

# It's Gonna Be a Hot One!

## 2026 WAA/WIDNR Annual Conference Program

February 15-17, 2026

Hyatt on Main & KI Convention Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin



**Annual Conference  
& Trade Show**



**Annual Urban Forestry  
Conference**



*Funding support provided by  
the USDA Forest Service*

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**Register at [www.waa-isa.org](http://www.waa-isa.org)**

## Conference Speakers

**Paul Ahlen** – Owner, Woods Walker LLC

**Zeus Arreguin** – Owner/Psychotherapist, One Step Closer Therapy LLC

**Beau Brodbeck** – Assistant Director for Field Operations/Affiliate Faculty, Auburn University

**Ian Brown** – City Forester, City of Madison

**Dan Buckler** – Urban Forest Analyst, WI DNR

**Nick Day** – Principal Program Manager, ComEd

**Joanne Edmundson** – Vice President & HR Manager, Wachtel Tree Science

**Drue Epping** – Director Pacific Northwest and West Coast, American Forests

**Jeff Epping** – Owner, Jeff Epping Design & Consulting, LLC

**John Wayne Farber** – Director of Operations, Hoppe Tree Service

**Sam Finco** – Owner, The Arborist LLC

**Josiah Georgeson** – Owner, Strider Trees

**Nate Good** – Legacy Conservation Supervisor, Operation Fresh Start/MSW Candidate, UW-Madison

**Cole Hager** – Green Jobs Coordinator, City of Milwaukee

**Joe Hansen** – Tree Preservation Officer, Village of Wilmette

**Richard Hauer** – Director of Urban Forestry, Eocene Environmental Group

**August Hoppe** – President, Hoppe Tree Service

**Laura Jull** – Associate Professor/Extension Specialist, UW-Madison, Dept. of Plant & Agroecosystem Sciences

**Jeremy Kane** – Director, Urban Tree Alliance

**Gary Kohler** – Owner, GJ Kohler Trees & More LLC

**PJ Liesch** – Extension Entomologist, UW-Madison

**Luke McCormack** – Scientist, The Morton Arboretum

**Bill McNea** – Forest Health Specialist, WI DNR

**Josh Mitchell** – Director of Vegetation Management, MiEnergy Electric Cooperative

**Johanna O'Boyle** – Owner, Ursula Minor Tree Care

**Travis Orlando** – Sr. Operations Supervisor, Wisconsin Public Service

**Eric Petersen** – President, ArboRisk Insurance

**Philip Potyondy** – Smart Tree Management Practice Lead, Davey Resource Group

**Roz Remsen** – Technical Advisor, The Davey Tree Expert Company

**Chad Rigsby** – Research Scientist, Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories

**Hallie Ringhand** – Owner, New U, LLC

**Elton Rogers** – Urban Forestry Coordinator, WI DNR

**Cody Rye** – Sr. Operations Supervisor, Wisconsin Public Service

**Dave Scharfenberger** – Retired Owner, Wachtel Tree Science

**Zack Shier** – Commercial Account Manager, Joseph Tree

**Luke Scheberl** – Instructor, Mid-State Technical College

**Thomas Schumacher** – Certified Arborist, Tree Health Management

**Bob Smail** – Research Scientist, WI DNR

**Wes Tregilgas** – Safety, Education, & Training Manager, Wright Tree Service

**Dannell Vance** – Urban Forestry Technical Services Manager, City of Milwaukee

**Robert Vanderhoof** – Research and Consulting SME, Arbormetrics

**Shelly Wolleran** – Owner/Operator, Soteria Training Solutions

# It's Gonna Be a Hot One!

The cold can't keep us away from Green Bay! Join us for another round of the **WAA/ WIDNR Annual Winter Conference!** The Program Committee put together another fantastic agenda this year. See all the details listed in this brochure. **Three Educational Sessions** starts us off on Sunday, followed by a networking welcome reception worth mentioning, where you can eat till your heart's content while rekindling old friendships. The Urban Forestry Council is also bringing back **Arbormaster Trivia** where the winners can earn bragging rights and prizes.

Monday and Tuesday include two full days of education with **general and concurrent sessions, Climbers' Corner, a Professional Development Track, the Business Track, and the Utility Track.** Visit the '**Practical Arborist Solution Sessions**' in the Exhibit Hall for a little hands-on training and ask questions in a smaller setting during Monday afternoon's Climbers' Corner. The annual

**WAA business meeting** will be held Monday evening to vote for the new WAA board members, followed by the **Exhibitor Social** with the famous blue-light special. Proceeds support the WAA's Student Scholarship Fund.

Have breakfast and take breaks during the conference in the Exhibit Hall to talk shop with all of our Exhibitors and Poster Presenters again this year. The latest and greatest innovations in arboricultural technology will be on display. **Breakfast on Monday and Tuesday will be offered in the Exhibit Hall again this year from 7:30-8:30 am, NOT AT THE HYATT.**

Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credits are available for the ISA Certified Arborist for presentations given throughout the entire conference. Also, Certified Tree-care Safety Professional (CTSP) credits will be available for qualifying presentations.

