2026 Conference Speakers



Alex Acevedo

City Parks Foundation

As a Bronx native whose career has been rooted in underserved communities, Alex Acevedo has had the pleasure of working and creating opportunities for people to prosper. Working with City Parks Foundation has deepened her knowledge and appreciation for the vital role that parks, trees, and green spaces play in connecting neighborhoods. Today, Alex combines her background in community engagement with urban forestry, helping lead initiatives that expand tree stewardship and strengthen community partnerships while cultivating a greener, more resilient and sustainable city for current and future generations.

aacevedo@cityparksfoundation.org



Ryan Allen

Dudek

Ryan Allen is an urban forester, ISA Certified Arborist, TRAQ, and Urban Forest Professional with 17+ years of experience helping cities, counties, and community organizations build healthier, more resilient urban forests. Ryan specializes in municipal urban forest management, long-range planning, and community-driven program development. As the lead of Dudek's of Urban Forestry practice he oversees citywide UFMPs, tree protection ordinance updates, canopy analyses, and strategic planning efforts for communities of all sizes across the U.S. His work is driven by the value that everyone deserves to live on a tree-lined street.

rallen@dudek.com



Sarah Balistreri

City Parks Foundation

Ten years ago, Sarah Balistreri attended a tree identification walk in Brooklyn, and it opened her eyes to the nature all around in New York City. First as a community activist and now as an urban forestry professional, Sarah connects New Yorkers to opportunities to learn about and care for their urban trees. At City Parks Foundation, Sarah's team was instrumental in bringing community voice into NYC's first Urban Forest Plan, and they are now leading several of the initiatives named in the plan to cultivate more urban forest stewards.

sbalistreri@cityparksfoundation.org



Darya Barar

HortScience

Darya Barar is a Managing Consulting Urban Forester and Arborist with HortScience | Bartlett Consulting. With 14 years of municipal urban forestry experience and more than a decade in consulting, she specializes in tree preservation, urban forest planning, municipal ordinances, and infrastructure projects. Darya works with cities and public agencies throughout California to develop practical solutions that support both healthy urban forests and thriving communities. RCA #693, ISA Certified Arborist, TRAQ, TPAQ.

dbarar@bartlett.com



Phil Bennett

City of Snoqualmie

Phil Bennett is Deputy Parks & Public Works Director for the City of Snoqualmie, WA. Phil is an ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional, ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, NPDES Certified Stormwater Inspector and currently serves on the board of the Green Communities Collaborative. In Snoqualmie, with help from City staff, elected officials and residents, Phil built a combined urban forestry/stormwater division of Public Works.

PBennett@snoqualmiewa.gov



Paul Buck

Paul has managed Plymouth, Minnesota's community forest for over 30 years. He's an enthusiastic spokesperson for the natural environment with a strong belief in the stewardship ideal of land management. He survived DED, is battling EAB and hopes his diversification efforts will spare the next forester from dealing with another epidemic (ALB anyone?).

pbuck@plymouthmn.gov



Jenn Cairo

City of Portland

Jenn Cairo has been Portland Oregon's City Forester since 2012 and a dedicated public servant in natural resources management for over 25 years including several years as a Land Manager and Senior Natural Resources Manager for the New York City Watershed, and Region Manager for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department overseeing one-third of the system. As Portland City Forester she led implementation of the city's first comprehensive tree regulations. She is a certified arborist, urban forestry professional and tree risk assessor.

jenn.cairo@portlandoregon.gov



Christine Carmichael

Fair Forestrs

Dr. Christine Carmichael is the award-winning Founder of Fair Forests Consulting. She holds a Ph.D. in Forestry with a Specialization in Gender, Justice, and Environmental Change and a Graduate Certificate in Community Engagement from Michigan State University. Dr. Carmichael has published high-impact research and consulted with numerous non-profit environmental groups and government agencies across the country and globe on ways to enhance multicultural partnerships, particularly in urban forestry, parks, and greenspace management. She is also a skilled facilitator with expertise in strategic planning and ensuring productive dialogue among diverse groups who have a stake in environmental programs.

