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## Tree care professionals honored at Texas Tree Conference

Oct. 7, 2015 – WACO, Texas – Caring for Texas' trees takes hard work and dedication. At this year's Texas Tree Conference over a thousand tree care professionals gathered in Waco to learn from national leaders in research, commercial and utility arboriculture and urban forestry.

"It is an incredible learning and networking opportunity for a growing field of professionals and for academics and students alike. This year, an added focus was not only on new and advanced technologies, like decay detection through sound imagery or a ground penetrating radar for root mapping, it was also on urban wood recycling and how trees are an urban asset and can be integrated in green infrastructure," Vincent Debrock, conference chair, president of the Texas chapter of ISA, and principal of Heritage Tree Care, LLC said.

The Texas Community Forestry and Tree Care Awards are held during the annual Texas Tree Conference and celebrate those who dedicate their lives to keeping Texas' trees abundant and healthy.

"I am amazed again, every year, how many wonderful people and projects we have in the arboriculture industry in Texas. Our committee works very hard to select the most deserving out of many outstanding nominations," Paul Johnson, urban and community forestry program coordinator for Texas A&M Forest Service.

2015 Award Winners:

### **Outstanding Arbor Day Activities: City of Texarkana**

Led by the city's Planning and Development Director David Orr, Texarkana's promotion of urban and community forestry in North East Texas earned them the 2015 Outstanding Arbor Day Activities award. This year's biggest impact came from the establishment of an official Arbor Day celebration and a city tree nursery. The nursery grows native trees for planting in city parks, along roads and to give to citizens in the community. Partnerships with Keep Texarkana Beautiful, Texarkana College Earth Club, Texas A&M University Texarkana, Texarkana Water Utilities and others have been key to the success of the program with a survival rate of over 95 percent for their first 500 trees.

### **Arboricultural Project of the Year: Houston Area Urban Forestry Council**

Houston Area Urban Forestry Council took home the Arboricultural Project of the Year award for their 2015 Tree Planting Competition. This year, 1,600 5-gallon trees were planted in less than two hours by 16 teams on Harris County Flood Control land. These trees will help intercept rainfall and reduce the amount of runoff that needs to be managed.

### **The Gold Leaf Award—Landscape Improvement: The University of Texas at El Paso**

The University of Texas at El Paso is the 2015 Gold Leaf Award winner for their Campus Transformation Project. With the addition of 700 trees of 24 varieties, the project revives the natural arroyo terrain that once defined the center of campus before it was replaced with roads and parking lots. Planting a variety of drought-tolerant shade trees, environmentally sensitive shrubs, grasses and plants native to the Chihuahua desert will lower temperatures and help prevent heat exhaustion.

### **Arborist of the Year: Oscar Mestas, regional urban forester, Texas A&M Forest Service**

This year's Arborist of the Year, Oscar Mestas, is a regional urban forester with Texas A&M Forest Service in El Paso. A graduate of Stephen F. Austin University with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry, Oscar is an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist, a Society of American Forester Certified Forester, and is Tree

Risk Assessment Qualified. Oscar served as editor for the Texas Chapter of ISA, founder of West Texas Urban Forestry Council, chairman of El Paso Tree Board and on the board of Keep El Paso Beautiful. Oscar exemplifies leadership, commitment, innovation, impact and sustainability in the world of trees and tree care.

The conference is organized by the Texas chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture and the Texas A&M Forest Service urban forestry department and is one of the largest of its kind in the nation.

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Photos of 2015 winners: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/texasforests-service/albums/72157659130762850>

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