye

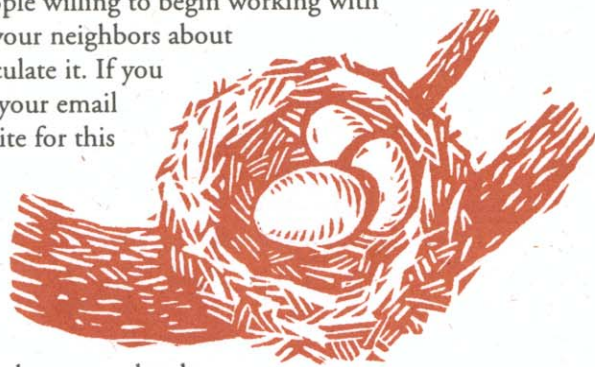


## *Establish a NeighborWoods group*

**I**n every neighborhood there are numerous people interested in working to improve the local forest. Some are doing it. Some would like to start. Many do not realize the local forest needs their help. A NeighborWoods group unites these people and moves the cause forward.

**Directions:** The first objective is to spread the word. Start by asking your neighbors and friends if they are interested in preserving and expanding their local forest. Then ask them who they know with the same interest. Keep a list of all names and telephone numbers.

Once you find a few people willing to begin working with you, set a meeting. Tell your neighbors about it. Create a flyer and circulate it. If you have one, begin sharing your email address or create a web site for this blossoming venture.



When this group gets together, spend your initial meeting discussing possibilities. Share your loves and your concerns about your local forest. Take a walk together and find out what you collectively know. Be sure to share phone numbers. Share this Guidebook and imagine what you might do together. Take notes and have a group member keep a binder of your activities. You will appreciate reflecting on these early efforts.

**Areas of Interest:**

Networking, Thinking and Investigating

**Ingredients:**

Neighbors, Telephone, Pen & paper, Ideas, Enthusiasm