## Who Should Attend?

This conference is intended for professional arborists, community foresters, nursery professionals, park and recreation directors and staff, tree care workers, landscape architects, green industry professionals,

community administrators, volunteers, and students. For additional information on the conference, contact Tina Johnson at 262-899-0060 or [admin@waa-isa.org](mailto:admin@waa-isa.org).

## THANKS TO OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPONSORS!

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## Cancellation and Refund Policy

- Refunds will be made if requested on or before January 30, 2026 with a \$25 processing fee.
- There will be no refunds for cancellations made after January 30th, although substitutions may be permitted. Refunds will only be considered in emergency situations at the Wisconsin Arborist Association's discretion. Refunds will not be provided for registrants who do not attend the event.
- Notice of cancellation and/or substitutions must be made by contacting Tina Johnson through the Contact Us page on our website or by calling Tina Johnson at 262-899-0060. A cancellation acknowledgement will be sent within 3 working days and fees refunded within 10 working days, subject to this Refund Policy. We do not issue refunds once the event has occurred.

## Poster Presentations

- We will be hosting poster presentation sessions again this year. A poster presentation is a great way to engage with peer professionals in sharing novel ideas and experience in the arboriculture, urban forestry and landscape horticulture field. Join the poster presentation by submitting an online abstract (250-350 words, max) before January 9, 2026.
- Complimentary registration for this conference will be provided to students (only) participating in the poster presentation. This benefit is limited to one student per poster submission, who must be identified either the

primary author or the designated presenter. Lodging and travel expenses are not included.

- Posters will be on display all day Monday and Tuesday morning. Presenters will be available for questions during Breaks with the Exhibitors.
- Register at <https://www.waa-isa.org/tribe-events/call-for-poster-presentations-at-the-waa-dnr-annual-conference-3/> or use the QR code on the right.



## Ascent Event Climbing Competition

### \*\*Climbers of all skill levels encouraged to compete!\*\*

- Monday evening from 5:30-6:30pm, right before the blue-light special, the WAA TCC will be hosting an ascent event to see who is the fastest climber in GB land. Pre-registration is required. Sign up on the WAA website by February 13, 2026 to compete.
- Must bring your own saddle and PPE to compete.

- Register at <https://www.waa-isa.org/tribe-events/ascent-event-climbing-competition-at-the-2026-waa-dnr-annual-conference/> or use the QR code on the right.



## WAA Retiree Information \*\*\*New This Year\*\*\*

- To try to keep retired members engaged in the WAA, the WAA Board of Directors approved a motion to adopt a 50% conference rate for retired members with at least 10 years of WAA membership.

- Registration will be as normal, just choose the WAA Retiree rate for the conference.

## 2026 WAA Program Committee

**Todd Haefke & Randy Krouse, Co-chairs • Gary Kohler, TCC Chair • Todd Haefke & Eric Romsos, Exhibitor Co-chairs**

Adam Alves	Briana Frank	Laura Jull	Sam Prestidge	Matt Staudenmaier
Kyle Babicky	Eric Freesmeyer	Abby Krause	Ryan Rodefer	Erin Stoekl
Mitchell Berge	Ron Gumz	Jeff Laufenberg	Elton Rogers	Ryan Swope
Ian Brown	Tim Harris II	Patricia Lindquist	Tracy Salisbury	John Thieme
Laura Buntrock	Rich Hauer	John Menzel	Aaron Schauer	Jessica Tomaszewski
Joseph Crawford	Anna Healy	Vijai Pandian	Tyler Schiesser	Shelly Wollerman
Edgar Ezerietis	Fred Hoppe	Brian Pelot	Nathan Schuettpelz	

# Schedule of Events<sup>◊</sup>

## Sunday, February 15, 2026

9:00-11:00 **WAA Board of Directors Meeting** – Grand A, KI Convention Center  
11:00- 1:00 **Safety Committee Meeting** – Grand A, KI Convention Center  
11:30- 4:30 **Registration** – KI Convention Center Lobby South

## Workshop Sessions

1:00- 4:30 **Session A**  
**Bugs and Crud – Chad Rigsby and Bartlett Labs**  
Come join us for this workshop that will focus on disease and insect diagnostics and protocols. Explore in depth issues that are presenting in the Midwest and how experts view these issues in terms of long-term tree survival.

1:00- 4:30 **Session B**  
**Fundamental Electrical Hazard Awareness: All About Arborists Working in Trees Adjacent To, or In, Utility Rights-of-way – Wes Tregilgas**  
This workshop will cover the fundamentals of electrical hazard awareness, basics of electric distribution, levels of arborist qualification around energized conductors, basics of utility ROWs, and how to partner with the utility and what to expect when seeking to remove trees in proximity to energized conductors.

