
OEC NEWSLETTER

Official publication of the Onondaga Earth Corps

What's the Point of Pruning?

BY MIRANDA GREGORY



A tree on Burnet Ave. before and after pruning a rotten central leader and sprouts around the base

This winter OEC has been working around Syracuse to prune city and park trees. When we prune trees, we selectively remove branches that are dead, damaged, or interfering with the structure of the tree. Pruning promotes better growth and the long-term health of our trees. Ensuring the health of Syracuse's trees will help achieve the goals of the city's Urban Forestry Master Plan, which are to grow canopy equitably, improve urban forest safety and resiliency, and connect the community to the urban forest. Trees that go without pruning can become more susceptible to pests and disease, suffer from broken branches, become a hazard for cars and pedestrians, and lose structural integrity.

Some of the first things we look for when we approach a tree are dead, diseased, or damaged branches that need to be removed. After that, we take a step back and look at the structure of the tree. Different tree species have different canopy shapes that we like to keep when removing branches. (Continued on page 4)

Upcoming Volunteer Events

Community Tree Planting
@ Willow Bay in Onondaga Lake Park, Liverpool, NY
Apr. 15, 9:30A
Co-hosted with OCSWCD. Lunch and refreshments provided.

OEC Bottle Bonanza Can Drive
@ Various locations in Fayetteville, NY
Apr. 15, Jun. 24, Aug. 19 & Oct. 21
More details on page 12

Community Garden Cleanup & Tree Giveaway
@ various locations
Apr. 22, 9:00A
Urban Delights Community Learning Farm & Pioneer Homes

Maxwell Park Tree Planting
@ Maxwell Park, East Syracuse
Apr. 29, 9:15A
Co-hosted with Onondaga Environmental Institute

Syracuse Urban Food Forest Project Community Planting
@ Kwanzaa Garden at the intersection of Midland & Furman
May 20, time TBD



Thank you to our Sponsors

Landscapes East
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Syracuse University
Rare Earth Nursery
Sauve Brothers Body Shop

Upcoming Events

FIND MORE DETAILS ON OUR FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM.
OUR USERNAME IS @ONONDAGAEARTHCORPS

Community Tree Planting

@ Willow Bay in Onondaga Lake Park, Liverpool
Sign up at bit.ly/OLPPlanting0415

April
15th

April
22nd

Community Garden Cleanup and Tree Giveaway

@ Urban Delights Community Learning Farm, Syracuse
Sign up at bit.ly/3K3fqRt

Community Tree Planting

@ Maxwell Park, East Syracuse
Sign up at bit.ly/3z4ZAP0

April
29th

May
20th

Syracuse Urban Food Forest Project Community Planting

@ Kwanzaa Garden, intersection of Midland and Furman, Syracuse
Sign up details TBA



Be Part of the Story

20 Years - Empowering Youth | Building Community

The simple story of youth as catalysts for positive change set root in Syracuse, NY in 2003

The Eli MacDonald Green Team launched as an eight week pilot project to employ youth to help revitalize the South Side of Syracuse through greening efforts. Over the past 20 years, the program has employed over 400 youth that have served over 116,000 hours, planted over 19,000 trees, shrubs and plants, and helped to lead countless neighborhood improvement projects.

Today, OEC has achieved accreditation from The Corps Network (TCN) – the national association of conservation corps. We have alumni that are business owners, tree care workers, not for profit managers, mothers and fathers, and engaged citizens. These accomplishments haven't come without their challenges.

Our journey has weathered personnel and location changes, community tragedy, broken trucks and trailers, and a pandemic. Our resilience is a testament to the young people in our program and the passion, perseverance, and dedication of our crew, staff, board members, volunteers, partners and supporters.

In 2023, we have much to celebrate and much work to do. We will be moving to a new location, implementing a new data management system, instituting sweeping program improvements and pursuing multiple new funding opportunities.

As we celebrate, we will take the time to reflect, recollect, and set the foundation for another 20 years of youth leading community resurgence and environmental conservation.

We invite you to be part of our story this year and beyond. Here are a few ways to get started.

