Arbor Day Foundation™

JUSTICE OUTSIDE

ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY TREES DAY

PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY CONFERENCE 2026



ARBORDAY.ORG

Beyond the Tree Count: Community-Centered Approaches to Urban Forestry



PRESENTED BY

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We are on Native Land

We recognize that we are on the ancestral lands of Indigenous peoples, specifically the traditional and ancestral homelands of the the Osage Nation, the Illini Confederacy (including the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Tamaroa, Peoria, and Michigamea tribes), and the Miami people who have stewarded this land for generations and continue to do so today. We acknowledge that these lands were taken through colonization, which led to the erasure of Indigenous cultures, languages, and governance systems.

Visit native-lands.ca to find the name of the Indigenous land you are occupying and then learn the history of that land and the native led-organizations

Who we are

- Grantmaking intermediary focused on racial justice and the environment, working on finding creative ways to minimize barriers to funding for historically underfunded communities with a trust based philanthropy approach.
- 185+ grantees across the U.S.
- Funding priorities
  - Health, Healing, and Wellness
  - Youth Access to Nature
  - Land and Water Access
  - Grassroots Organizing & Mobilization
  - Economic Opportunity





Overview

Our urban forestry work is supported by the William Penn Foundation Community Tree Collaborative and US Forest Service IRA Urban and Community Forestry

Four approaches that push on what urban forestry looks like on the ground:

- Urban Gardens as Forest Ecology
- Cultural Practices as Conservation
- Habitat Work that Centers Community
- Education and Workforce Development
- Storytelling





Student Conservation Association in New York, NY
Sonoma Ecology Center in Sonoma, CA

Urban Gardens as Forest Ecology

- **Iglesias Gardens** (Philadelphia, PA) focuses on fruit tree planting as a culturally specific food access strategy while also maintaining ecosystems of native fruit eating species like bats and birds.
- **The CommUnity Garden @ the Creek** (Philadelphia, PA) engages community members not just in tending trees but in processing fruit, cooking, canning, drying, seed saving, creating a full cycle of land stewardship year round.
- **Sixth World Solutions** (Lupton, AZ) supports the Kingsley Community Garden on the Navajo Nation, centering Indigenous food security as an act of both environmental and cultural resilience.





Canopy in Palo Alto, CA
Global Gardens Training Farm in Chicago, IL

Cultural Practices as Conservation

- **The Lumbee Cultural Burn Association** (Maxton, NC) carries forward a fire ecology practice that predates written records, with well documented benefits to forest ecosystems.
- **Giitigan** (Lansing, MI) is establishing a traditional Anishinaabe food forest with programming developed alongside Elders, storytellers, and traditional chefs. Indigenous communities have been land stewards for thousands of years.
- **Global Gardens Training Farm** (Chicago, IL) mission is to improve access to fresh vegetables for displaced families and their urban neighbors; feed the souls of displaced farmers through re-connection with the soil and food production; provide supplemental income for participating displaced farmers; and foster new farms.





Native Roots Farm Foundation in Wilmington, DE
Giitigan in Lansing, MI

Habitat Work that Centers Community

- **In Color Birding Club** (Philadelphia, PA) plants native trees to support nesting habitats for herons, eagles, and owls.
- **Delaware Bat Rehabilitation and Conservation** (Smyrna, DE) a Black and Indigenous led organization, is building a micro nursery to grow native tree and shrub seedlings for communities in need while bringing conservation education to communities of color.
- **Women for Green Spaces** (Chicago, IL) is dedicated to promoting green spaces and preserving the monarch butterfly and other pollinators by increasing the number of native plant gardens with nectar sources in school yards.





Women for Green Spaces (Chicago, IL)
In Color Birding Club (Philadelphia, PA)

Education & Workforce Development

- **Treobytes** (San Diego, CA) is developing drone piloting curriculum for urban forestry management.
- **Community Nature Connection** (Los Angeles, CA) runs an eight week hybrid training program followed by paid part time conservation jobs.
- **Botanical Community Development Initiatives** (Oceanside, CA) through their Reaching Roots program: hands on training in urban forestry, native plant restoration, and community food production, plus free distribution of native shrubs and edible plants to schools and food justice projects.





Canopy in Palo Alto, CA

Storytelling

- **Color My Outdoors** (Asheville, NC) is launching a multimedia storytelling initiative featuring Black and Brown photographers and writers documenting urban forestry careers, because representation in the narrative matters as much as representation in the workforce.





Color My Outdoors in Asheville, NC

Urban forestry work needs projects that are intersectional if we want increased positive impacts.












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Thank you.