1:00- 4:30 **Session C**  
**Certified Arborist Exam Review – John Wayne Farber**  
Looking to take the Certified Arborist Exam or brush up on arborist knowledge? This presentation is for you! We will look at some tips for preparation, what to expect on the day of, and the bulk of the time covering the material that may or may not be on the exam and beyond.  
The certification exam is on Monday, February 16th from 12:30 – 4:00 pm (check-in begins at 12:00 pm). Pre-registration for the exam is required through the ISA by January 29, 2026. (See <https://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Exam-Information> for more information.) Pre-registration is not necessary to attend this session, only the exam. This session will help anyone learn more about the scope of arboriculture. Attend as a study session or as a review and earn some CEU's. Everyone is welcome!

4:30- 5:00 **Student and New Member Welcome** – Sponsored by the WAA Membership Committee  
We would like to welcome you to the WAA and the 2026 Annual Conference. Plan to attend to get more information on conference activities and learn what the WAA can do for you. ALL ARE WELCOME!

5:00- 8:00 **WAA Welcome Reception and Networking Program** – Sponsored by the Wisconsin Arborist Association  
• Buffet dinner, soda, beer, cash bar  
• Networking with new and old friends

5:00 **Tree Climbing Committee Meeting**

5:30 **WAA Past Presidents Meeting**

6:30- 8:00 **Arbormaster Trivia** during the Sunday night reception. Create a team and test your knowledge. Prizes for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and best team name. Sponsored by the Wisconsin Arborist Association and the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council.

<sup>◊</sup> Schedule subject to change.



# Monday, February 16, 2026

7:30- 3:30 Registration – KI Convention Center Lobby South

7:30- 8:30 Continental Breakfast with Exhibitors – or on your own at hotel Pub 333

## Morning General Session

8:30- 9:30 **Motivations, Barriers, and Opportunities for Increasing Credentialed Tree Workers** – Beau Brodbeck

The introduction of a credentialing process for tree workers revolutionized and legitimized the profession of commercial arboriculture. This presentation discusses the benefits of and barriers to certification by looking at study results on professional interest in certification. These findings can benefit ISA chapters, particularly if they seek to replicate the approach to understand motivations, barriers, and values regarding arborist certification.

9:30-10:00 **WAA President Welcome** – Ian Brown

**WI DNR Representative** – TBD

**Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council Update** – Linda Cadotte

**TREE Fund Update** – Luke Scheberl

**ISA Update** – TBD

**Meet the WAA Board Members**

10:00-10:30 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

10:30-12:00 **Ways to Benchmark Your Community Through the 3-30-300 Rule and More!** – Rich Hauer

Using science to manage the urban forest should help to inform decision-making with predictable outcomes. The 3-30-300 rule is one idea based in science to help monitor and guide decision making. The idea proposes a person should be able to see 3 trees from where they reside, live amongst a 30% tree canopy cover, and have a public green space within 300 meters. This talk will provide approaches to integrate this into urban forest management. We will discuss how to use community engagement to understand how people in a community meet the rule. We will also discuss some implications when people lack one or more of these. The talk's end result is to discuss the science and weave a practical solution into decision making. But wait, there are more ways to benchmark your community's tree population, which will be discussed at no additional cost, besides your time.

## Certification Exam

12:00 – 4:00 **ISA Arborist Certification Exam** – Must be pre-registered with ISA. Registrants can begin checking in at 12:00 pm. Exam starts at 12:30 pm. Location: Auditorium

## Lunch and TCC Awards Program

12:00 – 1:00 Join us for lunch and offer this year's TCC champions 'congratulations.' The WAA TCC Chair will hand out awards to our 2025 TCC Champions.

## Afternoon Breakout Sessions

### Session A

1:00- 2:30 **Trees and Homeowner's Insurance: A Need for Adoptions of Climate-Smart Tree Risk Assessment** – Beau Brodbeck

Increasingly frequent and intense storms, flooding, wildfires, and other weather-related events have raised insurance losses and payouts. In response, insurance companies have tightened property restrictions, including reducing tree-related risks. However, unnecessary tree canopy removal harms climate mitigation by reducing ecosystem services. This research explores trends in insurance-driven tree risk reduction and aims to improve communication between insurers and arborists. Findings will guide climate-smart practices to promote resilient urban forests and better collaboration between these industries.

2:30- 3:00 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

3:00- 4:00 **Utility Storm Work: Unloading Wires Under Tension a Teaspoon at a Time** – Wes Tregilgas

This session will show videos of the injury disaster potential and lack of control from approaching wires under tension in storm conditions the traditional way and why the practice of "tying the wires down" doesn't exactly provide safety to the extent needed. New industry approaches to solving these hazards will be shown with methods that are much more predictable, controlled, and proven successful during Hurricane Helene along with sharing some case studies of jobs that went wrong and why.

### Climbers' Corner – Exhibit Hall C

8:30- 9:30 **Take Pride in Your Pile – Josiah Georgeson**  
Tree work involves large complex operations, big expensive equipment, and a deep knowledge of trade tricks, skills and techniques. It is easy to get focused on these grand elements when looking for ways to be more profitable, when in fact it is the small things that make the biggest difference. It is the things we do every day, many times a day, where big, cheap gains are found. This presentation explains why and how some of the smallest and easiest to train habits and tricks can lead to massive productivity gains, and provides some practical ways to grow your productivity and profits for free or cheap.

