
TREE CARE PLAN

2026-2030

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY
AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION

Agnes Scott College's first Tree Care Plan was established in 2012, with the college's application to become a Morton Accredited Arboretum, however the campus community's history of arboreal stewardship began long before any certification.

There are countless stories centering the dedication of the college to its trees. The white ash on the northeastern side of campus was just ten years old when the Battle of Decatur was fought in 1864, the incense cedar on the east side of campus is a product of ecological exchange with the west coast, the wood of the magnolias planted north of Rebekah Scott Hall in the early 1900s was preserved when the trees had to be taken down, and the ginkgos where students take their graduation photos were planted in the 1960s by a biology professor. Through the development and growth of the college, these trees have been conserved and celebrated- because they tell a story.

The collaborative artwork above represents this long-standing tradition of tree care. Community members were invited to ask themselves "What do trees mean to me?" and represent their thoughts and feelings artistically. This piece is a reminder that trees persist as a source of community interest and a priority for the college as it continues to grow. As an extension of this sentiment, the plan outlined below contextualizes and commits to maintaining current goals while envisioning the future of campus trees with the support of the community that cares for them.

Natalie Trimble '25,
Sustainability Fellow





CORE STRATEGIES

1. Engage ASC community members in consistent programming related to the arboretum, spotlighting learning and service opportunities.
2. Foster a culture of environmental stewardship on campus and celebrate the ecological, psychological, and physical benefits of trees.
3. Model best practices for tree care and maintenance through innovative programs in collaborative partnership with our contracted landscaping team, Office of Facilities, Campus Consulting Arborist, and Center for Sustainability.

TIMELINE

2026



TREE CAMPUS USA



CAMPUS CANOPY COVERAGE

2027



TREE CAMPUS USA



ATLANTA SCIENCE FESTIVAL TREE WALK

2028



TREE CAMPUS USA

2029



TREE CAMPUS USA



MORTON ARBORETUM RE-ACCREDITATION

2030



TREE CAMPUS USA



TREE INVENTORY



ATLANTA SCIENCE FESTIVAL TREE WALK



EDUCATION

1. Increase interdisciplinary thinking and connectivity between information gained in the classroom and experiential learning.
2. Increase student, staff, faculty, alumnae, and surrounding community awareness and utilization of the natural resources on campus and their benefits.

- Maintain the ASC Permanent Forest Plot Program (PFPP)
- Increase the number of courses that connect to the Arboretum
- Maintain the Georgia Native Oak Collection
- Explore the use of native oaks as shrub replacement
- Explore the possibility of a second Arboretum collection
- Maintain the Agnes Scott Arboretum Tree Walk
- Host a tree walk in conjunction with the Atlanta Science Festival every three years





Maintain the ASC Permanent Forest Plot Program (PFPP).

History: Agnes Scott's Permanent Forest Plot Program includes four on-campus locations, one located in a City of Decatur park, and one located in a DeKalb County park. Along with the questions posed by the national PFPP, Agnes Scott is utilizing heat sensor and soil moisture data to better understand community vulnerabilities and impacts from climate change to make recommendations to build climate resilience.

This project follows the guidelines by PFPP and along with year-round student researchers, summer students engage with the project also through the framework of the ASC STEM Scholars Program, which provides mentored research, feedback, assessment, oral presentation opportunities, and recommendations for future work.

Strategy: Data will be collected every spring or summer depending on student interest and sent to the Ecological Research as Education network as requested (typically every two years). Student engagement with the plot will be maintained through BIO-308: Data Intensive Ecology coursework every other year.

Project Lead: Dr. Jen Kovacs, with support from the STEM Mentored Research Summer Program + Campus Consulting Arborist





Increase the number of courses that connect to the Arboretum.

History: The ESS minor was founded in 2001 and has seen steadily increasing demand as of 2025. The Azalea Project is a faculty curriculum development workshop with the goal of integrating interdisciplinary sustainability and environmental issues into courses. The first Azalea Project was held in 2010, then again in 2012, and most recently in 2025.

Increasing the number of courses that connect to the Arboretum advances the development of the Environmental and Sustainability Studies minor and furthers the potential to create an ESS major. Interdisciplinary coursework is a tenet of Agnes Scott's liberal arts education.

Strategy: Host the Azalea Project every five years.

Project Lead: Environmental and Sustainability Studies Program Co-Directors + Center for Sustainability



Maintain the Georgia Native Oak Collection.