- Share your story about how OEC has contributed to you, your neighborhood, or the environment
- Join us at one of our community events this spring, summer or fall
- Save the date for our 20 Year Celebration at Earth Corps - Encore on October 14th at the SUNY-ESF Gateway Building (invite someone new too!)
- Support our fundraising efforts
- Contact us at info@onondagaeearthcorps.org for details and information

We look forward to you being a part of the story.

Sincerely

Gregory Michel
Executive Director

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What's the Point of Pruning?

We check for sidewalk and road clearance and remove any branches that are currently in the way for cars or pedestrians and trim back branches that are growing to be in the way in the future. Next, we look for branches that are interfering with growth and structure, such as branches that are rubbing or crossing over each other, or branches with included bark that are growing too close to each other.

After we make these cuts we take another step back and check out the tree from different angles to see if there are any other cuts that would benefit the tree. If there are a lot of branches, we may remove some throughout the tree to decrease the canopy density to allow for sunlight and air to come through the tree.

This year, OEC has a goal to prune well over 1,000 trees in Syracuse. We have been working towards this goal with our staff members, Advanced Young Adult crew members, and volunteers. The efforts made this season by everyone involved will help the city get closer to the goals of a safe and resilient urban forest.



This before and after is of a tree in an open lot on Erie Blvd West. The canopy was thinned and sprouts were removed from the base of the trunk.

Winter Community Pruning at Performance Park

BY MEGAN GORSS

Pruning is a fascinating way to engage with the trees around us. It encourages us to be precise in our movements and thoughtful in our decisions – the cuts we make while pruning have long-term impacts on the health, safety, and aesthetics of the trees we work on. As the City of Syracuse strives to increase its total tree canopy by almost 1000 acres in 20 years, properly maintaining our current tree canopy – both public and private – is critical.

We hosted one community pruning event this winter to teach folks how to take care of the trees that matter to them. Everyone who came out of the woodwork did an awesome job – it was a pleasure to prune with you!



Community volunteer Dick Scheutzow makes a pruning cut. In the background volunteers and staff assess a tree before pruning.

The Trying Life of a Street Tree Named Charlotte

BY LOGAN REIDSMA



ScrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrappaapaapapEE!! CLLRRRUUUKN!!! ShzzzzuUUUCCK!!!

Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) crews are along a street in the City of Syracuse. Shovels hit the ground on an overcast spring day; a tree lawn between the sidewalk and road will be transformed today when the crew plants their next tree, Charlotte.

Charlotte is a *Carpinus caroliniana*, a tree also known as musclewood, American hornbeam, or ironwood amongst other things. They are originally from the forests of the Eastern United States, so Syracuse, NY looks like a great place for Charlotte to set roots!

Charlotte's view of the neighborhood once they are planted will be gorgeous, but as they watch the crew prep the planting site, the only thing Charlotte sees are problems. There are power lines above the site and rocks in the soil. A week ago, Charlotte was ripped out of the ground at a local nursery where they were watered and fed the best nutrients on a regular basis. Under those conditions, they felt like they could have grown 100 feet, the biggest *Carpinus caroliniana* ever! Now, looking at this new site, Charlotte isn't so confident - they're downright nervous. They remind themselves that their relatives have only grown approximately 20 - 40 feet in height. Charlotte will never get tangled in the power lines above. As they're thinking about the issues with their new home, Charlotte spots a neighbor across the street, a red oak tree shading a house. Fortunately, the 60-foot-tall red oak doesn't have overhead power lines to worry about.

Charlotte doesn't notice the crew approach them until they pick them up off the trailer - it's finally happening! Once again, Charlotte's confidence in the future is shaken when the crew members mention that the nearby soils are somewhat rocky and compacted. Hopefully they can adapt to it!

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Follow along with Charlotte's Timeline

2023

It is a few months into Charlotte's new home and they are adapting and adjusting. It has been a hot summer, but fortunately OEC crews are watering Charlotte frequently. Charlotte's roots are spreading but they are still stressed because they are still establishing themselves. Sometimes planting the tree is the simple part: maintaining the tree and setting it up for success is an ongoing effort. Fortunately, Charlotte's root flare is at the soil line so they are sturdy and have a nice mulch ring that provides protection and moisture.