christine@fairforests.com



Rachel Comte

Urban Canopy Works

Rachel Comte leads Urban Canopy Works (UCW) with dedication to advancing trees and the tree canopy in urban and developed areas. As an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist and urban planner, she is a leading authority on urban forestry. Rachel has expertise in both urban planning and technical arboriculture, and is a marketing and communications specialist and trained facilitator. She brings over 30 years of combined experience, including a decade of managing urban forestry master planning, urban tree policy, action plans, and consultation to cities across the United States. She has expertise in biomechanics and offers a unique and valuable skillset, including advanced risk management and technical methods (resistograph and sonic tomography).

rachel@urbancanopyworks.com



Evangeline Costa

Fair Forestrs

Evangeline Costa is Chief Strategist at Fair Forests Consulting, where she leads strategic partnerships with municipalities, corporations and community engagement for urban forestry projects across the country. Her path into urban forestry came through a non-traditional career of corporate sales with Fortune 500 companies and entrepreneurship. She brings more than 20 years of experience bringing people together to move organizations and communities toward shared goals.

Evangeline@fairforests.com



Asha-Lé Davis

Pennsylvania Horticulture Society

Asha-Lé Davis is the Education and Outreach Manager on the Trees Team at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), where she leads community-based education initiatives that expand access to urban forestry across the Greater Philadelphia region. In her role, she develops and delivers accessible training programs that empower more than 200 individuals each year to become Tree Tenders, equipping residents of all ages with the knowledge and skills to plant, care for, and advocate for trees in their neighborhoods.

adavis@pennhort.org



Lance Davisson

The Keystone Concept

Lance lives in Boise, Idaho where he has operated an urban and natural resource planning firm, The Keystone Concept, since 2011. Prior to that, Lance worked in the public sector in several western states as a land manager, forester, commercial leasing professional and wildland firefighter.

ldavisson@thekeystoneconcept.com



Sebastián Díaz Barbosa

La Maraña-Servicio Forestal Comunitario

Sebastián is a licensed Professional Planner and agroecological farmer whose work focuses on environmental issues, particularly community forestry, land-use planning, environmental justice, popular education, and agroecology. He currently serves as Co-Lead of the Community Forestry Service Program at La Maraña, Corp., where he works with communities in Caguas, Puerto Rico, to advance urban and community forestry, environmental stewardship, and forest restoration initiatives. In addition, he is Co-Coordinator of Finca El Vapor, his family's agroecological farm in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico, where he contributes as a farmer, project planner, and facilitator of educational workshops and volunteer programs.

sebastian@lamarana.org



Thaddeus Driscoll

Colorado State Forest Service

Thaddeus Driscoll is the Urban Wood Research Associate at the Colorado State Forest Service. His work includes coalition building, outreach/education, and technical advising to expand urban wood utilization between public and private sectors. He is also heavily involved in the Urban Wood Network on the Board of Directors and as the Colorado Chapter lead. Passionate about expanding urban forestry with a circular mindset to strengthen community resiliency, his favorite tree is the Northern Catalpa, and favorite urban lumber is Honey Locust.

thaddeus.driscoll@colostate.edu



Steve Duffy

Steve Duffy serves as the Forester for the Presidio Trust in San Francisco, where he leads the stewardship of one of the nation's most iconic urban forests. With more than 25 years of experience in arboriculture, he oversees reforestation, veteran tree preservation, ecological restoration, and tree risk management. An ISA Board Certified Master Arborist and Urban Forest Professional, Steve integrates historical forest stewardship with modern, science-based management practices to enhance biodiversity, climate resilience, and public safety.

sduffy@presidiotrust.gov



Jessica Einhorn

NYC Parks and Recreation

Jessica Einhorn is the Chief of Forestry Programs for NYC Parks. She has been working in the field of urban forestry for the past 15 years. She is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist and holds a BS in Environmental Sciences from The New School. She is committed to making New York City a healthier place to live through finding opportunities to promote a more equitable urban tree canopy and inspiring fellow tree lovers to pursue a rewarding career in urban forestry.