9:30-10:00 **Please Attend the WAA President Welcome in Ballroom A**

10:00-10:30 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

10:30-12:00 **Aerial Rescue Demonstration** – Gary Kohler, Shelly Wollerman

Aerial Rescue preparation from the job description and walk through to realistic accidents on site, with the help of the Green Bay Fire Department. This presentation will show site setup, crew preparations, procedures and steps to successfully conduct a rescue.

1:00- 2:30 **Practical Arborist Booth Sessions** – See details on page 7.

2:30- 3:00 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

3:00- 4:00 **Practical Arborist Booth Sessions** – See details on page 7.

### Session B

**Cemetery Forests Through Different Lenses** – Dan Buckler, Elton Rogers, Bob Smail

Cemeteries are culturally significant, stable greenspaces, often hosting unique assemblages of trees. While they occupy prominent parts of our communities, they are understudied. We pull back the curtain on this common land use by placing cemeteries in the context of the broader urban forest. This was accomplished by comparing cemetery trees to existing data sets, including recently published federal data, as well as the utilization of novel individual tree detection and genus identification products derived from LiDAR and aerial imagery.

**Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

**AI for "Tree People"** – Philip Potyondy

Unlock the future of urban forestry! We'll dive into the revolutionary integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in arboriculture. From drone analysis to machine learning, discover how AI is transforming tree health monitoring, pest prediction, and maintenance optimization. We'll demystify these advanced tools, showing how AI and machine learning are becoming practical, accessible aids for "tree people." You can leverage these innovative technologies for precise, efficient, sustainable management to enhance urban quality of life.

# Monday, February 16, 2026 – cont.

## Afternoon Professional Track Sessions

### 1:00- 2:30 **Break the Stigma: Is Your Mental Health Important? - Zeus Arreguin**

This will be an educational presentation that aims to reduce stigma and provide information on mental well-being, which can include real life stories, overviews of common mental health conditions, and strategies for managing stress.

### 2:30- 3:00 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

### 3:00- 4:00 **Mental Health CPR – Hallie Ringhand, Joanne Edmundson, Nate Good**

We will give examples of mental health issues in the workplace and how addressing the physical body makes a substantial difference mentally. We will offer ideas on telltale mental health signs of when there is a deeper issue for someone and how to communicate to connect someone with the right providers and community to help them in this process. As panel experts, we would love the audience to ask:

1. What does a trauma response look like and how can I help someone out of that response?
2. What are the best things to do physically to manage mental health issues like anxiety, depression, etc.?
3. What food and lifestyle recommendations do you have to best support positive mental wellbeing?

## Afternoon Business Track Sessions

### 1:00- 2:00 **Growing Together: Exploring Opportunities with the Urban Forestry Council - Urban Forestry Council Panel**

Do you have ideas to improve urban forestry efforts in the state? Do you know that Wisconsin has an Urban Forestry Council? Whether you are a municipal forester, a commercial arborist, or are just interested in these issues, the council wants to hear from YOU! The purpose of the council is to advise the Wisconsin State Forester and the DNR on the best ways to preserve, protect, expand, and improve Wisconsin's urban and community forest resources. Join us at this listening session to get to know some of the Urban Forestry Council members, make your voice heard, and for a chance to win a "tree-rific" door prize! Copies of the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Biennial Report for 2024-25 will be available.

### 2:00- 3:00 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

### 3:00- 4:00 **Increasing Insurance Perception of Tree Risk – Ian Brown, Joe Hansen, Eric Petersen**

Some insurance companies are increasingly identifying trees as risk factors. This judgement is being made without professional arboricultural guidance. In some cases, companies are using aerial imagery to identify limbs overhanging insured property and requiring removal as a prerequisite for renewing an insurance policy. Policy holders are contacting tree care companies and/or municipalities to significantly prune or remove trees. We will discuss challenges and approaches to addressing these circumstances for the residents and clients we serve.

## Afternoon Utility Track Sessions

### 1:00- 2:30 **Innovative Remote Sensing Technologies in Vegetation Management: ComEd's Journey and Insights – Nick Day**

ComEd conducted a three-year evaluation of advanced remote sensing technologies including multispectral satellite imagery, hyperspectral imagery and LiDAR, to assess their accuracy, cost-effectiveness, and vegetation management analytics. This presentation will showcase the scope of these pilots, key insights from comparative analyses, and how ComEd is leveraging these findings to shape future strategies for predictive trimming, tree species identification and system reliability.