2026

Winter 2026 is rough so far. Charlotte has had conversations with their neighbor, the mighty red oak, about how to withstand these tough conditions. Life is generally progressing smoothly for Charlotte. However, Upstate NY in the winter is tough for all. To add insult to injury, a car side-swiped the branches hanging in the road earlier this month and snapped a few in half. Fortunately, cyclical pruning crews were able to prune off those large wounds before they created major problems for Charlotte and the people they serve nearby.

2053

Charlotte is thriving in their environment at this point. Due to good planning and proactive management, Charlotte's human neighbors have come to adopt them as their own. Charlotte provides shade to a significant portion of the sidewalk and road. They cool the area for people passing by in the extreme summer heat. Charlotte even absorbs air pollutants from vehicles that used to speed by and their fall foliage has caused those same speeding vehicles to slow down and admire the annual show. Additionally, Charlotte reduces the flooding that had impacted the sidewalk for decades.

The nearby neighbors were originally unsure of what to think of the new street tree when it was planted. They wanted something majestic like the red oak across the street or the maple trees in the parks nearby, but since then they have learned to lean into the benefits that all trees can provide.

2078

55 years later, the City of Syracuse has lost the street tree known as Charlotte the *Carpinus caroliniana* to an ice storm. Charlotte stood strong and provided many ecological services and benefits for the local community for decades, even generations. They will continue to support the Syracuse urban forest - a Storm Crew chipped the fallen tree into mulch which will be used when a new tree is planted. Soon enough another tree will be planted in Charlotte's place and continue to give to the community.

Greetings from New OEC Staff



**ALEX HINES
(HE/HIM)
CREW LEADER**

Hi, I'm Alex Hines. I am from Syracuse, NY born and raised. I went to Fowler and Henninger High School. I played two sports: football and b-ball. I like to do anything and everything because I am down to earth to take on any challenge and experience what the world has to offer. I'm kind of a people person then again I am not.

I have many things that I would like to do such as acting, architecture, business, health, construction, art, lawyer, car detail, etc... I just want to be able to be in all fields to get skills and enjoy the work and also have life skills to survive. I want to accomplish all my goals to look out for other people in poverty.

I came to OEC because I like to work in the field personally to make the world look better. I also came to OEC because I feel more like a family here and it's flexible for me to learn as I go along for anything else in life. I also love teaching new people what I have learned. Pass it down.



Alex during a tree planting event in Spring 2022



Visit to Mercy Works during Crew Leader training



**TODD EUDELL
(HE/HIM)
YOUTH PROGRAM
COORDINATOR**

Todd Eudell is a lifetime resident of Central NY. Todd lives with his wife and children. He holds a B.S. in Sociology from Empire State College after spending four years in Cheyney University. In 2013, Todd received his M.A. in Human Services, Executive Leadership from Liberty University. Todd has been working with youth directly for the past 12 years. He initially began his career with youth in 2011 as a volunteer working in the field during his tenure at New Justice Conflict Resolutions, Inc. After many positions and titles, Todd worked at Hillbrook Juvenile Detention Facility as a caseworker. Eventually, a position was open at OEC and Todd applied for the Youth Program Coordinator. Todd is thrilled to be in his new role at OEC. Todd has a strong passion for working with youth and seeing them grow into strong adults. Todd's interests include traveling with family and spending time at Barnes and Noble reading literature.

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Greetings from New OEC Staff



**ELIAD KANE,
(HE/HIM)
CREW LEADER**

Hello, my name is Eliad Kane and I'm 21 years old. I am originally from just outside of the City of Rochester and moved to Syracuse three years ago to attend SUNY ESF. I was drawn to OEC for their connection and management of the city's trees and wanted a job where I could work outside. I am looking forward to this upcoming spring season and hope to make a positive impact on my community, both socially and ecologically. I also look forward to further developing my leadership skills and my knowledge of managing natural systems.



Kate L. focuses on making a pruning cut on W. Fayette St.



**KATE LITTLEFIELD
(THEY/THEM)
PROJECT SPECIALIST**

Hello there,

I'm Kate Littlefield and I'm the Project Specialist at OEC. This introduction is a bit overdue as I've been existing behind the scenes at OEC for the last year and a half. I excitedly accepted this position in September 2021 and have been working alongside the wonderful staff, crew, partners and community since! The avenue that led me to OEC was a bit circuitous.

