

THE leaflet

FALL 2024



MEET THE
CHARLOTTEANS
WHO ARE

*building
canopy*

TreesCharlotte is a public/private nonprofit collaboration to grow, diversify and steward the city's iconic urban forest. Trained volunteers and science-based programs teach residents about the value of trees and how to plant and care for them.

A warmhearted welcome to fall!

A Word from our Board Chair

Dear TreesCharlotte Supporters,

This fall, we enthusiastically welcome a new planting season with ambitious plans to add more than 1,000 new trees to our canopy, distribute over 2,800 trees to our Charlotteans for their own homes, and care for approximately 1,400 previously planted trees in the city. We also offer a warm welcome to our new Executive Director, Allison Rhodes, who joined our team in September, and is already busy engaging with the TreesCharlotte community in exceptional ways.

Much like me, Allison joined TreesCharlotte because of her belief in the mission and vision of our organization, and a steadfast determination to keep Charlotte covered in canopy.

But we are not alone in our dream. There are companies, individuals, groups, and neighborhoods that are making a difference in small and big ways to fulfill the goal of growing our iconic urban forest. From signing our Charlotte Without Trees? pledge to partnering on our initiatives to discovering creative ways to keep trees in the forefront of our city, there are many Charlotteans who are doing their part to make an impact.

In this edition of the Leaflet, I welcome you to meet community members who are proactively taking steps to help protect and grow Charlotte's canopy in their own distinctive ways. May they inspire you to take action while welcoming the value and positivity that trees have in your life.

Kindly,



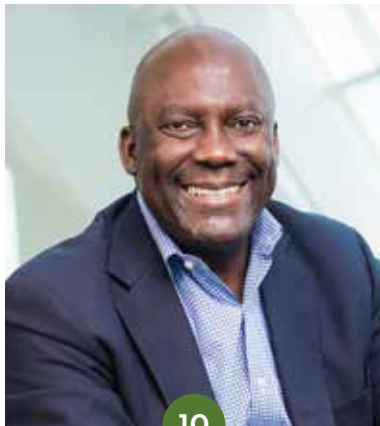
Mary N. Hall, MD



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BENEATH THE SURFACE:

soil

Ask most people to list their top three passions, and you likely won't often hear SOIL making the cut. But for our Urban Forest Educator, Heather Brent, the rich humus beneath the surface is a favorite topic.

It is not hyperbole to say that life depends on soil. Therefore, soil health is fundamental to the vitality of our ecosystem. **Soil is not dirt; it is a living, breathing substance that is composed of minerals, organic matter, living organisms, and pore spaces full of air and water.** Healthy soil supports the root systems of trees, allowing them to access the minerals and water needed for growth and resilience against pests and diseases, with no fertilizer required.

Unfortunately, many of our urban soils are not healthy at all. In most places, the topsoil was scraped away to build structures, and what's left is compacted clay devoid of organic matter. That's not to say that our Piedmont red clay is inherently bad; it is iron-rich and full of minerals. If organic matter is added to the soil, in the form of leaf litter, organic compost, mulch, or wood chips, then healthy soil will begin to build up quicker than most people think possible. You will know the difference because it will smell earthy and feel spongy. **Healthy soil not only feeds our plants and trees with the nutrients they need, but it also becomes a reservoir for water that helps mitigate both droughts and floods.**

SIMPLE STEPS TO CREATE A THRIVING ECOSYSTEM IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

- The best mulch is arborists' wood chips or shredded hardwood mulch
- Skip the dyed mulch and never use rubber "mulch"
- When applying mulch, make a layer 2-3 inches deep, and keep it 2-3 inches away from trunk.
- No mulch volcanoes!
- Don't cover the root flare, which is where the trunk of a tree meets the roots.

How can we help create healthy soil for our trees at home? Keep the soil covered at all times! Ideally, keep trees surrounded by a substantial ring of mulch out to the "drip line" of the tree (at the outer edge of the tree limbs). Mulch serves as a protective layer over the soil, helping to regulate temperature, retain moisture, and suppress weeds. As mulch decomposes, it enriches the soil and adds organic matter.