### 2:30- 3:00 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

### 3:00- 4:00 **Building a Climate-Resilient Canopy for Your Electric Utility – Nick Day**

Utilities in the Midwest are facing the effects of climate change now more than ever and these trends are not anomalies but rather represent a new normal. Without targeted intervention, the risk of outages caused by falling limbs and tree failures will continue to escalate. In this talk, ComEd will discuss how they used years of interruption investigations data, forecasted climate change impacts and remote sensing technologies to develop a new climate change-based trimming program.



**Monday, February 16, 2026 – *cont.***

## Special **Trade Show Events** in the Exhibit Hall on Monday!

### **Climbers' Corner** – Exhibit Hall C

1:00- 2:30 &  
3:00- 4:00

**Practical Arborist Booth Sessions** – Half-hour rotations will include a short presentation followed by a question-and-answer session. CEUs will be provided!

- **First Aid Practice and Applications** – **Gary Kohler, Shelly Wollerman**

This booth session will go over first aid practice and applications for use in arboriculture. Learn a couple of the basics needed to treat/package potential injuries on the job.

- **Chainsaw Maintenance and Sharpening Demonstration** – **Paul Ahlen**

Tree work is hard. Cutting should be the easy part! Everyone says to let the saw do the work, so let's make sure it actually can. Does your saw always start on the first or second pull? It should! Does your saw chain always throw big chips and cut like a hot knife through butter? It should! Let's take a dive into what it takes to keep our saws running smooth and cutting fast, regardless of make or model.

- **Hands On Roots** – **Luke McCormack**

In this hands-on demo, we will inspect preserved samples of fine roots as well as examples of coarse roots from potted plants. We will then discuss different types of fine roots, what healthy fine roots should look like, and what to consider when looking for fine-root rot. Next, we will inspect roots from potted plants to discuss common problems including circling roots, as well as corrective measures that can be taken before planting.

- **Advancing Your Canopy Anchor, MRS and SRS** – **Sam Finco**

Utilizing an access line to enter the tree allows for a lot of possibilities, full inspection of your final anchor point, rescue options, and work positioning possibilities. Advancing a canopy anchor presents some unique challenges and interesting solutions.

- **Ascent Methods** – **Thomas Schumacher**

We will discuss and demonstrate various techniques for ascending towards a tie-in point.



### Monday Evening Activities

4:20- 5:30

**Annual Business Meeting** – Grand BC – **ALL MEMBERS WELCOME!** ★ ★ Your vote counts! Please join us to elect our next Board Members!

5:30- 6:30

**Ascent Event Climbing Competition** – Hosted by the WAA TCC – Meeting Room B1-B3, near Climber's Corner

5:30- 9:00

**Exhibitor Social & Blue Light Special Fundraiser** – Exhibit Hall C

# Tuesday, February 17, 2026

7:30- 9:30 **Registration** - KI Convention Center Lobby South  
7:30- 8:30 **Continental Breakfast with Exhibitors** - or on your own at hotel Pub 333

## Morning General Sessions

8:30- 9:30 **Root Strategies and Leaf Tolerance to Drought** - Luke McCormack

Trees vary in their strategies and abilities to succeed in stressful conditions. Drought presents a significant challenge for planted trees as planting conditions and management can alter or limit the ability of individual trees to succeed. We will discuss different types of drought that trees in our region are likely to experience, together with the below-ground root strategies, as well as the above-ground leaf strategies that plants use to tolerate drought.

9:30-10:30 **Closing the Canopy Gap: Using Tree Equity Score for Informed Urban Forest Planning** - Drue Epping

As the oldest national nonprofit conservation organization in the United States, American Forests is committed to ensuring healthy forests and resilient forests, from cities to large natural landscapes, that deliver essential benefits for climate, people, water and wildlife. Its flagship mapping tool, Tree Equity Score, now includes enhanced features to help municipalities advance Tree Equity and close the urban canopy gap. Discover how these updates can support informed decision-making, build support among elected leaders, and strengthen advocacy for funding and implementation.

10:30-11:00 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

11:00-12:00 **Smart Tree Management: Superpower or Hoo-ha?** - Philip Potyondy

Is smart tree management for you? Want to maximize the potential of your urban forest with a data-driven, intelligent approach to tree management? This talk explores how AI, LiDAR, and cloud technology with clear key performance indicators (KPIs) move you from reactive maintenance to proactive management. Put data to work to track canopy equity, optimize risk mitigation, and justify budgets with measurable outcomes. Modernize your approach to grow a resilient, sustainable urban forest.

## Morning Professional Development Track

8:30- 9:30 **Reading the Tree Leaves: Using Clues from Plant Damage to Identify Insects** - PJ Liesch

Insects and their damage can sometimes be obvious, but in other cases we might only have subtle clues to work with. This session will help develop your diagnostic skills by shedding light on different types of feeding damage and other clues left on landscape plants by insects.

9:30-10:30 **Urban Soil Management for Trees** - Luke Scheberl

We will discuss soil management steps to improve site quality for urban trees. The discussion will include pre-planting tips as well as steps to take for established trees. Healthy soil is required for healthy trees. As arborists, we must continually enhance our understanding and management of soils to ensure the well-being of the trees in our care.

