
OEC NEWSLETTER

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Pruning Crabapple Trees



Walt pruning

Crabapples are probably one of my favorite trees to prune because they can be like a sculpture. Crabapples can have many branches that are too close and cross into each other, removing them in intentional ways to create shape and structure for the tree allows for some unique branches. Branches growing into the road, gone! Branches growing into the sidewalk, gone! Branches that are dead, gone!

BY WALTER WALKER



A freshly pruned branch



YA Crew Member Jacilyn pruning with a pole pruner

Welcome new staff!

Walter (Walt) Walker - Personal Development Team Lead



Hello everyone, My Name is Walter Walker. I'm from Syracuse, NY and I'm excited to join the Onondaga Earth Corps team. Being able to work with a great group of people who share the same interest is inspiring. The values of community support and engagement, while also improving our young people to be active members of the community is my passion and purpose as well. I look forward to the relationships and the bonds that will form from this journey.

Ishmel (Ish) Berkley - Young Adult Program Coordinator



Working at Onondaga Earth Corps allows me to be part of something bigger than myself. I've always had a deep appreciation for nature and the environment, and being able to help protect and restore the natural spaces in our community is incredibly meaningful to me. What inspires me most is seeing young people grow through this work—learning responsibility, teamwork, and respect for the environment. Being part of an organization that is building stronger communities while caring for the earth is both motivating and rewarding, and I'm proud to contribute to that mission every day.



OEC staff group photo with volunteers before surveying over 300 trees for HWA at Salmon River Falls

Plant Palettes - what are they and why are we creating them?

BY JULIA SMITH

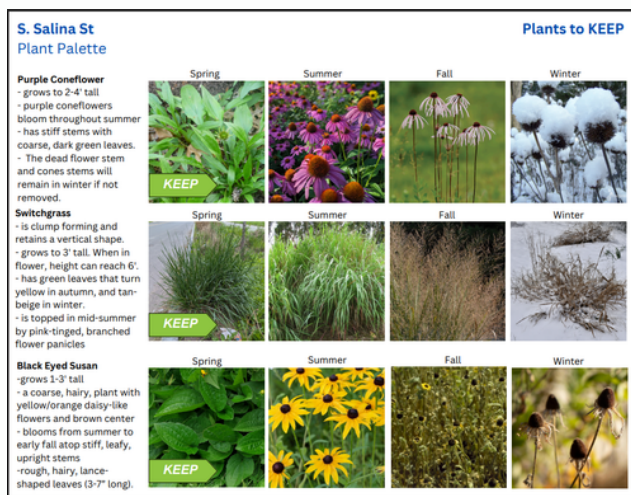
In Syracuse, green infrastructure most commonly can be referred back to the "Save the Rain" program, which is focused on using both natural processes and manmade systems to manage stormwater. This involves a variety of projects, such as rain gardens, porous pavement, green roofs, and constructed wetlands, to capture, absorb, and treat rainwater before it enters the sewer system, helping to reduce overflows and improve water quality.

OEC has been managing a number of these green infrastructure (GI) systems for over 20 years. In fact, we've been working on GI sites since we were first founded in 2004! When we work at a GI site, we must be aware of every single species of plant in it; both the plants we want to remove and those we want to keep and/or maintain. Currently, OEC is managing over 20 GI sites; from streetside bioswales to park rain gardens- that's a lot of plants to remember! By using a green infrastructure palette made specifically for each individual site, we can reference, learn, practice, and even memorize each plant prior to working on a site. Each palette contains information including the project site name, a unique list of each plant to both keep and to remove, a map of the site, each plant name, identifying tips and facts, and photographs of each plant in every season. Some plants look very different in each season, so these palettes are designed to help us by providing photographs of each plant per every season- there should be little room for confusion on a plant. See some images below for examples of the plant palette.

With the help of these GI palettes, crews now have consistent access to a clear and uniform understanding and description of each plant's purpose on a site, helping guide us all toward more direct and purposeful environmental education.