A METAMORPHOSIS IN DILWORTH

Take a stroll through Latta Park in Dilworth and it's hard to imagine there was a time when the area was anything short of beautiful. Neighbors Ruth Ann Grissom and Nancy Nicholson, however, recall the invasive plants and erosion that marked much of the landscape, as well as the time, effort, and care it has taken to get the park to the state it is in today.

To accomplish this, the duo had to literally get in the weeds. More specifically, they had to remove wisteria and the ligustrum, two invasive species that had taken over many parts of the park's vegetation. Both avid readers of entomologist and conservationist Doug Tallamy, Grissom and Nicholson combined their knowledge with assistance from Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation, financial resources from the Dilworth Community Association, and many hours of work by community volunteers, to transform 10 acres of the park into a biodiverse area filled with native plants and

trees. Thanks to the intentional selection of plant species, the park is home to many new animals, butterflies, moths, and bees as well as more than 150 species of birds.

The metamorphosis of the park has been an exercise in dedication, perseverance, and patience that requires time and financial support. Grissom and Nicholson recognize is a privilege their community has afforded them. In addition to the time and resources the Dilworth Community Association has provided to the work in Latta Park, they have supported tree equity in lesser-canopied neighborhoods of Charlotte as well through their Share the Shade program, which gives a portion of the money raised in the campaigns to a nearby neighborhood with fewer funding resources to help with their tree canopy. And their work is far from complete. Future plans for the park include the addition of 35 trees that TreesCharlotte will supply and help plant.

The idea of being a farmer while living in Charlotte may not sound feasible, but Erin Hostetler sees it differently. Her business, The Patio Farmer, takes the intimidation out of growing green spaces and edible plants in backyards, patios, and businesses throughout Charlotte, no matter the size or space available.

For Hostetler, farming is all about connection; connection to the food we eat, connection to the world around us, and connection to the process and farmers who grow our food. The connection to the green space around us extends the benefits plants and trees offer us

mentally, physically, and environmentally. “Plants do so much for us but we need to tap in and make those connections.”

Although Hostetler’s path to farming was circuitous, she possesses a family history of professional and recreational farming rich in the belief that being close to plants and trees allows us to focus on living in the moment and recognizing that we can’t control all aspects of life. Education, realistic expectations, and patience are all required, particularly when planting perennial fruit-bearing trees. Unlike their annual counterparts, which complete their life cycle in one year, perennials live for many years. They require less maintenance, but it is often several years before they produce the fruit that is a part of an edible garden. She also points out that the shade trees provide an important factor in planning an edible garden and suggests planting on the south side of trees for optimal sun and casting of shade.

A few lucky TreesCharlotte supporters have enjoyed Hostetler’s offerings after winning patio packages during the raffle at our annual TreeFest celebration held each spring. Among the services offered by The Patio Farmer are individual consultations, installation, maintenance, a master class, and a monthly plant club. More information can be found on her website at <https://www.thepatiofarmer.com>.

◀ ERIN HOSTETLER



ARISE WITH James Williams

It is rare to find someone whose persona, profession, and creative passion converge in as remarkable a way as they do for Charlottean James Williams. Landscape architect by training, Park Planner for Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation by trade, and artist at heart, there is one unifying commonality interweaving throughout every facet of Williams’ life: trees.

The significance of trees in his own life has inspired Williams to share his perspective through art, and a glance through his portfolio of work displays a unique and varied appreciation for trees of all species, shapes, and sizes.

Williams’ connection with nature began at the earliest of ages as a child in Rocky Mount, NC where his mother would often quip that he was “out riding the bushes.” In fact, he was fostering his love of trees and water, elements that resonate with him to this day and serve as inspiration in his art.

Through his education and training at N.C. A&T University and UNC Charlotte, his work designing recreational centers, greenways, and parks, and his scripture-based art, Williams has brought his skills and interests together to advocate for community, connect with nature through pen and ink culture, and share his passion for trees.

Williams’ artistic career began when his wife Joy was pregnant with their first child in the early 1990s and soon became a way for him to give space while using a medium that allows the character of each piece to come through. Also speaking in his art is a blend of self-described rebellion and his spiritual connection to the world around him.

The art shared here, titled “Arise,” is a red maple that James says embodies the tree standing up and showing its canopy. You can find more of Williams’ art at <https://treescripts.com>.