History: The Georgia Native Oak Collection was formed as a result of the 2019 application to become a Level II Morton Arboretum. The Campus Arborist advised starting with Georgia native oaks (*Quercus*). Oaks, long revered for their strength and longevity, are the most prevalent native group of trees in Georgia with 32 unique species. For the next few honor tree plantings, faculty and staff receiving our 25+ years of service award were able to choose from a list of native oaks to help us achieve this collection. These included rare and/or endangered species that range from small shrubs to huge trees.

The importance of this native oak collection includes educational awareness of the ecosystem benefits having a diversity of species can provide, showcasing the niche benefits native trees provide for stormwater mitigation and carbon sequestration, and appreciating the beauty of the many shapes and sizes that can come from one family of native trees.

Strategy: Maintain regular care of on campus trees as outlined in "Tree Maintenance" section. Explore other opportunities to expand engagement around the collection via walking tour.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability + Arboretum Advisory Committee



Explore the use of native oaks as shrub replacement.

History: In 2017, a Myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*) was planted as a means to support both the Tree program and the Georgia Native Oak Collection. Keeping in mind its suitability to the environment and useful shrub-like size, this species should be considered as an adoption for future landscaping projects. There is potential for application of this idea by having a fellow design an implementation plan.

Strategy: Implement a fellow-led project; evaluate native oaks on campus and collaborate with Campus Consulting Arborist in order to design and implement a native oak planting plan.

Project Lead: Sustainability Fellow + Center for Sustainability + Campus Consulting Arborist



Explore the possibility of a second Arboretum collection.

History: Agnes Scott is home to many varieties of camelias, azaleas, and other flowering woody plants that can be used to make dye. Many of the camellias on campus were planted by Dr. Kate McKermie, who taught physical education from 1956-1988. Creating a collection based on these dye-making plants would honor their history and provide further community engagement opportunities.

Strategy: Set intention for the Arboretum Advisory Committee to discuss ideas. Explore opportunity for a student intern to take this project on and/or collaborate with the Creative Arts Department.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability + Arboretum Advisory Committee





Maintain the Agnes Scott Arboretum Tree Walk.

History: The Agnes Scott Arboretum Tree Walk provides an interactive, interdisciplinary tree tour; the featured topics were inspired by the liberal arts curriculum, inviting visitors to think deeply about our connections with trees and how they are an integral part of our lives.

Strategy: Complete a QR code audit on a regular basis. Perform website and ArcGIS StoryMap upkeep. Explore student internship potential with a focus on updating location descriptions and audio recordings.

Project Lead: Center for Sustainability



Host a tree walk in conjunction with the Atlanta Science Festival every three years.

History: The Atlanta Science Festival/Agnes Scott College Tree Walk first took place in March of 2024 with thirty five attendees. This tree walk focused on Agnes Scott's Native Quercus Collection, spreading awareness of Agnes Scott's Arboretum with the greater Atlanta community and creating opportunities for students to be leaders on native plant knowledge. In 2026, the Arboretum Advisory Committee agreed upon hosting a walk every three years to create anticipation and maintain a high turnout rate.

Strategy: Dr. Jen Kovacs receives annual participation requests from the Atlanta Science Festival. The Center for Sustainability and Campus Consulting Arborist will keep record of the Tree Walk's cadence via the timeline on page five of this document and will collaborate with student organization SEEDS to recruit student volunteers.

Project Lead: Dr. Jen Kovacs + SEEDS + Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability + Arboretum Advisory Committee



SERVICE

1. Increase student, staff, faculty, alumnae, and surrounding community participation regarding the care and maintenance of the Agnes Scott Arboretum and college landscape.
2. Support on and off campus efforts to increase environmental stewardship and awareness.
3. Maintain the college's landscape by removing invasive vegetation through an annual campus-wide event.

- Host eight volunteer opportunities for the Birds Georgia plot every fiscal year
- Host monthly volunteer opportunities at the Agnes Scott Greenspace with Trees Atlanta



Host eight volunteer opportunities for the Birds Georgia plot every fiscal year.

History: Agnes Scott students began working in the plot of land by the Bradley Observatory in 2018 with the goal of obtaining a Birds Georgia Wildlife Sanctuary certification. The Wildlife Sanctuary program “recognizes and encourages property owners to enhance their land for birds and other wildlife. Through planting native plants, removing or controlling non-native, invasive species, and providing food, water, and shelter, property owners can provide critical wildlife habitat and create a safe-haven for wildlife and people”. This goal has since developed into an invasive species removal project and through the work of a student, Indie Lorick '26, a formal main campus invasive species management plan. Though formal certification has not yet been obtained, hosting volunteer opportunities in the plot is a way to work towards that goal as well as highlight the stories that have evolved along with it.

