

CATS Membership Meeting via Zoom, February 23, 2022, 9:30-11:00 am

Attendance: 49

Speaker: Liz Sargent, Historical Landscape Architect. Ms. Sargent's topic was: "South Mountain Cultural Landscapes: the Hearth of Pennsylvania."

The South Mountain Conservation Landscape is a timeless treasure of natural, aesthetic, historic, cultural, community, agricultural, and recreational resources in south central Pennsylvania. The focus of this presentation was the cultural heritage of South Mountain through the lens of trees, industry, and conservation.

South Mountain, Pennsylvania is located at the northernmost area of the Blue Ridge mountain range. Michaux State Forest encompasses more than 85,500 acres in the South Mountain area. Considered Pennsylvania's "cradle of forestry," Michaux is the site of the first forestry school, Mont Alto.

Mont Alto came about through the efforts of early conservationists. In the 1800s, the South Mountain area of Pennsylvania was being systematically logged and developed for resource extraction. By the end of the nineteenth century, Pennsylvania had been virtually denuded of trees and its land starved through ore extraction; the area became known as the "Pennsylvania Desert."

Logging and resource extraction had been necessary in the early years of settlement for the area's immigrant farmers to augment their incomes. Later, larger companies moved in and built on-site furnaces. Along with the rise of industrialization, the sight of the once glorious forest being wiped out led to a nascent conservationist movement.

Ms. Sargent discussed how using the Michaux State Forest example, one can view the history of a local population's relationship to the landscape from early depletion of resources to later work to reestablish and nurture the ecosystem. This early reforestation project, which predates the establishment of the National Park system, has led to astonishing regrowth and re-enrichment of the natural systems and quality of the local population's lives. Although the forest will never be what the Native Americans or early settlers saw, it exists as a testament to what conservation efforts in so-called "large landscapes," (expansive yet cohesive areas that transcend the legal reach of existing institutions) can yield when inhabitants and multijurisdictional organizations cooperate.

Business Meeting:

Announcements: Robin Hanes, President

The CATS spring tree sale is scheduled for April 9 at the Department of Forestry. Aromas Café will be open, and there will be trail walks through the arboretum.

Yesterday evening, February 22, the City Council heard the Tree Commission's report on the State of the Urban Forest:

- Citizens are growing more concerned, knowledgeable and active about the value of trees
- The canopy survey, done every 5 years, shows that 10% of the City's tree canopy has been lost since 2004; it is anticipated that 15% will probably be lost by the next survey. Maps of the tree canopies in various neighborhoods have resulted from this survey. Notably, the lowest amount of tree cover is in the 10th and Page and Star Hill low-income neighborhoods. (UVa and County properties are not included.)
- The City Council was urged to appreciate the importance of the Tree Commission, which is advisory only at this time
- The Tree Commission is presently working to rewrite zoning codes in an effort to promote tree canopy expansion.
- CATS is an important partner to the Tree Commission. For instance, four significant trees have already been lost due to the redevelopment at Friendship Court. As the next phases of development proceed, more significant trees may also be lost. CATS members can write to their local officials asking them to spare those trees (CATS, as a 501(c) 3 nonprofit, cannot take political stands).

The State of the Urban Forest report will be posted on the CATS website.

Treasurer's Report: Michelle Cormier

Michelle reported on FY 2021, a good year for CATS:

- Tech expenses have increased, but that's just a byproduct of CATS moving more quickly into the modern way of doing things
- CATS received a sizeable donation from the Caplin Foundation for our project at 10th and Page
- A grant from Virginia Trees for Green Water came in
- The tree sale in 2021 netted \$5,770

In 2021, CATS had \$24,000 in income and \$20,000 in expenses. This brought the budget out of the red since in 2020 CATS was down \$4000.

Making videos was costly, but they have been well-received.

Communications: Penny Kaiserlian and Libby Gretz

Penny discussed the new MailChimp format and noted that the CATS mailing list is up to 1,100 (MailChimp can accommodate up to 2,000 names).

The first CATS ad is just about to appear in C'ville Weekly with another scheduled for the end of April.

Dues: Libby asked that members pay their dues. To date, only about 50% have been collected. Libby will send out another round of emails.

Education: Mary Spear

Adam Downing from the Department of Forestry is next month's membership meeting speaker on March 30.

The new tree steward work group is close to finalizing the curriculum for the training class of 2022. Two new classes being considered are on urban trees and on advocacy on behalf of trees.

At the end of March there will be a class on how to plant trees properly. A class on identifying and managing invasives is scheduled for April.

Tree walks are listed on TIF, as is Emily's spring ID class.

In-person workshops are still suspended due to the pandemic.

Jackie Savage has volunteered to act as the Photo Librarian. Jackie is also the new Tree Basics coordinator.

Projects Committee: Kathy Nepote

The projects picked up again in February with several days for pruning and invasives removal.

Kathy urged everyone to stay on top of opportunities by checking TIF. As spring gets going, so will more days of pruning and invasives removal.

Potting parties are scheduled for March 3 and March 19.

CATS planted a memorial tree at Emmanuel Church.

Past President's Report: Barbara White

Barbara carries the wooden name tags with her in her car; contact her if you need to get yours from her.

Other Announcements:

Helen Ida Moyer reminded the group about the Virginia Festival of the Book and the session CATS is sponsoring on March 16.

Attendees discussed whether members would use PayPal to pay their dues; most would. Libby will add to her email to members who haven't paid a note that they are welcome to use PayPal to bring their memberships current.

Respectfully submitted,
Alison Brill