Interim Executive Director Elliott Royal, resident Jimmy Cabrera, and Board Chair Rickey Hall with the “Three Sisters.”

Three sisters stand tall at the intersection of Clanton Road and West Boulevard, yet it would be easy to drive right past and not recognize them. It would also be easy to lose the history and significance of the sisters. And it would be easier still to remove them altogether when building for the future.

But West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition Interim Executive Director Elliott Royal and Board Chair Rickey Hall won’t let that happen. The coalition, which accounts for 19,000 residents in 19 communities in west Charlotte, is working to bring Three Sister Market, a 12,000 square foot grocery co-op to the land in an area of our city that has long been a food desert.

And who are these three sisters? Though they take the form of two maple and one elm tree, they represent the African-American women who for generations have worked to improve the lives of those living in the West Boulevard corridor. Educators and advocates Rachel Parker, Lizzie Carter, and Amay Martin James were the first generation of “three sisters,” and

set in motion a succession of history and legacy of women’s leadership that extends to today.

With funding commitments in place, the market is set to begin construction in the near future. And when it does begin, the three sisters will remain. The grand trees have been thoughtfully incorporated into the site plans for the market and will not only provide an aesthetic backdrop, but will also serve as a reminder of the rich history and vibrant future the three sisters represent for the community.

Stay up to date with the progress of Three Sisters Market on social media at @3smcft and find out more about the West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition at www.westblvdc.org.



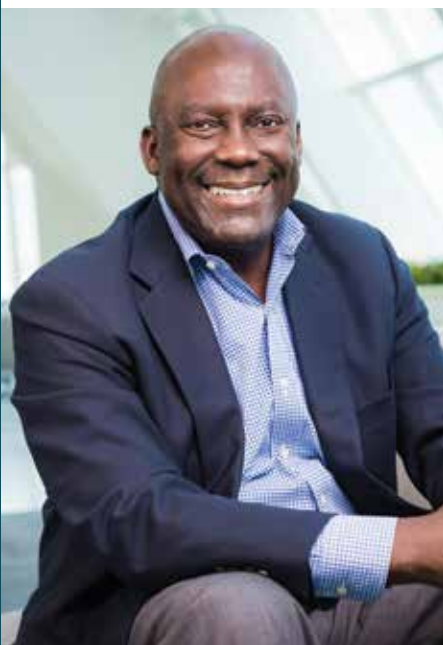
While we are encouraging all Charlotteans to sign the *Charlotte Without Trees?* pledge, we are not alone in our efforts to bring canopy preservation to the forefront of minds and conversations in our city. No one is too young or too old to join tree preservation and growth efforts and 3rd grader Brielle B. is proof. As a Brownie in Troop 7006 of the Hornet’s Nest Chapter of the Girls Scouts of America, Brielle and her fellow scouts have taken the “Girl Scout Tree Promise,” a pledge that is parallel in many ways to the *Charlotte Without Trees?* pledge.

In addition to receiving a patch for taking the Girls Scout Tree Promise, several of the 38 patches on Brielle’s vest include environmentally-focused activities. And from her interest in the pledge, she and her mother Sonia recently volunteered with Trees-Charlotte in a TreeMapping event. Brielle’s hope is to encourage her fellow troop mates and all Girl Scouts to follow suit by taking action and getting involved.

Tayuanee Dewberry, CEO of Girl Scouts Hornets’ Nest agreed and was pleased to hear Brielle is leading the way in our community. “At Girl Scouts Hornets’ Nest, we believe that every tree planted is a step toward a healthier, more sustainable community. Our Tree Promise empowers our young leaders to take action against deforestation and climate change. Through this initiative, Girl Scouts not only cultivate their love for nature but also develop essential skills to make a real impact in their neighborhoods. Together, we’re nurturing the future of Charlotte, one tree at a time.”



FIRMLY ROOTED KODWO GHARTEY- TAGOE



“TREES ARE PART
OF THE **NATURAL**
BEAUTY OF
CHARLOTTE.”

The TreesCharlotte Board of Directors is currently comprised of 15 Charlotteans with a variety of experience and knowledge, but one unifying purpose – to help our organization thrive!

