

# Forests

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## Wildland Firefighting: Neighbors Helping Neighbors

**Abbey Driscoll, Public Affairs Specialist**

Rural landowners are taking the initiative to reduce wildfire threats in Oregon. And thanks to recent funding by the Oregon State Legislature, the Oregon Department of Forestry has awarded \$1.2 million in grants to Rangeland Fire Protection Associations and the counties in which they operate.

Because of their proximity and knowledge of the land, RFPAs are frequently the first line of defense for range fires that often start by lightning. “These men and women are often first on the scene of a wildfire, and many fires are kept small because of their initial attack,” said Marvin Vetter, ODF’s RFPA Coordinator.

RFPAs are made up of ranchers who come together to form a volunteer firefighting program. These associations are approved by Oregon’s Board of Forestry to protect private and state rangeland within a geographic boundary and work cooperatively with the Bureau of Land Management, ODF and counties. Located in central and eastern Oregon, the twenty RFPAs protect 4 million acres of private land and more than 600,000 acres of state lands.

“Landowners are critical to the firefighting effort. When federal, state and local fire organizations come together with private landowners, all outcomes are more successful,” said Baker County Fire Division Manager Gary Timm.

Administered in partnership by ODF and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, grant funds are being used for equipment, training and administrative support. They range from \$7,000 to \$94,000 and depend on RFPA size and amount of sage grouse habitat within its boundary. Counties with RFPAs also benefit and are using funds to assist with additional firefighting classes, communication tools and personal protective equipment.

“Given proper resources and training, RFPAs can continue to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires. It’s the fires we don’t hear about we’re grateful for, and that’s in part thanks to this neighbor-helping-neighbor effort,” adds Vetter. 🌲



Photo by  
Marvin Vetter, ODF



Photo by Marvin Vetter, ODF

▲ Photo above: Ashes from the Morgan Creek Fire along the Snake River.

◀ Photo left: Smoke and flames from the Cedar Creek Fire.

# What is an Arborist?

## Cynthia Orlando, Public Affairs Specialist

When problems or questions arise about trees and tree care, such as site-appropriate tree choices or proper pruning, who can we turn to? The best answer is usually, “an arborist.”

The trees in our communities provide us with clean air and clean water, wildlife habitat and lower costs for treating storm water. Attractive, well-cared-for trees are also an investment that can lead to substantial returns, including enhancing property values. However, for even the most ardent tree-lover, all of these benefits can pale when one’s trees look unhealthy or appear to threaten life and property. An arborist is a professional who cares for, prunes and maintains trees and shrubs and is often called upon to evaluate the condition of trees, make recommendations for their care and provide services including control of disease and insects. They may specialize in one or more arboriculture disciplines, like climbing and pruning, diagnosis and treatment or report writing and consultation.

## What is an “ISA-certified” arborist?

For more than 30 years, the International Society of Arboriculture has promoted and built the professionalism and expertise of the arboriculture profession.



Photo by Cynthia Orlando, ODF



Photo by Cynthia Orlando, ODF

▲ Consulting arborist Morgan Holen, above, makes recommendations to developers so trees are protected during construction.

To do this, ISA implemented rigorous standards for its certification program, which requires an arborist to pass a demanding exam, have at least 3 experience and maintain Continuing Education Units. In recent years, the ISA has increased its professional credentialing for municipal specialists, utility foresters and tree workers.

## Consulting arborists

Among their many duties, consulting arborists evaluate existing trees and provide management recommendations, assess risk potential, conduct landscape appraisals and guide the protection of trees during land development.

Morgan Holen, for example, a consulting arborist with Morgan Holen & Associates, writes reports for a variety of clients that include developers, the Oregon Zoo and municipalities such as the City of Wilsonville. Holen makes recommendations to developers so trees are protected during construction and city codes are met. She’s often busy collecting tree inventory data, reviewing city tree codes or working with civil engineers and landscape architects to develop tree

◀ EWEB’s Chris Hoffman, left, is part of a 4-person team responsible for pruning near power lines to maintain minimum clearance for vegetation as outlined by the Oregon Public Utility Commission.

protection plans.

“After a tree plan is finalized by the design team,” says Holen, “I write the arborist report.” Holen develops tree protection specifications to preserve mature trees which ultimately beautify the site and enhance environmental and economic benefits. “Generally, the earlier I’m brought into the process, the better the outcome,” she adds.

Hazard tree risk assessments are another aspect of Holen’s consulting practice, as well as expert witness work often related to insurance claims or arbitration.

## Utility arborists

Arborists who choose to specialize in working near power lines are called utility arborists. Utility arborists are committed to the maintenance of trees and other vegetation and to ensuring the safe, reliable distribution of energy like electricity to businesses and residences. Additional training is required for arborists who work near power lines as they must maintain minimum clearance for vegetation to energized facilities. Many people don’t realize these minimum distances come from the Oregon Public Utility Commission and are laid out in Oregon Administrative Rules.

