

HOOSIER IN THE BUCKEYE STATE

An Arborist Exchange Report

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Hoosiers (Indianans) and Buckeyes (Ohioans) are not that different. We have the same climate zones, tree species, biotic and abiotic tree stresses. However, there are still differences among our urban forestry programs. This article will discuss some of those differences, as well as some personal findings and observations concerning my exchange from Evansville, Indiana—where I’m the city forester—to communities in Ohio.

What made this exchange interesting, and more difficult to write about, is that it involved visiting more than just one community. My host was Southwest Ohio Regional Urban Forestry Coordinator Wendi Crabill, who works out of Lebanon, just north of Cincinnati. Wendi introduced me to communities in southwest and northwest Ohio.

Funding & Statistics

Thanks to my SMA exchange, I was able to acquire some valuable information about how other communities fund their urban



Wendi Crabill and Shawn Dickerson at Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum in Cincinnati

forestry programs. For instance, Ohio communities are able to charge an assessment based on linear footage of property frontage—Indiana does not.

Table 1 shows data for Evansville, Indiana, followed by data for the Ohio communities I visited during the exchange. Although it is statistically appropriate only to compare Ohio communities to one another, I have listed statistics for Evansville, Indiana, to indicate where we stand with regard to funding our programs.

Perhaps one reason that some of the communities in Ohio are faring better financially than Evansville is that our UF program is only five years old. Although Evansville would like to have an outstanding tree program, it takes time to gain public and political

support to put good tree program initiatives into action. Some communities in Ohio have developed new programs recently and have outstanding programs in place already. Bowling Green, for instance, began their tree program a year ago and already has tremendous support.

Pavement & Trees

Most of the communities that I visited in Ohio are distinctly different from Evansville with regard to pavement repair and trees, with the exception of Toledo. Evansville and Toledo replace sidewalks and keep the original path of the sidewalk, while trying to do as little damage to trees as possible. Sylvania, Ohio curves the sidewalks around trees and, in some cases, brings the curve out away from the trees. They also practice slab jacking, a process for sidewalks where the slabs are still intact.

Pavement issues can be just as crucial in business districts, where root space is extremely limited. Cincinnati increases the available rooting area in their high-use commercial districts by using structural soils and even tree vaults.



Tree vaults in bridges in Cincinnati

Emerald Ash Borer

The most disturbing part of the exchange was visiting the quarantine zones of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). I had never before seen the damage that EAB can do.

It never really sunk into my head that EAB kills every ash tree in the area it infests and how serious and difficult the issues are with quarantine

City	Population	Trees Inventoried	Urban Forestry Budget	Tree Planting Budget	Years w/Established UF Program and Director	Years as Tree City USA
Evansville, IN	127,000	10,000	\$344,561	\$10,000	5	5
Bowling Green, OH	30,000	7,500	\$467,209	\$101,000	1	25
Centerville	23,024	10000	\$251,000	\$15,000	9	20
Cincinnati	327,000	88,000	\$1,600,000	\$533,333	25	25
Sylvania	17,600	7,800	\$225,000	\$33,000	25	23
Terrace Park	2,273	2,600	\$38,000	\$6,000	20	20
Toledo	307,946	100,000	\$4,199,810	\$63,000	50	25

Table 1. Community Population and Urban Forestry Program Data



Ash trees killed by EAB in Toledo

efforts. In Toledo and surrounding areas, EAB has hit hard, killing every ash tree in sight. It was a heart-wrenching experience for any arborist.

The pest appears to be spreading rapidly along waterways (by floating debris) and by highways (by illegal firewood transport, it's theorized). The public's perception of the severity of this pest is obviously flawed, since many of the affected areas refuse to remove their trees until the trees die. Also, ash continues to be planted, as I witnessed in the front of a new department store complex in the middle of the quarantine zone.

Perspective

I asked all the arborists that I met about species that they preferred. Some of the street trees that Ohio foresters said they favor, that we use in Evansville as well, are: *Acer truncatum*, *Celtis occidentalis*, *Cornus racemosa*, *Gymnocladus dioicus*, *Koelreuteria paniculata*, *Nyssa sylvatica*, *Syringa reticulata*, *Taxodium distichum*, *Tilia tomentosa*, *Ulmus americana* 'Valley Forge', *Ulmus parvifolia*, and *Zelkova serrata*.

I had some interesting discussions with many of the arborists during my exchange, especially concerning tree diversity. While many of the communities are doing an outstanding job of keeping their overall species diversity high, there are city blocks with monocul-



Curved sidewalk, post-repair, in Sylvania, Ohio Photo: Wendi Crabill



London plane trees grown in structural soils in Cincinnati

tures. Some Ohio arborists argued that the uniform appearance of a single species is desired by citizens.

I argue that highly diversified tree plantings can be aesthetically pleasing and relaxing, whereas uniform plantings look too standard and even militaristic—and monocultures are just too vulnerable to major pests.

Beauty, Kindness, and Regret

While in Cincinnati I was fortunate to visit Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum.

I have never before seen such an outstandingly well managed tree program at a cemetery. There were many species in the cemetery to view, including 22 state and national champion trees. Spring Grove even has a patented 'Spring Grove' dogwood and graciously donated one to Evansville. I was very happy to receive this gift, and I immediately planted the tree next to Evansville's Oak Hill Cemetery office.

While I was in Ohio, every soul that I met was kind. A special thank you to Wendi Crabill and her fiancé Bryan Van Buren, Matt and Karyn Dickman, and Stephanie and Greg Miller, for welcoming me into their homes. Thank you to the arborists who invited me to their communities: Dave Bienemann, Matt Dickman, Mike Engler, Dave Gamstetter, Randy Haller, Craig Schaar, and Bob Slack.

I am also thankful for the great information from Ohio State Urban Forester Drew Todd and Ohio Regional Urban Foresters Ann Bonner, Lisa Bowers, Lola Lewis, Stephanie Miller, Marianne Prue, and Alan Siewert. From you all, I have learned so much. A special thank you to my mentor, Wendi Crabill, for your sharing your outstanding knowledge, time, and kindness.

The only regret I have is that I could not write more about the people I met and the interesting observations that I made. If I did, then I might have to find a publicist for writing a book. Thank you, SMA and Altec Inc., for giving me the opportunity to participate in this exchange. 🍃