

UCFS Board Member Profile: Carol Mini

Name: Carol J. Mini

City, State/Province, Country: Palm Coast, FL, USA

Place of Employment: City of Palm Coast

Job Title: Urban Forester

Educational level and major field: Master of Public Administration, B. S. Environmental Horticultural

List any professional certifications: ISA Certified Arborist FL-5479A, ISA TRAQ Certified



List any other urban forestry, arboriculture, or related organizations you're involved with:

- Florida Chapter ISA
- Florida Chapter ISA - Trees Florida Planning Committee
- Executive Board Member for St. John's Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve.

LinkedIn profile link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/cj-bennett-837ba2330>

Brief bio:

My career in urban and community forestry began as a University of Florida Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent, where I developed my passion for teaching and connecting people with the natural world. Through horticulture programs offered to the public, I discovered a growing passion for trees and pursued my ISA Arborist Certification.

That passion led me to the City of Palm Coast, where I have proudly served as Urban Forester for the past 21 years. Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of meeting and educating people of all ages, helping them see trees in a different way and develop a deeper respect and appreciation for the many benefits trees bring to our everyday lives.

I have always believed that education is more powerful than regulation. Through my work, I strive not only to protect trees today, but to inspire others to value, care for, and protect them for generations to come. Leaving a legacy of stewardship and helping future generations understand the importance of trees has been at the heart of my career.

This past August, I completed my Master of Public Administration, furthering my commitment to community leadership and my desire to contribute to the administrative and executive decisions that shape the future of urban forestry.

What makes you happy about being an UCFS member?

What makes me happiest about being a UCFS member is the sense of community and connection it provides. My experience at the 2025 MFI in beautiful San Jose, California had a profound impact on me. I came away realizing that I was not a lone ranger fighting against the odds, but part of a community of professionals who understand the challenges, share the passion, and genuinely want to see one another succeed.

UCFS has given me a professional family – a place where I can share challenges, celebrate wins, learn from losses, and know that others understand the work we do. That sense of camaraderie has been incredibly meaningful to me.

After 21 years in urban forestry, I have learned that the work can sometimes feel like an uphill battle. Knowing there is a community of people who are willing to share experiences, offer support, and celebrate the importance of what we do makes the journey much more rewarding. Being a UCFS member reminds me that we are not doing this work alone.

What got you interested in the field of urban forestry?

Honestly, I think my interest in urban forestry started when I was a kid, long before I ever knew urban forestry was a career. I grew up spending my free time in the woods with my friends. Back then, we weren't allowed in the house on the weekends till dusk (I'm ageing myself), so we learned to entertain ourselves outdoors. We built forts, climbed trees, explored, played, and simply enjoyed being outside. The woods were our playground, and trees were an important part of almost everything we did.

Those experiences gave me a connection to trees and the outdoors that stayed with me as I grew older. My career eventually began with the University of Florida Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent position, where I discovered how much I enjoyed teaching and sharing my knowledge with others. It was there that my appreciation for trees grew into a true passion, leading me to pursue my ISA Arborist Certification and eventually become an Urban Forester.

In many ways, I feel like I've come full circle. The child who couldn't wait to get outside and climb a tree grew into an urban forester who wants to make sure future generations have the opportunity to experience that same connection with nature. That is what continues to motivate me today.

In what ways do you want to contribute to the [mission](#) and [strategic direction](#) of UCFS? Are you particularly interested in a certain area of board service such as governance, policy, outreach, financial oversight, etc.? Do you see any of your strengths being especially helpful to leading the organization?

I would like to contribute to UCFS's strategic direction by using my 21 years of municipal urban forestry experience, my background as an educator, and my commitment to developing strong professionals and future leaders in our field. I believe building confidence begins with education, mentorship, and creating opportunities for professionals to learn from one another.

Throughout my career, I have believed that education is more powerful than regulation. I would bring that philosophy to UCFS by supporting programs and opportunities that help professionals strengthen their knowledge, develop leadership skills, and have the confidence to make informed decisions that benefit both trees and the communities they serve. I believe we are strongest as a profession when we openly share what works, learn from our challenges, and continually strive to improve.

Urban forestry is a profession built on relationships, and I would like to help strengthen the connections among professionals at every stage of their careers. Most importantly, I want to help cultivate the next generation of urban forestry leaders so that the impact of our work continues well into the future.

I am particularly interested in board service focused on policy, outreach, and education. With 21 years of experience as a municipal Urban Forester and recently completed Master of Public Administration, I bring practical experience and a strong interest in the policies and decisions that shape the future of urban forestry.

My background as a University of Florida Extension Agent helped develop my strengths in communication, education, relationship building, and problem-solving. I believe these skills would allow me to bring people together, listen to diverse perspectives, and help develop practical solutions that move the organization forward.

As an Executive Board member, I would be honored to bring a practitioner's perspective, a collaborative leadership style, and a genuine commitment to supporting the profession and the people who serve it. I would especially value the opportunity to strengthen UCFS's outreach and educational efforts, contribute to policy discussions, and help develop the next generation of urban forestry leaders.

Favorite tree and why?

My favorite tree is the Southern Live Oak, *Quercus virginiana*, and I think my love for it goes all the way back to my childhood. Growing up, the woods were my playground. My friends and I spent our days building forts, climbing trees, exploring and enjoying the freedom of being outdoors. Trees were not something I simply looked at, they were part of our adventures and a place where many of my childhood memories were made.

As I became an urban forester, I gained a much deeper appreciation for what makes the live oak so remarkable. Its ability to compartmentalize trauma and decay, adapt to its surroundings, and withstand incredible challenges is truly magnificent. Even when humans create difficult conditions for them, live oaks find a way to endure. They remain rooted, stand tall, and continue growing for many years.

I admire that resilience more than anything. The live oak reminds me of the importance of staying grounded while being willing to adapt, and of having the strength to weather difficult times without losing sight of who you are. In many ways, it represents the qualities I hope to carry throughout my own life – resilience, strength, adaptability, and the ability to provide something meaningful for those who come after me.

Perhaps that is why the live oak feels so special to me. It connects the child who spent days climbing trees in the woods with the urban forester I am today. It is a reminder of where my love of trees began and the kind of legacy I hope to leave behind for my daughter and others.