Kodwo Gharthey-Tagoe is a board member who came to TreesCharlotte in a manner similar to many volunteers, staff, and tree recipients: through a personal connection. When former board member Stoney Sellars reached out to Kodwo soon after he and his family relocated to Charlotte with Duke Energy Corporation, Kodwo, who had volunteered with TreesUpstate (formerly TreesGreenville), was immediately on board.

In his role as Chief Legal Officer, Kodwo possesses a unique perspective on trees, from a personal angle as well as from a corporate viewpoint. He sees both the positive benefits trees offer as well as the challenges trees can create. “Trees are part of the natural beauty of Charlotte. Trees and other vegetation are also one of the leading causes of power outages for utilities. To keep electricity reliable, we have a responsibility to protect the lines that deliver it to homes and businesses across our region. We at Duke Energy understand the important role of trees and their numerous benefits to the environment and communities, so we work to ensure our operations and vegetation, including trees can co-exist.”

His vision is for the entire community of Charlotte to work collectively to maintain the natural beauty of the city, maintaining canopy by ascribing to the often-repeated “right tree, right place” philosophy. To that end, he actively advocates for TreesCharlotte with the City Council and most recently replaced a dead tree in his yard with a birch from TreesCharlotte. However, it is the white oak (*Quercus alba*) that most resonates with Kodwo. “It speaks to me every time I see one – It tells me to be firmly rooted, steady and strong, takes time!”

DUKE ENERGY FOUNDATION

Since 2016, Duke Energy Corporation, Duke Energy Foundation and their employees have donated more than \$225K to TreesCharlotte.

As the philanthropic arm of Duke Energy Corporation, Duke Energy Foundation offers grant opportunities and encourages employee volunteerism as a way to support the communities where they provide service. TreesCharlotte is one of the fortunate recipients of the foundation’s charitable giving by sponsoring our Treesilience Initiative.

Currently in its second year, Treesilience is a holistic tree care initiative aimed to protect and enhance Charlotte’s under-canopied and under-served neighborhoods while building community through trees. Duke Energy Foundation Vice President and Philanthropy Manager for North Carolina, Dominique Johnson, sees the Treesilience support as an example of the mission of the foundation’s guiding principles. While Duke Energy Corporation is focused on creating solutions for the clean energy of the future, Duke Energy Foundation is focused on funding endeavors that address its three principle tenants:



Duke Energy Foundation presents a check during a tree seedling giveaway event in April 2024.

- to create vibrant economies
- to enhance climate resiliency
- to foster justice, equity, and inclusion

“Treesilience aligns beautifully with our guiding investment priorities,” states Johnson, who recognizes that, along with the many health, economic, and environmental benefits that come from tree-filled communities, there is beauty in living in a neighborhood lined with robust and healthy trees. “TreesCharlotte is an integral part of making Charlotte a place folks want to live as they work to keep our community green.”

PARTNER WITH US!

You can follow Duke Energy Foundation’s lead and support the growth and protection of Charlotte’s canopy by partnering with TreesCharlotte! Our corporate partnership programs offer a range of opportunities for area businesses that recognize and support the benefit of a robust canopy. For more information, contact Development Manager Beth Brodie at beth@treescharlotte.org.

Our CWT campaign is in full swing and is quickly reaching its intended goal of challenging Charlotteans to find ways to support our city's canopy. Our pledges were created with specific Charlotteans in mind: homeowners, renters, students, builders and developers, landscapers and gardeners, and business owners and community leaders.

WHY I SIGNED THE *CHARLOTTE WITHOUT TREES?* PLEDGE

RYAN BATTLE

For Ryan Battle, CEO of Battle Capital and Founder of QC General Contractors, signing the *Charlotte Without Trees?* pledge was an easy sell. For the last 8 years, QC General Contractors has been building and remodeling homes in Charlotte, while fostering a relationship between their building process and the environment they work in. The company's unique approach and process affords QC General Contractors the ability to adapt to conditions and existing environment thanks to in-house landscape designers who are able to tailor their plans to each building site's needs.