I received my Associates degree at the Ranger School (SUNY ESF) in Forest Technology in 2011 then went to main campus ESF to earn my Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources management with a minor in Urban Forestry. I worked in the private sector in Arboriculture until mid 2015 when I then went back to School for a Masters degree in Landscape Architecture. During this time I interned with Steve Harris, the city arborist, and first caught a glimpse of OEC.

Following graduation, I entered the private sector once again doing engineering and landscape design. I learned valuable skills but missed being in and working with nature, which made me feel disconnected from the world around me. I then found OEC, (or rather it found me)!

I passionately believe that everyone should get to experience nature in a way that is comfortable, comprehensible and exciting for them. While the combination of skills and knowledge I have developed set me up for large scale land management, I enjoy focusing that energy into caring for the mosaic of parks and green spaces throughout Syracuse with people and nature in mind. One cannot exist without the other and it becomes increasingly important for people to continue to connect and form relationships with their local parks and trees as part of their community.

Being able to share this passion and teach others to view their environment through a different lens has been a wonderful experience and I look forward to many more to come! (teaching people to use power tools is super fun too!)

Hope to see you all out and exploring!

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Full Throttle Bottle Bonanza

BY PIETER KEESE

I am pleased to formally introduce you to Bottle Bonanza, a fund-raising initiative whose mission is to redeem returnable beverage containers with Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) as the beneficiary.

We hope to expand Bottle Bonanza in 2023 in order to make a greater impact on the increasingly vital mission of OEC supporting youth with leadership skills, civic engagement, green job training, and team building. The expansion effort of this fundraising initiative will engage a three-pronged approach:

1. Expand Bottle Bonanza's exposure with the addition of another neighborhood
2. Expand Bottle Bonanza's volunteer pool
3. Pursue interested friends and patrons of OEC for matching funds

Please consider pledging matching funds to make a difference in the lives of our community and youth. Your contribution would be greatly appreciated and will be entirely dedicated to the execution of OEC's mission.

In 2022 OEC was blessed with \$2,000.00 in Bottle Bonanza matching funds. While any amount would be greatly appreciated, pledges of \$500, \$1000 or \$1500 would have the greatest impact. If you prefer to make a one-time donation, Bottle Bonanza's 2023 budget is \$1,000.00 and is available for sponsorship. Please designate your preference: budget or matching.

Thank you for your thoughtful generosity in support of this important cause. For more information about Bottle Bonanza, visit the OEC website/donate/Bottle Bonanza to find the redemption center nearest you or learn how to hold your own bottle and can drive.

Contact Yvonne Chu, ychu@onondagaeearthcorps.org 315-565-3797, to establish your pledge.

Special thank you to Zoom Printing, Falso Drive, for lending their folding machine to trifold 600+ Bottle Bonanza Flyers and JD Middle School for their ongoing donation of bottles and cans spearheaded by Anna Endreny.



Folks pitch in during a previous Bottle Bonanza donation drive, loading up personal vehicles and OEC trailers with returnable cans and bottles. Volunteers and donors raised over \$4,000 during OEC Bottle Bonanzas in 2022.

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Greetings from New OEC Staff



**BRENT NELSON
(HE/HIM)
CREW LEADER**

My name is Brent Nelson. I have a passion for landscaping and outdoor living spaces. I love the aesthetic beauty of well thought out and well-defined landscape design and implementation. Because of a troubled past beginning when I was very young, I have a sincere desire to mentor and encourage young people to learn and develop skills that will enrich their personal lives as well as the lives of the people in their community through hard work, assessment of personal values and morals, goal setting, and an overall commitment to excellence. I look forward to working with OEC, making a difference, and having an impact in my community and a positive manner that influences people in a positive manner always.



Visit to Rare Earth Nursery with David Ryan (second from right) during Crew Leader training



Brent working in a rain garden on East Genesee Street.



