

**Tree City USA & Growth Awards**  
**David S. Bienemann, Municipal Arborist**  
**Elizabeth Mays, Intern Arborist Division**

The Tree City USA program is sponsored by The National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. The program provides direction, technical assistance, public attention, and national recognition for urban and community forestry programs in many towns and cities that is home to more than 93 million Americans.

Every community can benefit from being a Tree City USA, no matter the size of the community. The National Arbor Day Foundation has summarized these benefits into six general categories. They are framework for action, education, public image, citizen pride, financial assistance, and publicity.

Meeting the four standards to become a Tree City USA gives direction for a community to develop a forestry program. The four standards to become a Tree City USA are to have a Tree Board or Department, a Tree Care Ordinance, a Community Forestry Program with an Annual Budget of at least \$2 per capita, and An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation. These standards help get a community started on their own forestry department, only to keep growing in their tree care skills.

Because of the standards, the community becomes educated on trees while they are getting organized to apply for the Tree City USA status. They become more educated as Tree City USA staff meet with professionals to learn more about tree care as the years go on. Next, becoming a Tree City USA improves the public image of the community. When coming into a city with a Tree City USA sign, it shows that that community cares about its environment. It is also an indication to prospective businesses that the quality of life may be better here. Gaining and retaining the Tree City USA recognition gives a sense of pride to everyone in the community, whether they were involved or not.

Another benefit from being a Tree City USA is that communities that are part of Tree City USA sometimes get preference over other communities from the government giving grant money out for forestry departments. Also presentation of the Tree City USA growth award and Arbor Day celebration offers many publicity opportunities.

The National Arbor Day Foundation also gives out a Tree City USA Growth Award to recognize environmental improvement and encourage higher levels of tree care throughout America. Not only does this award give recognition to those cities that have improved, it also provides new ideas to all the leaders of Tree City USA's to improve community tree care.

The City of Bowling Green has received the Tree City USA Award for 26 consecutive years and the Growth Award for 13 consecutive years. We set a state record with 55 points for the Growth Award in 2005. Our goal is expand our tree care and beautifications programs for a better environment future for our citizens.