



Urban Forestry Council Welcomes New Members

Jeff Edgar Steps Down after More than a Decade, Jeff Wolters is Appointed to Represent WGIF

The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council (UFC), established to advise the Wisconsin State Forester and Department of Natural Resources on the best ways to preserve, protect, expand and improve Wisconsin's urban and community forest resources, welcomes five new members.

They are Thomas Landgraf of the UW-Madison School of Business and Dimension Development, LLC; Vijai Pandian of the UW-Extension, Brown County; Jeffrey Treu of We Energies; Kevin Westphal of the City of Cedarburg; and Jeff Wolters representing the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation.

Members reappointed to an additional 3-year term include Dr. Robert Brush, UWSP Professor Emeritus, Dan Traas, Ranger Services, and Dr. Les Werner, UWSP Professor.

Since 1994, Jeff Edgar of Silver Creek Nurseries, Inc., has served on the council as the WGIF representative. From 2002 to 2004, Jeff acted as chairman of the UFC. Jeff was honored to be a part of the council, especially as chairman, when he had the opportunity to make the opening speech at the annual conference. He treasures the friends and business contacts he made through his activities on the UFC, and will always remember how he and his colleagues were affected personally by the events of 9/11, the same day they were in Washington, D.C., for the national meeting. He credits his time on the council as encouraging him to be more vocal with legislators.

During the later years of his work on the council, Jeff saw more controversial issues

surface. State efforts in the battle with EAB and exotic invasive species are ongoing efforts that, in his opinion, require active input from all spectrums of the industry. He is hopeful that the 20 x 2020 Tree Planting Initiative moves forward, as he sees this as a positive program for all involved. Jeff is glad to say that he has seen the council evolve from being a group made up of people from within the industry, to expand to include people with widespread and diverse technical knowledge, and to those somewhat apart from the industry but still having an effect on it, such as builders and public works directors who work in municipalities around the state. Jeff sees this "broader knowledge-based group" as an important development in the growth of the council.

Even though he is no longer on the UFC, Jeff will continue to work to promote the idea of urban forestry, which he sees as becoming more of an issue for more people as global warming and energy consumption concerns increase.

"If you don't believe trees keep areas cool, just go to Las Vegas!" Jeff remarked, when extolling the positive aspects of trees on everything from aesthetics to water absorption. Because of greater demands on his time at Silver Creek Nurseries, Jeff is not as available to go to council meetings and was not able to participate the way he once had. He decided it was time to step down. Following Jeff Edgar's decision, the WGIF board of directors appointed Jeff Wolters, the wholesale manager at Johnson's Nursery, as their representative to the UFC.

The August meeting of the UFC was the first meeting for Jeff Wolters as the new WGIF representative. As a new member, he is getting acquainted with the matters of the council. Like Jeff Edgar, Jeff Wolters would like to see the 20 x 2020 Tree Planting Initiative be implemented, and mentioned that the August meeting included a discussion of marketing efforts for the program. Other subjects coming before the council include the preparation of the annual report to the DNR, including discussions about funding and grants. Budget reductions, EAB, Best Practices, and the Urban Forestry Awards will all be given thoughtful consideration at the next meeting.

When asked about the connection between urban forestry and nurseries, Mr. Wolters cited the story of the 'Espresso' coffeetree, describing a tree that had suddenly become so popular among municipalities that it became extremely difficult if not impossible to obtain, pointing out a lack of communication. He remarked that "communication goes both ways."

To address this, he sees an opportunity for the council to be a liaison between urban foresters and nurseries. Doing so might also provide more diversification, as feedback from the nurseryman can be used to inform the choices that urban foresters have. And he sees better communication as a solution to the problem of supply and demand.

It's clear WGIF will continue to be well represented on the Urban Forestry Council.