
HEATHER WILSON

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PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Urban Forestry professional and collaborative leader with over 12 years of experience in arboriculture and urban forest management. Extensive experience developing and maintaining relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders, hiring and retaining quality staff, creating and implementing new programs, and coordinating both large and small scale urban forestry projects. Regional collaborator with established relationships across disciplines with local, regional and state governmental agencies, public and private sector groups, non-profit and for-profit organizations, K-12 and higher-education leaders. Driven to create pathways for connectivity.

EXPERIENCE

Lexington Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) – Lexington, KY

Program Manager Sr. Urban & Community Forestry, 09/2021 - present

- Manage city arborist and urban forester
- Promote the expansion and protection of the urban forest to ensure equitable access to the benefits of urban and community trees
- Provide guidance to city staff on the institution of tree care principles, and develop management standards for implementation across projects and divisions
- Work in partnership across governmental divisions to update city ordinances, articles and manuals
- Collaborate with a wide variety of entities including city staff, city leaders, residents, non-profit and for profit organizations, K-12 and higher-education leaders to initiate and implement a variety of projects - Reforest the Bluegrass, Reforest at Home, Tree Week, Lex Grow Trees
- Engage with leadership to set priorities based on needs, resource capacity and hazard assessments
- Participate in vendor selection and management process for LFUCG programs such as the Hazardous Street Tree Cost Share Program and Community Tree Pruning Program
- Create vendor contracts, requests for bids, and grant submissions
- Grant management
- Research industry best practices in support of training development and program content
- Conduct tree risk assessments and provide guidance to staff and administration on best practices
- Leverage tools and databases to define and support projects, including those focused on equitable distribution of tree canopy to promote positive human health outcomes, reduced storm water runoff, reduced heat island effects, increased biodiversity and many other city supported initiatives
- Manage budgets, tree inventories and projects

- Present updates, new information and recommendations regarding urban forestry programs and initiatives to city council, council work sessions, commissions and community groups.
- Present LFUCG tree initiatives, programs and projects at Regional, National and International Conferences
- Serve as a member to multiple boards and commissions

University Of Kentucky Department of Landscape Architecture – Lexington, KY

Part-time Instructor Urban and Community Forestry, 01/2021 - present

- Introduce students to organizations and initiatives in urban and community forestry and guide development of capstone project centered on perceived needs or selected topics
- Engage with students on a variety of applied projects and processes in urban and community forestry
- Serve as a liaison between academia and practical implementation of projects
- Connect students with individuals in the community involved in urban and community forestry work
- Provide real world experience and expertise
- Develop career pathway awareness for students

Lexington Fayette Urban County Government – Lexington, KY

City Arborist, 08/2016 - 09/2021

- Developed and implemented operational protocol for tree care and horticulture crews
- Built the urban forestry operations crew
- Managed the daily operations of the tree care and horticultural crews, assigning work as appropriate
- Conducted tree risk assessments
- Consulted with leadership, colleagues, staff and community members on proper tree care for healthy urban forests per industry standards and best management practices
- Inventoried over 300 trees, assessed diversity, and monitored health
- Used aerial photos, GPS data and satellite maps for tree planting initiatives
- Led community education projects on benefits of trees
- Worked collaboratively with community partners on tree care and planting projects
- Planned and implemented projects for conservation of wildlife habitat and soil and water quality including Reforest the Bluegrass and Reforest at Home where more than 5000 tree seedlings are planted (since 1999) and 3000 tree seedlings are given to residents (since 2020), annually
- Managed time efficiently to complete tasks within deadlines
- Tracked budgets, tree inventories and projects in Microsoft Excel
- Supported landscaping operations using design, functionality, and standards as paramount principles
- Served as LFUCG representative during neighborhood meetings

Dave Leonard Tree Specialists – Lexington, KY

Plant Health Care Specialist, 06/2011 - 08/2016

- Attended training programs to maintain certifications, to broaden professional skillset, and to continue engaging with the community
- Provided tree care assessments and expert advice and introduced services to address specific concerns
- Developed and maintained relationships with clients and partners to build trust with clients and to drive growth for the company
- Identified tree health, pest, and disease problems, and made appropriate integrated pest management (IPM) applications, timelines, and budgets
- Grew plant health care program by developing new client offerings including an organic landscape care program and a compost tea program
- Hired, trained, managed, and retained employees
- Cultivated positive relationships with vendors
- Gathered, organized, and input information into Microsoft Excel and client management software

EDUCATION

Master of Science: Forestry, 05/2011

University of Kentucky - Lexington

Bachelor of Science: Forestry, 05/2004

University of Kentucky - Lexington

CERTIFICATIONS

- ISA Certified Arborist KY-0805AM
- ISA Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist KY-0805AM
- Tree Risk Assessment Qualification

PUBLICATIONS

Wilson, H.N., Arthur, M.A., Schorgendorfer, A., Paratley, R.D., Lee, B.D., & McEwan, R.W. (2013). Site characteristics as predictors of *Lonicera maackii* in second-growth forests of Central Kentucky, USA. *Natural Areas Journal*, 33(2), 189-198.