10:30-11:00 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

11:00-12:00 **Oak Decline Research Update** - Roz Remsen

Oak decline has become a widespread issue for mature oak trees, affecting some of the urban landscape's most valuable trees. Our research, a collaboration with University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point and The Morton Arboretum, investigated which site and soil characteristics are driving white oak decline in the Chicago region. We will also review The Morton Arboretum's research on oak decline on sites across Illinois. The results inform our management recommendations for addressing both biotic and abiotic factors in the decline complex.

## Climbers' Corner - Exhibit Hall C

8:30- 9:30 **Don't play Russian Roulette with Rigging** - Josiah Georgeson

Rigging operations can be supremely hazardous and frequently involve many unknown factors, and everyone will experience an unexpected outcome sooner or later. The key to a long and profitable career is limiting losses due to accidents. This presentation will explain how many of the techniques we use are a bad idea if we take a closer look at the simple math of probabilities and will offer some more sustainable alternatives to these common practices so you can have a long profitable career.

9:30-10:30 **Lanyards: Work Positioning and Beyond** - Johanna O'Boyle

Every day, we climb with a vastly underrated tool right on our saddles—our lanyard. We'll look at lanyard construction, saddle placement, using mechanical positioners, slack management, and how to get the most use out of this commonly used piece of gear.

10:30-11:00 **Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations**

11:00-12:00 **Solving Rigging Challenges Before They Happen** - Sam Finco

Anticipating potential issues that frequently happen with rigging and solutions that you can utilize to make your work flow smoother and more efficiently.



# Tuesday, February 17, 2026 – cont.

## Utility Track Sessions

8:30- 9:30	<b>WPS Electric Path to Ground – Cody Rye, Travis Orlando</b> <b>LIVE ELECTRICAL DEMONSTRATION</b> to show how electricity works on the power lines. We will go through scenarios of down power lines on the ground, vehicles, other objects and what to do.
9:30-10:30	<b>Condition-Based Utility Vegetation Management: Aren't We Really Talking About Asset Management? – Robert Vanderhoof</b> Condition-Based Vegetation Management (CBVM) integrates AI, remote sensing, and workflow technologies to shift Utility Vegetation Management from time-based cycles to a data-driven, asset-focused model. By monitoring vegetation conditions and targeting high-risk areas, CBVM enhances reliability, reduces fire risk, and optimizes resource use. Successful adoption requires embedding technology into business processes, transforming data into actionable insights that improve safety, efficiency, and sustainability while lowering maintenance costs.
10:30-11:00	<b>Break with Exhibitors and Poster Presentations</b>
11:00-12:00	<b>Cutting Time, Not Corners: The Story Behind a Cooperative's Cycle Reduction – Josh Mitchell</b> Taking over three electric cooperatives, one (the largest in size) faced a 12-year trimming cycle. In five years, we achieved a 5-year cycle without weakening clearances. Key changes: GIS-driven work planning, qualified-bid contractor pools, and risk-based specs. Beyond budget, success relied

## Lunch and Awards Program

12:00 - 1:30	Join us for lunch and support this year's award winners. The Wisconsin Arborist Association and the Wisconsin Urban Forest Council will reward the significant people, programs, and communities that make the urban forests in Wisconsin a better place for everyone.
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## Afternoon Breakout Sessions

### Session A

1:30- 2:30	<b>Don't Get Caught With Your Plants Down: Abiotic Tree Disorders, Prevention and Solutions – Laura Jull</b> Abiotic or physiological disorders are caused by non-living factors such as environmental stresses, physical, mechanical, and chemical damage, weather extremes and improper planting and cultural practices that can impact plant health and normal growth. Because plant symptoms may mimic other abiotic or biotic disorders, accurate diagnosis may be difficult. However, incorrect diagnosis and treatment can make the problem worse or pesticides are applied unnecessarily. Proper plant selection, installation, and maintenance can prevent many abiotic problems from arising.
2:30- 3:30	<b>Great Garden Designs, Healthy Trees: Never the Two Shall Part – Jeff Epping</b> Drawing on 35 years of experience in horticulture and design, this lecture bridges the gap between aesthetic goals and arboricultural realities. Jeff Epping will share his philosophy on incorporating trees into landscape design, emphasizing the critical "right plant, right place" methodology, key to successful gardens. The focus is on practical thoughts and considerations for tree selection and designing compatible and beautiful understory plantings that ensure long-term tree health, consider future maintenance needs and potential conflicts.

### Session B

1:30- 2:30	<b>Current and Future Urban Forest Health Issues – Bill Mcnee</b> What's next after the spongy moths and emerald ash borers? We will review the forest health issues that have recently affected Wisconsin's urban forest and identify important insects and diseases to watch for in 2026.
2:30- 3:30	<b>A Census of Wisconsin's Entire Urban Forest – Dan Buckler</b> Across the country, the USDA Forest Service and local partners have collected field data in dozens of major cities as part of the Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis project. In Wisconsin, this initiative was expanded to collect tree data across all urban areas. With over 1,300 permanent plots now established in the state, we will share results related to the composition, size, health condition, and challenges of our entire urban forest, not just trees along streets or in parks.

