



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Milwaukee County
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**Milwaukee County Gets Greener:
Brewers Foundation Donates Trees to Milwaukee County Parks**

MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele today announced that the County’s Parks Department will plant an additional 70 trees this spring, thanks to a partnership with the Brewers Foundation and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Through the Root, Root, Root, for the Brewers tree-planting campaign, the Parks Department will receive 70 trees representing seven species—catalpa, sugar maple, swamp white oak, Kentucky coffee tree, hackberry, Japanese tree lilac, and honeylocust.

The trees will be among more than 200 trees that will have been planted in the parks since February. More than 30 diverse species, with a focus on trees native to Wisconsin, will be planted. An additional 200–300 trees will be planted from September–December.

“We place a high value on trees and the benefits they bring to our parks and the people of Milwaukee County,” County Executive Chris Abele said. “Trees serve as a living legacy for future generations, and we are grateful to the Brewers Foundation and the state Department of Natural Resources for their help in replenishing areas where trees can be most appreciated.”

Benefits of trees are many. They can reduce air temperature by blocking sunlight and removing energy from the air, absorb carbon dioxide and potentially harmful gasses and release oxygen, reduce stormwater runoff and soil erosion, and provide habitat and food for birds and other animals.

Trees are planted not only to restore areas where trees have been removed due to safety hazards, impaired health, injury or infestation, but also to redesign areas or to reforest underutilized turf-grass areas and agricultural fields within the park system. Since 2014, the Parks Natural Areas Program alone has planted about 1,400 native hardwood trees and shrubs, and in fall of 2016 and 2017 an additional 2,000 native trees and shrubs will be planted.

A field analysis in 2007 found that, of the 1.5 million trees growing in the park system, 356,000 were ash species. In 2009, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was discovered in Franklin. With a range of 20 miles, EAB presents a true challenge to the Parks Land Resources Division. Since 2014, nearly 2,500 ash trees have been removed due to EAB infestation.

“Anyone who lived in the Milwaukee area during the ’60s may recall the devastating effects of Dutch Elm Disease,” said Ramsey Radakovich, Milwaukee County Parks Deputy Regional Operations Manager.

According to Ian Hanao, a presenter at the Arbor Day Partners Conference in November 2015, Milwaukee's elm population went from 106,738 in 1956 to less than 1,000 in 2015.

"We're looking at a similar situation with EAB," said Radakovich. "Although our staff are trained to recognize the symptoms of a tree that has been infested, the signs may not display until two to four years after infestation. As foresters, we're saddened knowing that those trees will die within another two to four years."

A multi-pronged approach is being used to deal with the issue: physical removal, treatment, biocontrol, and replacement with a diversity of trees. The Department has prioritized zones for removal according to the concentration of park patrons.

Playgrounds, picnic areas, and areas along the Oak Leaf Trail are addressed with removals to keep patrons safe by avoiding untimely failure of tree limbs—or entire trees.

Highly valued ash trees may be injected to prevent an EAB attack; however, the trees must be treated every other year as long as EAB exists within a 20-mile radius.

"The cost combined with finite resources available for tree maintenance in our 15,000-acre park system puts limits on the number of trees we can treat," said Radakovich.

In small areas of the parks, The Wisconsin DNR and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service have used biological control as part of an integrated pest management plan. Stingless wasps, a natural predator of EAB, have been used to target EAB eggs and larvae. Since 2007, at least 19 states have used stingless wasps. The wasps are not attracted to people or pets.

Through a variety of partnerships, the Parks has increased its replacement program. In addition to the Brewers Foundation and Wisconsin DNR, the Parks has joined forces with the Fund for Lake Michigan, Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network, Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful, The Park People of Milwaukee County, friends groups, local neighborhood associations, school groups, and individuals. These groups and individuals have provided funding to purchase trees for the park system.

Information on the purchase of individual memorial trees is available at parkpeoplemke.org/node/135.

In related news, County Executive Chris Abele will commemorate Arbor Day with the help of first graders from Rawson Elementary School, as they and Parks staff plant two new trees in the Boerner Botanical Gardens, Friday, April 29, at 10 a.m. Free saplings, courtesy of Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful in partnership with the Argosy Foundation, will be available to the first 100 visitors.

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