One such arborist is Chris Hoffman with the Eugene Water and Electric Board.

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## Chinese Fringetree (*Chionanthus retusus*)

This attractive deciduous flowering tree features fragrant pure white flowers and thick, fissured bark. Easy to grow, it makes an excellent accent or specimen tree in the landscape, and is also popular as a street tree.

Its crown is round or vase-shaped and, although the tree often grows with several trunks, it can be structurally pruned to grow with a single trunk. There are male and female forms and it's a good choice for a small yard. While the males flower more than the females, the females produce eye-catching dark blue berries enjoyed by birds in late summer.

It is a slow grower but is generally pest-free and grows in both part shade and full sun. Water deeply during periods of extended drought. 🍷

**Flowers, bark, and mature Chinese Fringetree, right. This is an easy-to-grow tree with fragrant white flowers.**

Photo top left by John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org  
Photos bottom left and right by T. Davis Sydnor, Ohio State Univ., Bugwood.org



## news briefs

### Help available for small woodland owners



Photo by Cynthia Orlando, ODF.

#### **Cost-share funding for stewardship plans now available.**

Cost-share funding is available for landowners who need to prepare or revise stewardship plans for their lands. Most forest stewardship management plans describe the property and its features and outline the landowner's long and short-term objectives. Remember, management plans are frequently required in order to qualify for other funding – especially federally funded programs.

**For more info:** Thomas E. Wittington 503-945-7399 or click on "Forest Stewardship Program" here: [oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/GrantsIncentives.aspx](http://oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/GrantsIncentives.aspx)

### New tree care book for tablets

The saying "Right-Tree-Right-Place" is, for some, often easier said than done. To help people succeed, a new app for Android and iOS users called "Selecting, Planting and Caring for a New Tree" is now available, thanks to Oregon State University Extension Service. For those without tablets, a downloadable publication is also available.



**For more info:** [catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1438](http://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1438)

### Older trees the focus of this year's Urban Forestry Conference

If you've ever had an interest in trees, their benefits and care and urban forestry, now would be a good time to look into attending the annual **Urban and Community Forestry conference** that takes place June 2 at Portland's World Forestry Center.

Sponsored by the Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Community Trees and the US Forest Service, the theme of this year's conference is "Maintaining Magnificence – Preserving Old trees in Urban Areas."

**For more info:** [oregoncommunitytrees.org](http://oregoncommunitytrees.org)



Photo by Cynthia Orlando, ODF

Participants at last year's conference enjoyed a variety of speakers including ODF's Paul Ries and keynote speaker Erica Smith Fichman with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation.

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## Forests for Oregon

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## What is an Arborist? (continued)

Hoffman, an arborist certified by the I.S.A., has been with EWEB for four years and is part of a four-person team of arborists. Hoffman's duties include tree inspections, overseeing the work of tree crews and customer relations - including notifying homeowners in advance of line clearance operations such as pruning. He also tracks the number of trees requiring on-site work - such as climbing or bucket work - by geographical area to inventory work progress and gauge accomplishments.

"We have approximately 700 miles of

overhead power lines," says Hoffman, "all our lines must be inspected every two years." Much of the associated pruning work is contracted out with Wright Tree Service and their crew. "The best part of my job is you have to have both a good knowledge of forestry and good customer service skills," he adds.

EWEB's utility arborists use a G.I.S.-based tree management software called Arbor Pro. A cheerful side note: they also donate excess chips from tree chipping projects to local community groups like Friends of Trees, who use them for

mulching tree planting projects.

## More about certified arborists

When questions or problems arise about trees and tree care, locating and contacting an arborist is always a good first step. Remember, it is always best to look for arborists who are certified, i.e., a person who has passed the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certification exam.

*For more info:* You can find a local certified arborist by visiting [treesaregood.com](http://treesaregood.com) or [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com) 🌳

# From the State Forester



**Doug Decker**  
State Forester

**"We bring our experience, know-how and working relationships to make a difference for urban and rural Oregonians."**

**T**his issue of *Forests for Oregon* introduces how urban and rural communities, each in their own ways, work together to protect their natural landscapes.

Rangeland fire protection associations—of which Oregon has a growing number—provide neighbor-helping-neighbor support to fight fire and protect range resources. Arborists and urban tree care specialists focus on protecting and increasing a healthy urban forest canopy.

Oregon Department of Forestry employees are proud to be a bridge of assistance for both communities. We help focus state, private and federal funding resources that add value, and we bring our experience, know-how and working relationships to make a difference for urban and rural Oregonians.

Wherever you are—urban or rural Oregon—if you are reading this, I'm betting you know as well as I do that it's our trees, forests and landscapes that make Oregon distinctive, and that provide the suite of benefits that sustain our lives.