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NW Chapter



Some of my earliest gardening memories take me to my childhood home in Maine. My parents shared their love for the earth by example in their careful stewardship of our land. By noticing the color, texture and smell, I learned to appreciate good soil. Sometimes I think that they would be amazed to know how, what they understood so naturally is much of the science that we study today; I often imagine still learning from them in my garden.

In 2011, I retired and we moved to a much smaller house at a new development in Hinesburg. Not even a blade of grass was growing on the lot; it was a blank canvas for my creation! I do love a garden with a story – much like my Mother, who would often go to a stranger’s house to ask for “a slip” of an interesting plant growing in their yard – many of my perennials come from friends or places leaving me with fond memories. I’ve learned how to propagate many of those plants and continue to share them and their stories. One experiment has been to espalier apple trees along the backside of the garage – it was a good improvement and wicked fun!

When I took the **Master Gardener** course in 2006, followed by the **VT S.O.U.L Tree Steward** course in

2007, my intention was to learn about trees – how they grow, how they live, why they die and what we could possibly do to influence their ability to thrive in the urban landscape. With the support from both groups and in collaboration with the South Burlington City Arborist, project **TREEage** was launched. Our mission was and still is, to make a difference in our community, one tree at a time. Back then “our community” was my street; then my neighborhood; then other neighborhoods and much more. We have leveled mountains of mulch, removed tons of stem girdling roots, pruned thousands of trees and at the **TREEage Community Nursery** in South Burlington, we grow and supply most of the street trees for the city.

Our “community” has expanded but our focus has remained the same. Fun fact – during the 2020 pandemic year – I was a speaker at the **ISA International Virtual Conference** and my talk was about these programs, project **TREEage** and how we volunteers are the “secret weapons” for municipal arborists when they help us to learn and to see trees through their eyes. So, now we can literally say **our community is the world!**

I admire the study of Entomology and am so thankful for our access to the many experts who share their knowledge and advice about pest management. This is one of the necessary evils of the work we do and our struggles to manage or co-exist with pests who often have a purpose in our ecosystem too.

Although, I see no value for ticks!! With my focus on tree care, and as a **VT Forest Pest First Detector**, I have been most interested in helping with detection, education and planning related to the forest pest problems. Now that the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has been detected in VT, we join many other states where it has ravaged the Ash tree population. The [VermontInvasives](#) site is a good resource for us all to know for our plan to move forward.

Over time I have been drawn to the one thing that connects trees to the earth – roots. My obsession has evolved into an interesting journey of research, science, and problem solving that I hope to tell you about one day. In the meantime, I highly recommend these books:

[TheHiddenLifeofTREES](#) by Peter Wohlleben

[TheLandscapeBelowGroundI-IV](#) (shameless plug – in 2020 my first research paper was published in the latest book of the series; it is chapter 49 “Assessment of Root System Quality in Container-Grown Trees”)

I have been a **Certified Master Gardener** and **S.O.U.L Tree Steward** for 15 +/- years. The impact that we humans have caused on the sustainability of our delicate ecosystems is disturbing. Now, our work is more important than ever – we have an opportunity to educate, and show by our example as good stewards of our land – we are paying it forward!

Planting trees is great, but GROWING trees is different and critical! I think that most people are intimidated by trees – they are just very large plants! And yes, there are many things that we can do to influence their ability to thrive in the urban landscape. So, I challenge you to be curious and make 2021 your year to volunteer with project **TREEage**. I promise that you will learn something new when you see trees through my eyes.

The outreach and science based stewardship of these programs along with support and encouragement from EMG, VT UCF, the City/Town Arborists and so many wonderful people, like all of you, has encouraged me to lead project **TREEage** and to continue our commitment of... *making a difference in our community – one tree at a time.*