

Utility Adapted Tree Research Production and Out Planting

Project Profile

April 2005

Project Description:

Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Transmission Programs, Power Plant Research Program and the Maryland Electric Reliability Tree Trimming (MERTT) Council have partnered with the US National Arboretum, DC Urban Forestry Administration, University of Maryland, and the USDA Forest Service, to develop, grow and test new tree cultivars with growth characteristics and tolerance of urban utility planting sites in the Maryland/DC metro area.

The research supports the need to better promote the planting of trees that will not cause interference with the safe and reliable operation of utilities while assuring continued investment in the health of urban forests. The work promotes utility-adapted tree choices with the long-term goal of bringing together partners interested in breeding utility adapted trees and developing nursery industry production protocols for selected cultivars.



The newly established National Arboretum pot-n-pot nursery is growing tree cultivars not yet tested for utility adaptability. These trees will be out planted under utility right-of ways in urban environments.

Background

This work supports the Public Service Commission Order Number 77132 issued on July 30, 2001 in response to the Governor of Maryland's request to establish a Task Force on utility preparedness due to prolonged power outages from severe ice storms in January 1999 and Tropical Storm Floyd the same year. The task force recommended that, "the Public Service Commission, the MD DNR, MD Office of Planning, and MD utilities, should jointly develop a systemic approach to routine tree pruning on both public rights-of way and private property, with the primary goal of improving the reliability of overhead lines. In Section IV, titled, Tree Trimming, the Commission directed the utilities to cooperate with Staff, DNR, OPC, and other interested parties to develop recommended modifications to the State's policies and regulations to improve tree trimming and maintenance programs by utilities.

Major Activities to Date:

- Established a pot-n-pot nursery to grow new tree cultivars exhibiting appropriate growth characteristics and adaptability for planting in urban utility rights-of-ways.
- Analyzed trees through destructive sampling to compare pot-n-pot nursery production with field planting.
- Identified out-planting locations in urban utility right-of-way environments in the MD/DC area.
- Completed plot layout protocols and site layout at three urban sites.
- Planted 46 trees at one out-planting site in the District of Columbia.

Continuing efforts include:

- Monitoring and data collection will continue through partnership activities. Tree mortality, growth and growth characteristics will be tracked. This data will be used to further develop cultivar fact sheets and promote utility based nursery production.
- A data collection methodology is being developed that builds on past Municipal Tree Restoration Efforts (MTRP).
- A web site that promotes the value of planting utility adapted trees, provides access to educational factsheets for selected trees, lists of acceptable trees, utility contacts, and links to additional resources will be developed to promote better species selection and the benefits of planting the proper trees in utility environments.

For more information, please contact:

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The project is administered by the Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council, Hagerstown, Maryland.