S. State Street GI site plant palette created by Julia



S. Salina Street GI plant palette created by Julia

Haiku Corner

Enjoy a few poems, complements of OEC's creative staff members!

By Logan Reidsma

snow blowing sideways
face stinging intensely
sun let's get this bread

By Ish Berkley

Warm bread from the oven
curls in the quiet air
morning breaks softly

By Terrance Castro Valdes

snow flurries around
time refracts the moment stalls
trees dance tools collide

By Julia Smith

tapping trees syrup
ice fishing in snow and cold
bountiful harvest



Homemade sourdough bread baked by Julia Smith!



Foremen Chelsea and Logan going crazy outside

By Amanda Cruty

cat prancing in snow
how many blocks must they go
psp, psp, psp, psp, psp

By Amanda Ives

tree in the power line
cool reject for mad problems
MAD all capitals

By Nate Baker

spider hunts its prey
it discovers a human
they become best friends



Logan + rare winter sunlight



Terrance enjoying a winter hike

Working Outside in Winter

BY NATHANIEL BAKER

Winter is a difficult season to work in, but the pruning is fulfilling work. We come in early in the morning and look over our maps, confirming our route for the day. Once the crewmembers show up, we brief our individual crewmember on the plan for the day. After we get our tools out the door and grab the trucks. The crewmember will help navigate for the crew leader as we visit our sites. Using tree keeper and our maps we will confirm that we are working on the correct tree. We look over the tree and confirm the work that needs to be done before we get the tools out and get to work. We prune the tree, taking breaks to make sure we are hitting the right things. After we finish we head over to the next tree and work on it next. This goes on until we go to lunch. Then we go back out and work on more trees. Occasionally someone from parks will come out and provide guidance and assistance. Towards the end of the day we will come back to the office and clean and sharpen our tools for the next day.



Chainsawing from YA Crew Member Jacilyn's POV



Nate at Selkirk Shores State Park



Terrance pruning with hand pruners



The crew at Selkirk Shores State Park

Season of Pruning

BY AMANDA IVES

What are the OEC crews doing out in the cold this winter? And why are they carrying poles with saws on them? I'm so glad you asked! We are bundling up to prune trees that were planted in years prior, which is an important part of maintaining Syracuse's tree canopy.

Everyone loves planting trees (including us at OEC). Planting creates a noticeable difference in the community and is a great way to involve people in the community in conservation efforts. But what happens if those trees are ignored for years, and then they become issues? Think of pruning as the tree's annual physical. Part of pruning the tree is checking up on it. Part of pruning certain types of trees is establishing a "central leader" branch, which allows the tree to grow taller and stronger. We also check to make sure that the trees are not becoming a problem for residents. We make sure that branches are not growing into the road or sidewalk, not just currently, but in the future. We also make sure that the trees grow in an aesthetically pleasing way. Studies show that trees that are maintained are more widely accepted and embraced by residents. Historically, the tree canopy has been ignored in disadvantaged and red lined communities, and if they are planted, they are left to become a nuisance or even a safety hazard in these neighborhoods. OEC is making sure that the hard work spent planting trees is maintained for a happier and healthier tree canopy that serves the community.

So why prune in the winter? Why not spend the cold inside and come back out in the summer months? No leaves on the trees makes it easier to make good pruning cuts, just in the right place so that the tree can heal effectively. The trees are also dormant in the winter, which means that they will lose less sap and nutrients in the winter. Since the ground is frozen, we aren't able to continue with tree planting. The winter gives the best conditions for pruning, so we make sure to bundle up!



Amanda I. pruning with a pole pruner



The crew getting a truck un-stuck at the dump



Photos captured in the field by YA Crew Member Connor Jacobs while surveying for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

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

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.



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ABOUT THE ONONDAGA EARTH CORPS

When the Eli MacDonald Green Team was restructured in 2005 as the 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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