## Afternoon Professional Development Track Sessions

1:30- 2:30	<b>Urban Oak Decline: Preservation and Management Options – Zack Shier</b> The urban environment is a challenging place for trees and shrubs, and for most of the Midwest, it's only getting harder. Erratic winters and shifting temperatures can challenge tree species that have been accustomed to the winters and summers of the past 100yrs. This has been unfortunately true for many species of the mighty oak genus. Urban oak decline is becoming a more serious problem, with increased symptoms like bacterial cankers, borers, root rot, dieback and tree death. This presentation helps educate the everyday arborist on what practical methods can help, including preservation mindset and products/equipment. We'll look at real world situations where management has succeeded and failed, and discuss current options as well as future needs to help address urban oak preservation.
2:30- 3:30	<b>The Urban Woodland Project: Mapping, Insights, and Future Standards – Jeremy Kane</b> The Urban Woodland Project maps, inventories, and analyzes contiguous urban forest patches to understand their extent, condition, and character. Because such landscapes are variously defined and managed across the country, the Urban Tree Alliance is partnering with municipalities, private property owners, and schools to establish consistent baseline data and reveal the nature of Madison's urban woodlands. This presentation will share the project's origins and key findings, and explore how shared standards for analyzing and managing urban woodland systems might be developed.

## Afternoon Business Track Sessions

1:30- 2:30	<b>Growing Future Arborists: Youth and Pre-Apprenticeship Pathways – Dannell Vance, August Hoppe, Cole Hager</b> Discover how Youth and Pre-Apprenticeships are shaping the next generation of arborists. Our expert panel will share real-world experiences from both public and private sectors, highlighting the structure, key elements of success, and the value these programs create for apprentices and employers alike.
2:30- 3:30	<b>An Arborist Trek to Mount Everest (With a Safety Message) – Dave Scharfenberger</b> The goal is to get you to think outside the box of your career and personal life, while giving shameless plugs to the ANSI Z133 safety standard. Along with showing lots of beautiful pictures of Nepal that might just inspire you to take a trip!

# Hyatt on Main & KI Convention Center Information

**333 Main St., Green Bay, WI • (920) 432-1234 (local) or (888) 421-1442 (toll-free)**  
(corner of Madison and Main Streets – downtown Green Bay)

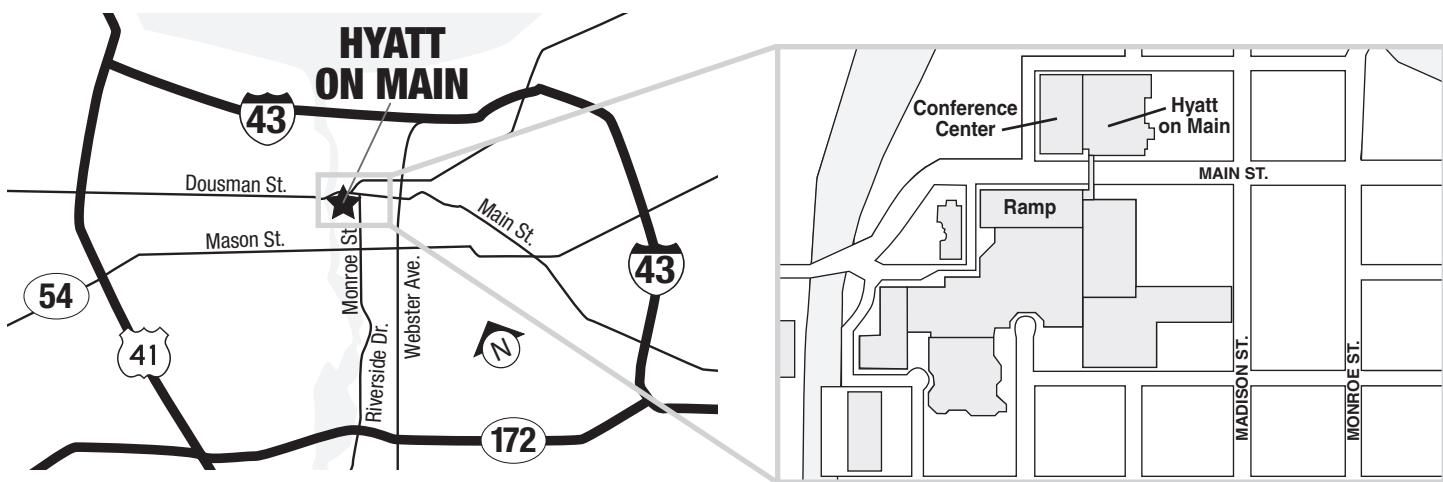
## Directions

**From Milwaukee & Illinois (I-43):** I-43 North to Webster Avenue (Exit #187), turn left on Webster, go to Main Street (3rd set of lights) and turn right, hotel is two blocks on the right.

