

# Urban Forest Stewardship

*From Assessment to Action*

**10:00 Welcome and Announcements**

*Melanie Sparrow, Executive Director, Georgia Tree Council*

**10:10 City of Savannah Urban Forest Updates/Preventive Maintenance: The more you look, the more you find**

*Gordon Denney, Senior Director, Park and Tree Department*

*Scott DeArmey, Urban Forestry Division Director*

**10:45 Managing Urban Forests in Unincorporated Areas**

*Jake Henry, Development Services Manager, Chatham County Department of Engineering*

**11:15 Growing Our Trees, Our Future: Savannah Tree Foundation's Effort to Ensure a Green Future for All**

*Jackson Alexander, Executive Director*

*Matt White, Operations Manager*

*Talana Holloway, Field Operations Technician*

*Gwen Osenkowsky, Field Operations Technician*

**12:05 Lunch** *catered by Kayak Kafe*

**1:00 Plant Growth Regulators in the Urban Forest**

*Shem Kendrick, Local Manager - Savannah Office, Bartlett Tree Experts*

**1:30 From Assessment to Action: Developing Long-Term Tree and Shrub Management Plans**

*Kris Johnston, Arborist Representative - Savannah Office, Bartlett Tree Experts*

## Session descriptions and speaker bios

### **Preventive Maintenance: The more you look the more you find**

*The ongoing process of developing, starting, and managing a large scale municipal preventive maintenance program.*

**Gordon D. Denney, PLA**

Park and Tree Department, Senior Director

City of Savannah



Gordon Denney serves as the Senior Director of the City of Savannah's Park and Tree Department, overseeing the care of Savannah's historic squares and monuments, municipal cemeteries, neighborhood parks, public trees, and vegetation along public rights-of-way. A professional Landscape Architect and certified Arborist, he is a University of Georgia graduate and has dedicated 25 years to the City of Savannah, previously administering the City's Tree Protection Ordinance and leading the Park Maintenance Program. A Savannah native, Gordon is an active member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Georgia Chapter of ASLA, the Arbor Day Foundation, the Georgia Tree Council (Board of Directors 2013-14), and the International Society of Arboriculture.

**Scott DeArmey**

Urban Forestry Director  
City of Savannah

Scott currently serves as the Urban Forestry Director for the City of Savannah. He has been with the City for 11 years, and has served in multiple roles during that time, managing all aspects of the City's Urban Forestry program. He has been in the arboriculture industry for 28 years, with much of the time spent in private tree care working for Bartlett Tree Experts. Scott holds a Bachelor's degree from Clemson University in Forest Resource Management, and holds both ISA and TRAQ certifications. In his spare time you will find him in the woods hunting or on the coastal waters fishing.

**Managing Urban Forests in Unincorporated Areas**

*Discussing the unique challenges of managing trees in the unincorporated areas of Chatham County.*

**Jake Henry**

Development Services Manager  
Chatham County Department of Engineering

Jake Henry is the Development Services Manager for the Chatham County Department of Engineering. He joined Chatham County as the Lead Arborist, performing development plan reviews for tree ordinance compliance, and now manages the land disturbing activity permitting process. Over his career, he has worked for non-profits planting trees, pruned & removed trees as a bucket operator, and worked in a lab researching biological control of invasive forest pests. He received his bachelor's from Cornell University in Biogeochemistry and his master's in Forest Ecology from Mississippi State University.

**Growing Our Trees, Our Future: Savannah Tree Foundation's Effort to Ensure a Green Future for All**

*Join the STF team as they share about their ongoing work, including impact measures from the Trees Across Georgia grant, new developments focused on invasive education and removal through the Urban and Community Forestry grant, and expanded canopy coverage efforts by way of their community tree nursery.*

**Jackson Alexander**

Savannah Tree Foundation  
Executive Director



Jackson Alexander is the Executive Director of the Savannah Tree Foundation. His professional experiences include roles with the University of Arkansas System, Communities Unlimited, the National League of Cities, the University of South Carolina System, and Georgia Southern University, where he has gained experience in volunteer management, leadership and economic development, grant and fund procurement, community engagement, and constituent relations. In Jackson's role with the Savannah Tree Foundation, he oversees staff operations; coordinates grant management, event planning, and raising efforts; and expands the organization's impact across Chatham County through community engagement and outreach.

**Matt White**

Operations Manager  
Savannah Tree Foundation

Matt White has been the Operations Manager for the Savannah Tree Foundation since 2024. Bringing three decades of experience in various sectors of the horticulture & arboriculture industries with a hands-on educational background, Matt has worked in a variety of roles with Chatham Nurseries, Oasis Irrigation and Landscape Management, and Nelson Group. In his current role with the Savannah Tree Foundation, Matt oversees all operations at the Community Tree Nursery, orchestrates planting efforts, and assists with community education and outreach.

**Talana Holloway**

Field Operations Technician  
Savannah Tree Foundation

Talana Holloway serves as a Field Operations Technician at the Savannah Tree Foundation, where she assists in nursery operations, tree health assessment, and invasive species identification and eradication. Originally from Plains, Georgia, Talana graduated from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC), where she grew her interest in invasive plant species and Geographic Information System (GIS). Talana loves to educate, identify, and eradicate invasives, specifically the infamous Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*).

**Gwen Osenkowsky**

Field Operations Technician  
Savannah Tree Foundation

Gwen Osenkowsky is a Field Operations Technician at the Savannah Tree Foundation. She has a background in film production, logistics, administrative work, and material fabrication (carpentry, custom building) and has worked in the Locations department on multiple projects from major production companies. In her current role at STF, she plays a key role in securing and maintaining planting locations and assists in fabricating structures to improve functionality of both nursery and field operations.

**Plant Growth Regulators**

*Attendees will learn the benefits of plant growth regulation and practical uses to shape the landscape around us while reducing labor and improving aesthetic.*

**Shem Kendrick**

Bartlett Tree Experts

Shem was drawn to the Savannah area by the spectacular urban forest and historic architecture. Shem joined Bartlett Tree Experts in 2024 after providing the Savannah area with



quality tree care for 10 years. Shem is a Board-Certified Master Arborist (BCMA), Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ), and a three-time Georgia State Tree Climbing Champion. Shem is a board member of the Savannah Tree Foundation and an active participant in educational events for the Georgia Arborist Association. He enjoys helping clients manage their entire landscape but is most passionate about mature tree preservation. With his industry experience and support from the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories, Shem can provide his clients with scientific-based recommendations to keep their landscape healthy, safe, and beautiful. In his free time, Shem enjoys tending to his many bonsai trees and spending time in nature with his wife, Ashley, and their son Ilex (the botanical name for the Holly Genus).

## **From Assessment to Action: Developing Long-Term Tree and Shrub Management Plans**

*Attendees will explore the development of tree and shrub management plans, including prioritization of care needs, phased implementation strategies, and the role of proactive planning in preserving long-term canopy health.*

### **Kristopher Johnston**

Bartlett Tree Experts

Kristopher Johnston began his career in arboriculture through environmental education and outreach, where he developed a passion for connecting people with the natural environment. He later worked in a consulting arborist role with Bartlett Tree Experts centered on tree inventories, risk assessment, and management planning before transitioning to his current role as an Arborist Representative. Kristopher is an ISA Certified Arborist, ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional, Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ), and holds a Georgia commercial pesticide applicator license. He focuses on practical, long-term approaches to tree health and helping clients make informed decisions for their landscapes. In his free time, Kristopher enjoys gardening, bluegrass music, and spending time outdoors with his dog, Winnie.

