

September 29, 2022

Outstanding tree care professionals, projects recognized at annual Texas Tree Conference

WACO, Texas — Texas A&M Forest Service and the Texas Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture recognized the Texas Community Forestry Award winners yesterday at the 42nd annual Texas Tree Conference in Waco, Texas.

“The Texas Community Forestry Awards Program recognizes individuals, communities and organizations who have gone above and beyond to promote urban forestry through education, tree planting, resource protection and conservation,” said Mickey Merritt, Texas A&M Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program Leader. “These awards, as part of the annual Texas Tree Conference, showcase the passion that Texans have for their trees and urban forests.”

David Vaughan was named the 2022 Texas Arborist of the Year.

Each year, an outstanding individual is awarded the Texas Arborist of the Year award recognizing their contributions to arboriculture and community forestry. Nominees are evaluated for their leadership, commitment, innovation, impact and sustainability in the field.

Vaughan, one of the first certified arborists in Texas, has been a mentor to many and volunteers for countless organizations in the tree care industry.

He is a charter member of the International Society of Arboriculture, Texas Chapter and served on the group’s board of directors for three terms. He has also served on the board of directors for the San Antonio Arborist Association and Alamo Forest Partnership. He teaches classes on tree care, health and maintenance for city officials, gardeners and homeowners.

The 2022 Award for Outstanding Landscape Improvement was awarded to Houston Wilderness for the Houston Ship Channel T.R.E.E.S. program.

The award 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 Houston Ship Channel T.R.E.E.S. program, a collaboration with the city of Houston, Houston Parks and Recreation, Harris County Flood Control District and others, has planted more than 26,000 native trees. The plantings are targeted for heavily industrialized areas that have become areas of high asthma rates, heart conditions and high heat indexes. Each planting is designed to enhance the habitat and ecosystems of locations with the most need, and each planting is done by volunteers.

The plantings are credited with sequestering more than 4 million pounds of carbon dioxide, reducing stormwater runoff by more than 71 million gallons and absorbing nearly 37,000 pounds of pollutants annually.

The 2022 Arboricultural Project of the Year Award recipient is the Cypress Creek Riparian Restoration Project.

The award recognizes a specific tree care, protection or planting project that exemplifies modern arboricultural practices and customer service.

The Cypress Creek Riparian Restoration Project planted 7,100 trees along the riparian area of Cypress Creek within the Kickerillo-Mischer Preserve in northwest Houston. The project was completed on Houston Arbor Day with the primary focus of improving water quality and promoting flood mitigation through tree planting.

The project included 222 volunteers and was funded by the Bonneville Environmental Foundation's Change the Course Partnership, Arca Continental, Aramco Gas and Oil, One Tree Planted, Caterpillar Foundation and H-E-B.

The partnership was comprised of state, local, nonprofit and community organizations. They included Harris County Precinct 4 (Now Precinct 3), City of Houston Drinking Water Operations, Trees for Houston, Bayou Land Conservancy, Houston-Galveston Area Council, MUD 230 and Texas A&M Forest Service, among other local stakeholders.

The project partners used i-Tree software to demonstrate the benefits the trees will provide to the community. By providing data such as carbon capture and the number of gallons of stormwater intercepted, the partnership produced reports that counted toward the companies' social responsibility goals.

The 2022 Outstanding Community Forestry Program Award recipient is The Woodlands Township Integrated Forest Management Plan.

The award recognizes individuals, organizations or municipalities that have promoted community forestry through a program that significantly engages, educates or enhances the community.

The Woodlands Township Integrated Forest Management Plan began in 1999 with a focus on "keeping the woods" in The Woodlands. The plan combines forestry, wildlife and natural resource conservation into a program that includes an annual Arbor Day tree giveaway, an annual community tree planting event, invasive vine removal and community-wide replanting efforts.

More than 1.5 million native tree seedlings have been distributed and more than 10,000 trees have been planted through the project. In addition to trees, volunteers have also planted native shrubs and pollinator plants.

In addition to the annual community tree planting, The Woodlands purchases 3,000 trees each year. Most of the trees are planted by contractors, but volunteer groups also use the program as a way to fulfill service projects and hours. Each volunteer group receives guidance on site selection, planting and maintenance.

Award recipients were given a framed, limited-edition print of a famous Texas tree by artist Ronnie Wells from Salado, Texas, for their outstanding achievement.