**From Stevens Point & Wisconsin Rapids (Hwy. 54):** Hwy. 54 into Green Bay (Mason Street), cross the Fox River, take the first exit (downtown exit – Madison Street), stay in right lane and follow to Main Street, hotel is on the corner of Main and Madison Streets.

**From Madison (Hwy. 151, 41):** Hwy. 151 East to Hwy. 41 North (at Fond du Lac) to Hwy. 172 East, exit onto Riverside Drive and turn right (Riverside Drive turns into Monroe), Monroe to Main Street (about 3 miles), turn left on Main Street, hotel is 2 blocks on the right.

**From Minneapolis/Eau Claire/Wausau (Hwy. 29):** Hwy. 29 to Monroe Avenue, turn left and follow to Main Street, turn left on Main, hotel is two blocks on the right.



## Rates

**Conference rates:** \$124/night for single/double or \$149/night for triple/quad occupancy, 2 queen bed rate. For other room types, costs vary. For the conference rate, indicate you are attending the WAA/DNR Annual Conference or go to <https://www.hyatt.com/events/en-US/group-booking/GRBRG/G-N78X>.

**Please make hotel reservations before January 23, 2026.** The hotel will not hold rooms beyond this date.

## Alternative Hotels with Room Blocks This Year:

**Hampton Inn** – (201 Main St., attached to KI Convention Center) - conference rate is \$149/night for double queen or standard king. For the conference rate, please call (920) 393-1821 and indicate you are with the Arborist Group Block or use this link: <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/qrblhxh-waa-1cffa33c-0c00-4faa-acc6-6e534ca56ff2/>. **Please make hotel reservations before January 16, 2026.**

**Northland Hotel** – (304 N. Adams St., 1 block from KI Convention Center) – conference rate is \$142/night for standard king or \$162/night for double queen. For the conference rate, please call (920) 393-7499 and indicate you are part of the WI Arborist Association Room Block or use this link: <https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1758381618669&key=GRP&app=resvlink>. **Please make hotel reservations before January 22, 2026.**

## Alternative Hotels:

**Quality Inn**  
(0.6 miles from KI Convention Center)  
321 S. Washington St.  
920-437-8771

**St. Brendan's Inn**  
(0.6 miles from KI Convention Center)  
234 S. Washington St.  
920-884-8484

**Hawthorn Suites**  
(2.7 miles from KI Convention Center)  
335 W. Joseph St.  
920-435-2222

# Registration

Please PRINT clearly, or if you prefer, register by credit card online at [www.waa-isa.org](http://www.waa-isa.org).

**Early-Bird Registration and Student Registration include:** all educational sessions, Sunday and Monday night receptions, Monday and Tuesday breakfasts and lunches.

**One-day Registration includes:** the educational sessions and meals for that day.

I am  
a WAA  
member

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Early Bird Registration:

WAA member: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$300 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
WAA non-member: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$325 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
WAA Retiree: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$150 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday Only Registration:

WAA member: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$150 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
WAA non-member: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$175 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
WAA Retiree: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$ 75 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Employees:

I am  
a WAA  
member

Attendee #1 \_\_\_\_\_ \*

Tuesday Only Registration:

WAA member: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$150 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
WAA non-member: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$175 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
WAA Retiree: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$ 75 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Delayed Registration Fee:

WAA member & non-member: # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$ 45 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**(additional cost if postmarked after January 30, 2026)**

Attendee #3 \_\_\_\_\_

Full-time Students - daily rate (includes meals):

# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$45 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Date attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee #4 \_\_\_\_\_

Full-time Students - full conference (includes meals):

# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$70 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee #5 \_\_\_\_\_

Guest meals only - daily:

# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$130 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee #6 \_\_\_\_\_

Date attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee #7 \_\_\_\_\_

Guest meals only - full conference:

# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$190 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee #8 \_\_\_\_\_

**Vegetarian Meals Needed**

Monday Lunch # \_\_\_\_\_

Tuesday Lunch # \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee #9 \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee #10 \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

*(Use additional paper if necessary)*

\*Required field needed for name tags/badges

Enclose a check for the total due, payable to the **Wisconsin Arborist Association**  
or go to [www.waa-isa.org](http://www.waa-isa.org) to pay by credit card.

*Return this form and payment to:*  
**Wisconsin Arborist Association, PO Box 189, Eagle, WI 53119-0189**

NO REFUNDS AFTER JANUARY 30, 2026.



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# It's Gonna Be a Hot One!

## 2026 WAA/WIDNR Annual Conference Program February 15–17, 2026

Hyatt on Main & KI Convention Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin



**Annual Conference  
& Trade Show**



**Annual Urban Forestry  
Conference**



*Funding support provided by  
the USDA Forest Service*

*These institutions are equal opportunity providers.*

**Register at [www.waa-isa.org](http://www.waa-isa.org)**

*If you have received a duplicate of this brochure, please pass it along to someone else who may be interested in attending.*