Jessica.Einhorn@parks.nyc.gov



Drue Epping

Facet

Drue Epping is an Urban Forest Planner with Facet, where she partners with government agencies to develop urban forestry management plans, design tree ordinances, and create guidance resources for key urban forestry topics. As a former municipal urban forester and current Chair of the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission, she has extensive experience in community engagement, permit review, canopy planning, and urban forest policy. Drue is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, ISA Urban Forest Professional and Board Member for Pacific Northwest ISA.

DEpping@facetnw.com



Jim Grob

Jim has a B.Sc. and M.Sc. in tree and forest biology (SUNY ESF, University of Victoria). Jim's career has spanned working for most of his career as a tree physiologist scientist for Weyerhaeuser Company, and most recently a technical and sales advisor for Profile Products. Jim currently is a self-employed urban tree production consultant, an Associate Supervisor for Pierce Conservation District, a member of the Non-profit Nursery Network leadership committee, and founder and organizer of the Urban Tree Root Quality Alliance (UTRQA).

jamesgrobwa@gmail.com



Rich Hauer

Eocene

Richard Hauer is the Director of Urban Forestry at Eocene Environmental Group and an Emeritus Professor of Urban Forestry at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. He was honored as the 2023 Alex L. Shigo Award for Excellence in Education and the 2018 & 2024 L.C. Chadwick Award for Arboricultural Research. He has authored over 200 publications and delivered over 600 talks worldwide.

rhauer@eocene.com



Anna Heckman

City of Kirkland

Anna Heckman works for the City of Kirkland, WA as a Senior Environmental Planner/ Urban Forestry Program Coordinator. Her near 30 years of urban forestry experience spans from forest ecology research and field work, to managing municipal tree maintenance programs, to consulting for development review and policy building for trees and landscapes with municipalities across the Pacific Northwest. Anna is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist and Urban Forest Professional, a SAF Certified Urban and Community Forester, and she holds both TRAQ and TPAQ qualifications.

aheckman@kirklandwa.gov



Jamie King

American Forests

Jamie King is the director of Education and Research at American Forests. He earned a BS in Natural Resource Conservation from Virginia Tech, is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, ISA Urban Forest Professional, and holds the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification. Jamie serves the Urban and Community Forestry Society and the ISA Credentialling Council where he works to elevate the people and practice of urban forestry and arboriculture.

jking@americanforests.org



David Lefcourt

City of Cambridge

David Lefcourt has been the City Arborist and Tree Warden for Cambridge, MA for over 19 years, managing a canopy of roughly 24,000 trees. He holds a BS in Environmental Horticulture and discovered his passion for urban forestry through municipal work in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. David has held leadership roles in several forestry organizations, including UCFS, MTWFA, and New England ISA. When not working with trees, he enjoys running, and playing soccer.

dlefcourt@cambridgema.gov



Sarah Low

Oregon State Univesity

Sarah C. Low has been studying trees since she noticed ants on a favorite flowering dogwood when she was 10. In the past 20 years, Sarah has planned for, studied, taught about, and managed urban trees and natural areas in multiple cities, including Tacoma, WA and Philadelphia, PA. Sarah has experience in Federal and municipal government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. This includes establishing the Philadelphia Urban Field Station with the USDA Forest Service in 2011 and founding the Tacoma Tree Foundation in 2018. Sarah is also a TRAQ qualified ISA-Certified arborist. Sarah is now an Assistant Professor of Practice and Urban Forestry Extension Specialist at Oregon State University.

sarah.low@oregonstate.edu



Dana McNally

Pennsylvania Horticulture Society

Dana McNally is the Trees Field Operations Manager at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), where she oversees the planning, implementation, and quality assurance of tree planting, maintenance and urban forestry initiatives across the Greater Philadelphia region. An ISA Certified Arborist, Dana manages field operations related to sidewalk tree pit construction, planting site assessments, tree procurement and distribution, species selection, tree health monitoring, pruning, establishment care, as well as staff, volunteer and contractor oversight. She also supports data collection, volunteer engagement and education, and stewardship efforts that help expand Philadelphia's urban tree canopy, particularly in neighborhoods most impacted by environmental inequities.

