



LOCAL SELF RELIANCE

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Trees are all too often a scarce resource in North America's cities, and this "urban deforestation" is unfortunate for a number of reasons. Streetside greenery can, for example, soften a harsh urban environment, absorb pollution, cool the hot summer air, and—most important—provide a highly visible symbol of neighborhood revitalization.

Many of today's stretched-to-the-breaking-point city budgets just don't include enough money to provide for tree planting and maintenance, however, and—even when modest efforts are made—urban trees suffer very high mortality rates. (In New York City, for instance, species that would—in the country—survive for upward of 50 years usually die in less than seven!) The problem is a combination of urban vandalism and the fact that most metropolitan tree-planting is done by city crews whose members are ignorant of basic tree care techniques.

Recently, though, community planting projects—in which residents plant and care for their own trees—have begun to reverse the trend toward greenless cities. The Oakland (California) Tree Task Force, for example, has established an urban forest—planted by neighborhood residents—in a vacant lot next to one of the city's "toughest" schools.

The Oakland group set up their planting day as a community fair ... complete with food, balloons, T-shirts, and a disc jockey from a local radio station. When the area youngsters showed up looking for a good Am, The Task Force folks showed them how to plant and care for the trees. You can be sure that—after having a hand in its creation—the students made sure their forest was protected.

In fact, only one of the schoolside trees has been lost to vandalism so far ... and the neighborhood "foresters" quickly learned that the damage had been done by a boy who had not participated in the fair. (The Task Force suggested &at he youngster plant a replacement ... he was delighted to have the chance, and the forest has been thriving ever since.)

Not long ago, the Oakland Tree Task Force re-formed into a new organization called ON TOP (Oakland Neighborhood Tree Organizing Program). The group can be reached—for more information—at 3803 Broadway, No. 2, Oakland, California 94609.

Philadelphia is another example of a city with a thriving urban greening program. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society provides young trees (at \$5.00 each) to any neighborhood in which 80% of the residents petition for the service. The Society also arranges for the required permits and provides a machine for any necessary sidewalk cutting ... while the neighborhood residents remove the pavement, dig the pits, and plant the trees.

Once the young plants are in the ground, the PHS people provide stakes and wires as needed, plus advice on tree care. This project and others like it—involving community participation—have made Pennsylvania a model "urban agriculture" state. If you'd like to know more about the commonwealth's programs, write Philadelphia Green, 325 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106.

While the Pennsylvania tree planting movement is run through the state's Horticultural Society, a Los Angeles group called TreePeople demonstrates what can be accomplished on a more personal scale ... with a project that started out as a oneman operation! Because, although TreePeople founder Andy Lipkus now has a staff of nine helpers, he began his arboreal endeavor alone . . . and his group has since helped residents plant more than 5,000 trees (of smog-tolerant species) throughout southern California. In fact, the group's education program will have reached some 15,000 people by the end of 1979! You can write to TreePeople at 12601 Mulholland Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90201.

The Boston Urban Gardeners (BUG), another "city forestry" organization, has gone to the economic "roots" of the problem and established a series of smallscale community nurseries in an effort to produce trees that city residents can afford. According to BUG, a tiny 70¢ Japanese cherry seedling can grow to be five feet tall in less than three years in an urban tree garden. (And such an established tree would sell for as much as \$30 at a commercial nursery.) The group is in the process of growing scores of affordable ornamentals ... that add greenery to land which (because of contamination from lead and other heavy metals) is unfit for vegetable gathering.

Anyone who'd like to learn more about such community-based tree planting projects as the Boston Urban Gardeners (or any of the other organizations mentioned in this article) should contact the Green Leaf Flyer ... a newsletter published by Isabel Wade, 783 Buena Vista West San Francisco, California 94117.

You can have a free catalog of ILSR's selection of books and pamphlets by sending Me Institute a self-addressed, stamped envelope. To get on the mailing list for the organization's bi-monthly magazine, Self-Reliance, send \$8,00 (\$15.00 for institutions) to ILSR, 1717 18th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Or, send \$25 (\$17 of which is tax-deductible) to become an associate member of the Institute ... and—in addition to receiving the magazine—you'll obtain a 20% discount on all other Local Self-Reliance publications.—MOTHER.s

For the past several years, the good folks at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance in Washington, D.C. have worked to help urban residents gain greater control over their lives through the use of low-technology, decentralist tools and concepts. We strongly believe that more people (city dwellers and country folk alike) should be exposed to the Institute's efforts ... which is why we're now making this "what's happening where" report by ILSR staffers one of MOTHER's regular features.

