

Texas Community Forestry Awards

2020

Every year, the Texas Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture and Texas A&M Forest Service partner on recognizing the best of the best in the world of arboriculture and community forestry in Texas. Usually, we recognize our winners at the Texas Tree Conference in Waco. Being recognized in front of hundreds of our friends and colleagues is a special treat.

Unfortunately, this year we're all dealing with a global pandemic, and our awards committee decided the next best way to recognize these deserving recipients is to announce their awards during #TexasArborDay.

The award is a framed, limited-edition, remarked print of a famous Texas tree by artist Ronnie Wells out of Salado. We've tried to provide a high-quality award for high-quality recipients.

First, is our 2020 Outstanding Arbor Day Award. This award recognizes individuals, organizations, or municipalities that have promoted Arbor Day through special projects, ceremonies, news articles or observations with an Arbor Day theme.

The 2020 Outstanding Arbor Day Award goes to Keep Lewisville Beautiful Arbor Day Tree Plantings.

Keep Lewisville Beautiful and the City of Lewisville Parks Department work together each year to host outstanding Arbor Day activities by hosting public Arbor Day events and tree plantings that engage community volunteers. It is true that everything is bigger in Texas-, and especially in Lewisville where they celebrate TWO Arbor Day events annually that combine plantings with education and public awareness.

KLB hosts city-wide cleanup events where they partner with the parks department to plant trees for National Arbor Day in April and Texas Arbor Day in November. City officials read their annual Arbor Day proclamation on stage with a Tree City USA flag presentation to the audience. In addition, at each event their emcees also present tree facts and talking points, ending with a raffle to give away trees to be planted at volunteers' homes.

The audience is invited to help plant trees in a city park as part of their Arbor Day celebration. What makes these Arbor Day events special, is that they engage the community on a deeper level, by allowing volunteers to make a direct connection with a call to action to plant. Volunteers are engaged with why trees are important, and then we take it a step further to get their hands dirty and plant trees in public spaces. This not only adds to the tree canopy, it creates a sense of ownership and community pride.

Next, is our 2020 Arboricultural Project of the Year. This award recognizes a specific tree care, protection, or planting project that exemplifies modern arboricultural practices and customer service. Nominees may include arborists, tree care companies, landscape contractors, organizations or communities.

The 2020 Arboriculture Project of the Year is "From Tree to Urban Forest Health – Austin's Urban Forest Health Program"

This project uses an innovative approach to manage forest health at the municipal level. By exploring new strategies, increasing public-private partnerships, and offering diverse education and outreach to the public, they are proactively managing the forest, not the trees.

Oak Wilt is best addressed at a neighborhood scale. Their approach has pivoted away from direct tree management with individual property owners. They're now focusing on partnerships that connect communities with qualified arborists.

Municipal managers are able to focus on the big picture of forest health while trees receive care at the local level. This project supports development of the arborist community including classes and workshops that help arborists earn industry credentials and refers community members to credentialed arborists

This approach leverages arborists' knowledge and skills by providing grant funding to community groups for neighborhood tree assessments. Neighborhood groups use the data collected to develop management goals for their community and the City uses it to supplement oak wilt monitoring maps.

This project provides residents up-to-date information about proper tree care. It helps them organize their response to a tenacious disease, and it taps into local communication channels to help neighbors take ownership of their local urban forest and diversify their approach to managing their trees. This project moves away from impractical attempts to manage every tree in Austin in favor of facilitating connections between tree owners and qualified professionals. In a very significant way, this project allows us to proactively manage the forest, not the trees.

Our 2020 Award for Outstanding Landscape Improvement recognizes individuals, organizations, or municipalities that have made significant contributions through tree planting, care and landscaping which enhances environmental protection, conservation, beautification, energy conservation, or wildlife protection with significant impact over the years.

The 2020 Outstanding Landscape Improvement Award goes to The Heritage Park of Flower Mound.

Heritage Park of Flower Mound is an 82-acre Community Park that was built in four phases between 2012 and 2019. Heritage Park has become a family friendly hot spot for picnics, birthday parties, playgroups, family reunions, award winning outdoor education programs, classes, and special events.

The park has several miles of beautifully enhanced trails that meander through wooded areas, multiple wildflower preserves, native landscaping, and past bronze animal sculptures making patrons feel as if they were in a national forest. The Town was determined to make this the best park in the area by including major amenities for the community's enjoyment. An educational plaza was included to allow for interpretive signage allowing residents to learn about animals, plants, trees, birds and more native to the area.

Memorial and Town "tree farm" trees were planted with each phase of Heritage Park. Over a mile of multipurpose trail and the wildlife encounter trails were designed utilizing the existing deer paths and utility easements as to minimize the removal of trees. With its completion, Heritage Park now provides a wide array of outdoor recreational opportunities and activities to accommodate a variety of users.

Our Final award is for the 2020 Texas Arborist of the Year. This award recognizes an individual for their contributions to arboriculture and community forestry. Nominees are evaluated for their leadership, commitment, innovation, impact, and sustainability in our field.

The 2020 Texas Arborist of the Year is Susan Henson

Susan is a long-time supporter of quality arboriculture and has promoted trees in the many job, teaching and leadership positions she has held in her community, region and Texas. Starting back in 1976, she worked on the City of Fort Worth landscape production crew and helped to establish the city's first tree nursery.

Susan recently retired from the City of Grand Prairie where she had worked since 1989, as their Arborist and Horticulturalist.

She managed the horticulture crew that grew, planted and maintained over 10,000 square feet of annual beds, municipal grounds, medians and ROW to include trees and shrubs. She also planted and maintained a tree and container nursery and transplanted the trees from the nursery throughout the city.

Susan has managed three Texas Arbor Day ceremonies. She completed the first tree inventory of Parks, Right of Ways and Medians in 1992, second in 2002 and recently a sample street tree inventory (included neighborhood areas) for EAB management. Her tree programs have won many awards including several Texas Community Forestry Awards.

Adding to Susan's lasting legacy will be her leadership including serving as President for: • Trinity Blackland Urban Forestry Council • Crosstimbers Urban Forestry Council • Texas Urban Forestry Council • Grand Prairie Women's Club • Business and Professional Women's Club Grand Prairie • Texas Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture and others.

Susan's husband Mike jokes that "She has to be President!" To which Susan responds, "Lead, follow, or get out of the way!" Susan deserves this award for her lifetime of hands-on growing, planting and caring for trees, her mentoring and teaching students, and her leadership in her civic and tree organizations.

On behalf of the Texas Chapter of ISA and Texas A&M Forest Service, thank you for joining us in recognizing these deserving winners. Please give them a round of applause, comment in chat, or give them a quick phone call or tweet of congratulations.

We hope to see a nomination from you or for you in 2021.

Learn more about the Texas Tree Awards here: <https://isatexas.com/members/awards/>