ddentice@Pennhort.org



Chris Peiffer

PlanIt Geo

Chris Peiffer is an ISA Certified Arborist and ISA Urban Forest Professional with over 15 years of experience developing urban forest management and master plans for small communities, large cities, and regions. At PlanIT Geo, he established the firm's Urban Forestry Consulting Services section dedicated to management planning, tree protection policy, and canopy goal setting, and has led or contributed to dozens of plans, with more than 30 adopted by city councils. Chris now serves as Director of Urban Forestry Strategy, where he guides plans from scoping through council adoption and supports municipal staff in navigating political, budgetary, and operational realities of implementation.

chrispeiffer@planitgeo.com



Philip Potyondy

Davey

Philip Potyondy is the national practice lead for Smart Tree Management at Davey Resource Group, Inc. (DRG). Having spent the majority of his 20+ year career with Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, he brings a unique perspective to DRG's Smart Tree services—understanding firsthand the operational, technical, and organizational challenges municipalities face. Philip is an ISA Certified Arborist, ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional, and a TCIA Certified Tree Care Safety Professional.

philip.potyondy@davey.com



Erid Román Rosario

La Maraña-Servicio Forestal Comunitario

Erid Román Rosario was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and raised in Caguas, Puerto Rico. He is passionate about botany and environmental conservation and serves as a Community Coordinator with the Community Forestry Program of La Maraña, Corp. His interests focus on the identification and collection of plant specimens that are at risk or endangered. For the past five years, he has facilitated educational workshops and guided field tours aimed at promoting environmental awareness and appreciation of the flora and fauna of the Puerto Rican archipelago.



Jehane Samaha

U.S. Forest Service

Jehane Samaha is the National Urban Nursery Specialist with the USDA Forest Service. She develops trainings and networking for both urban foresters and nursery growers to improve tree stock quality, enhance connectivity in the urban nursery pipeline, and promote adaptive genetics for urban trees. Jehane is based in Philadelphia, and previously worked at PHS (the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society) and the Morris Arboretum. She is an ISA certified municipal arborist, and completed a master's thesis at the University of British Columbia on street tree species selection. Outside of work, Jehane enjoys art and woodworking, hiking and biking, and cooking good meals with community.

Jehane.Samaha@usda.gov



Navé Strauss

NYC Parks and Recreation

Navé Strauss is the Director of Tree Planting for NYC Parks. He leads a team of over 40 professionals and operations staff who manage a large portfolio of street and park tree planting projects all 5 boroughs of NYC. Navé has been working in the Tree Planting program since 2009 and since then has helped develop NYC's tree procurement program, a robust M/WBE contracting program, a new in-house tree planting program, and most recently, implementing a 9-year strategic planting schedule to fully plant every street in NYC. When he's not working, he can be found spending time with his family and friends, playing music, enjoying trees and nature generally, cooking, or reading. Navé has a Master of Public Administration and a BA in Environmental Studies. He is an ISA-Certified Arborist.

Nave.Strauss@parks.nyc.gov



Ryan Suttle

HortScience

Ryan Suttle is a Consulting Arborist and Urban Forester at HortScience | Bartlett Consulting. His work focuses primarily on preserving trees during construction, tree risk assessment, and tree risk management. He volunteers on the CTLA in revision of the 11th edition of the Guide for Plant Appraisal, ISA's Educational Products and Services Committee, the ISA Western Chapter's Tree Care For Birds Committee, the board of the Urban Canopy Coalition, and ISA's Board Certified Master Arborist Test Committee. In his spare time, he enjoys caring for his small bonsai collection, making art, and improving his birding skills.

rsuttle@bartlett.com



Jennifer Wills

City of Longview

Jennifer Wills serves as the City Manager for the City of Longview, Washington, where she leads a full-service municipal organization dedicated to building a vibrant, resilient community with 40,000+ residents. Prior to becoming City Manager in 2025, she served as Longview's Parks and Recreation Director, overseeing parks, recreation, the municipal golf course, and the city's urban forestry program.

jennifer.wills@ci.longview.wa.us