Despite a perceived tension between urban forestry and builders, Battle sees the capacity and potential for building, canopy preservation, and growth to exist simultaneously and so they work to incorporate existing trees as much as possible and add new trees where needed. An example, a newly crafted home in Westerly Hills where a tree was preserved despite requiring extra care in the building process, which Battle saw not as an obstacle but an added charm to the property. His commitment to *Charlotte Without Trees?* includes a promise to develop with trees in mind.



The team at QC General Contractors. Battle pictured back right.

We are currently at more than 60% of our goal of 500 signed pledges by the end of 2024. Take the time today to help us get there by signing the pledge at www.CharlotteWithoutTrees.org. Below, meet two of the more than 300 Charlotteans who have signed the pledge and find out what motivated them to sign.

TESIA LOVE

When Tesia Love saw a TreesCharlotte social media post about invasive vines, her curiosity was piqued. As an ayurvedic health practitioner, Tesia's interest in wellness focuses not only on the healing techniques she practices, but also fuels her passion and knowledge in herbs and gardening. She began questioning the species that produced beautiful purple blooms and lush green growth on her own property, and quickly realized they were not the lovely plants she suspected, but were invasive species and a threat to her trees.

With that recognition, signing the *Charlotte Without Trees?* pledge was a logical step for Tesia. A native Charlottean who returned to the Queen City after living in Florida and Washington, DC, Tesia appreciates the growth Charlotte has experienced during her time away and the new amenities that growth has afforded its residents. Yet she also recognizes growth can result in a loss of green space, something Tesia has always enjoyed about the Queen City and sees as a means to balancing the stressors that come with metropolitan living. With her pledge, Tesia promises to remove and replace invasive trees on her property and control invasive vines, even if they are nice to look at.



Ayurvedic health practitioner Tesia Love.

Sign the pledge at www.CharlotteWithoutTrees.org

THE SADLER'S

place of peace

Halfway between Greenville, SC and Greenville, NC is Charlotte's own Greenville, a historically black neighborhood and our newest Treesilience partner. Among Greenville's approximately 250 households are Pop and Marie Sadler, a lively couple who have resided in the neighborhood for more than 43 years. The Sadlers are known throughout Greenville for being active and involved leaders, and now they are known for a project they have carefully constructed on land adjacent to their home: Place of Peace.

Place of Peace is a meditation garden the Sadlers created along City of Charlotte's Urban Arboretum Trail with the goal of adding a pleasant surprise along the walking and bike path for people to use to reflect, relax, and meditate. "We all need something for the soul," reflects Pop. The garden also serves as a reminder of the resilience of Greenville, a neighborhood that has historically faced challenges, including the demolition of a large portion of its homes during Charlotte's Urban Renewal project in the 1960s.

There are benches that offer respite and a boulder Marie touts as a symbol of the sacrifices of the Greenville community, reminding those who pass by that Greenville is "solid as a rock." And now there are trees. The trees are a step toward creating tree equity in an area that



Several generations of the Sadler family recently gathered to plant trees in the meditation garden.

lags significantly behind the rest of the city, with only 23% canopy in contrast to Charlotte's overall 47%.

The garden is protected and maintained through the Sadler Family Foundation, which partnered with TreesCharlotte to add 4 crepe myrtles to the grounds of the garden. "When other people buy into your dream, it is a blessing" says Pop. "Trees provide health benefits - the more we've got the better off we're going to be."

More history on Greenville can be found by searching "historic neighborhoods" at library.charlotte.edu.

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FALL PLANTING SEASON AT A GLANCE

OUR CALENDAR AND OUR TREE YARD ARE FULL!

Among the events we will be involved in during the first half of our planting season, are:

17 TreeDay Plantings

6 TreeCare Events

17 TreeKeeper Days

6 TreeAdoptions

All these will take place at:

13 neighborhoods/apartments

4 places of worship

4 nonprofit

10 parks/greenways

13 schools



Our TreeMasters at a recent TreeAdoption.



If you are interested in volunteering, visit our Event Calendar page and look for the blue flag!



JOIN THE MISSION

TreesCharlotte is a public/private nonprofit collaboration to grow, diversify and steward the city's iconic urban forest. Trained volunteers and science-based programs teach residents about the value of trees and how to plant and care for them.


TreesCharlotte's vision is 50 percent canopy coverage, city-wide acceptance of responsibility to plant and care for trees and sustained funding to continue the mission generation to generation.


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