**ZOIE GOLD
(SHE/HER)
CREW LEADER**

Hello, my name is Zoie Gold! I am originally from Long Island but came to Syracuse to study environmental studies at SUNY ESF. Along the way, I developed an interest for Syracuse's urban environment that I was learning and living in. Throughout my time at ESF I heard and saw some of the work OEC was doing around Syracuse. The various environmental projects, from invasive species management to increasing tree canopy cover brought me to OEC. As I started to do more research, the commitment to the community and people really stood out to me. I am very excited to begin my journey with OEC as a crew leader this spring!

Advanced Crew Members Reflect on a Winter of Pruning



Antonio Hendrix (left) with a pole snip, Nuke Gunn (center) with a handsaw, and Saadiya Sheekh-Nuur (right) with a pole saw.



**ANTONIO HENDRIX,
(HE/HIM)**

I started working at Onondaga Earth Corps as a Young Adult and now I am currently an Advanced Young Adult. Throughout the winter I was a part of the OEC's pruning crew. The thing I look forward to the most on a workday is having the opportunity to learn and become better at pruning trees. The one thing I don't look forward to is any day that it is raining because having wet clothes is not fun. One moment I'll never forget was when we spotted a hawthorn tree that was covered in mealy bugs. This reminds me of the fact that I have never seen a good hawthorn tree yet as the season dwindles. The thing I'm most proud of is having the opportunity to interact with the public and informing them on what we're doing and why we're pruning. Now that I have some experience at pruning, I would tell myself at the beginning of the season to have more confidence and that things aren't as complicated as they seem. Working at OEC I learned about teamwork and communication. After this season I want to work at any place that allows me the opportunity to work within the community.



**SAADIYA SHEEKH-
NUUR, (SHE/HER)**

This season, I acquired a valuable skill set in properly pruning trees to foster tree growth and structure support. Regular tree maintenance promotes healthy growth and minimizes the risk of damaged, diseased, and dead branches. By ensuring that the tree's structure is well-maintained, one can prevent any potential issues in the future, such as compromising branch structure or improper weight distribution. I believe that my contribution to the community through tree pruning will positively impact the longevity of these trees, ensuring they remain for the next several decades. Encouraging proper tree growth and structure will significantly benefit the community and its environment in the long run.

Bottle/Can Drive to Support Onondaga Earth Corps

Date: 4/15/23, 6/24/23, 8/19/23, 10/21/23 **Time:** 9 AM – 1 PM

Site of Collection: Fayette Manor, Cashin Drive/Brookside, Huntleigh Park and Southfield Drive

Event Coordinator: Pieter Keese 315-289-6776, Greg Michel 315-632-0080

Instructions to Bottle/Can Donors:

Bottles and cans can be dropped off at the locations below or leave them by your mail box for pick up by 12:00PM

- 160 Brookside Lane
- 208 Redfield Ave
- 318 Fayette Drive

20th
Anniversary



All proceeds benefit *Onondaga Earth Corps*, a not-for-profit organization based in Syracuse whose mission is to empower young people to be active participants in creating positive change for their communities and the environment.

Empowering Youth | Building Community



Help Onondaga Earth Corps celebrate our 20th anniversary!

www.onondagaeearthcorps.org

DONATE

For more information, visit www.onondagaeearthcorps.org/donate

Amazon Smile

Use smile.amazon.com when making Amazon purchases & select Onondaga Earth Corps as your charity.

Fund-A-Truck

Donate towards our fleet vehicles. Fund-A-Truck goal: \$50,000

Bottle Bonanza

Redeem your returnables at one of our redemption center partners: Express Bottle Return, F-M Returnables, Papa Cans and Bottle Return. Bottle and Can Retrieval. Ask them to deposit the \$ to the Onondaga Earth Corps Account.



@EarthCorps



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SUNY EOC Building

100 New St. Room 239

Syracuse, NY 13202

ABOUT ONONDAGA EARTH CORPS

When the Eli MacDonald Green Team was restructured in 2005 as Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) for local communities, OEC was formed to:

- Help youth understand the relationship between people and the urban ecosystem
- Engage youth in hands-on community and environmental service learning projects
- Train youth for future jobs and careers in environmental fields
- Empower youth by developing their leadership abilities that help them analyze situations, solve problems and implement strategies to improve their communities

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