Strategy: The fellow will host at least four invasive pulls per semester. See more on invasive removal and ecosystem restoration [here](#).

Project Lead: Sustainability Fellow + Center for Sustainability



Host monthly volunteer opportunities at the Agnes Scott Greenspace with Trees Atlanta.

History: Trees Atlanta is a local non-profit that works to mitigate Atlanta’s tree loss, protect its forests, and increase its tree canopy. As the result of a continuing partnership since 2008, the Agnes Scott Greenspace (located south of main campus) has seen intentional care and engagement from the campus and broader community. For a number of years, Agnes Scott was also partnered with a Trees Atlanta Forest Steward who guided invasive species management in the area. Currently, volunteer opportunities are scheduled on a monthly basis and consist of removing invasive plants. The monthly volunteer opportunity with Trees Atlanta supports capacity building with established community partners, opportunities for students to connect with a local non-profit for potential internships and post-graduate employment, and responsible ecosystem stewardship.

Strategy: Continue discussions with Trees Atlanta for FY27 Memorandum of Understanding.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability



CERTIFICATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

1. Maintain current certifications and explore opportunities to expand.
2. Continue partnerships that support tree care best practices, community engagement, and climate resilience.

- Submit annual Tree Campus USA certification
- Submit for Morton Level II Arboretum accreditation every five years
- Align projects with the joint Agnes Scott and City of Decatur Climate Resilience Plan, when feasible and effective
- Maintain Memorandum of Understanding with City of Decatur
- Maintain the Arboretum Advisory Committee





Submit annual Tree Campus USA certification.

History: The first certification was submitted in 2012, which was the catalyst for Agnes Scott to create a Tree Care Plan and establish an Arboretum Advisory Committee. This certification continues to be a driving force by providing an avenue for national recognition as well as programmatic support through framework and outlined best practices.

Strategy: The Center for Sustainability will maintain data collection, take photos of events throughout the year, and submit for re-application every December.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability



Submit for Morton Level II Arboretum accreditation every five years.

History: A Level I accreditation was first submitted and received in 2013; Level II was submitted and received in 2019 and 2024. Through the 2020-2025 Tree Care Plan goal assessment, it was decided by the Arboretum Advisory Committee to not pursue Level III accreditation. The resource and staff requirements are not within feasible reach nor is it something that is a prioritized goal for the college. This pivot is an opportunity to review Level II requirements and continue building robust engagement with that programmatic scope. This accreditation supports international recognition, programmatic support through resource opportunities, and elevates the intent of our tree care and engagement.

Strategy: The Center for Sustainability will maintain data collection, photos of events, and submit every five years. See timeline on page five for more.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability



Maintain the Arboretum Advisory Committee.

History: The Arboretum Advisory Committee was created with the launch of the College's Arboretum in May 2012.

Strategy: The fellow will host at least one AAC meeting per semester. The spring semester meeting typically doubles as the Arbor Day celebration. See more [here](#).

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability + Arboretum Advisory Committee



Maintain Memorandum of Understanding with City of Decatur.

History: In 2016, the City of Decatur and Agnes Scott College outlined a memorandum of understanding with the goal of ensuring Agnes Scott College's compliance with City of Decatur's tree care policies and reduce overall paperwork.

Strategy: The Campus Consulting Arborist and Center for Sustainability will continue to send the City of Decatur required tree removal and inventory updates.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + City of Decatur Arborist + Center for Sustainability



Align projects with the joint Agnes Scott and City of Decatur Climate Resilience Plan when feasible and effective.

History: The joint Climate Resilience Plan with the City of Decatur was published in 2021, one year after the college's v2 Tree Care Plan update. Through implementation, trees have been a consistent topic of conversation (care, risk, heat/flood mitigation, insurance, emergency response, etc). It is imperative to consider strategies within the tree care plan that continue to support existing goals around holistic care and engagement along with utilizing resilience frameworks to guide decision making and planning. This framework is also an opportunity to partner and elevate community organizations to grow the impact of these best practices.

Strategy: CRP sub-committees will support and develop related projects when necessary.

Project Lead: Center for Sustainability + CRP sub-committees

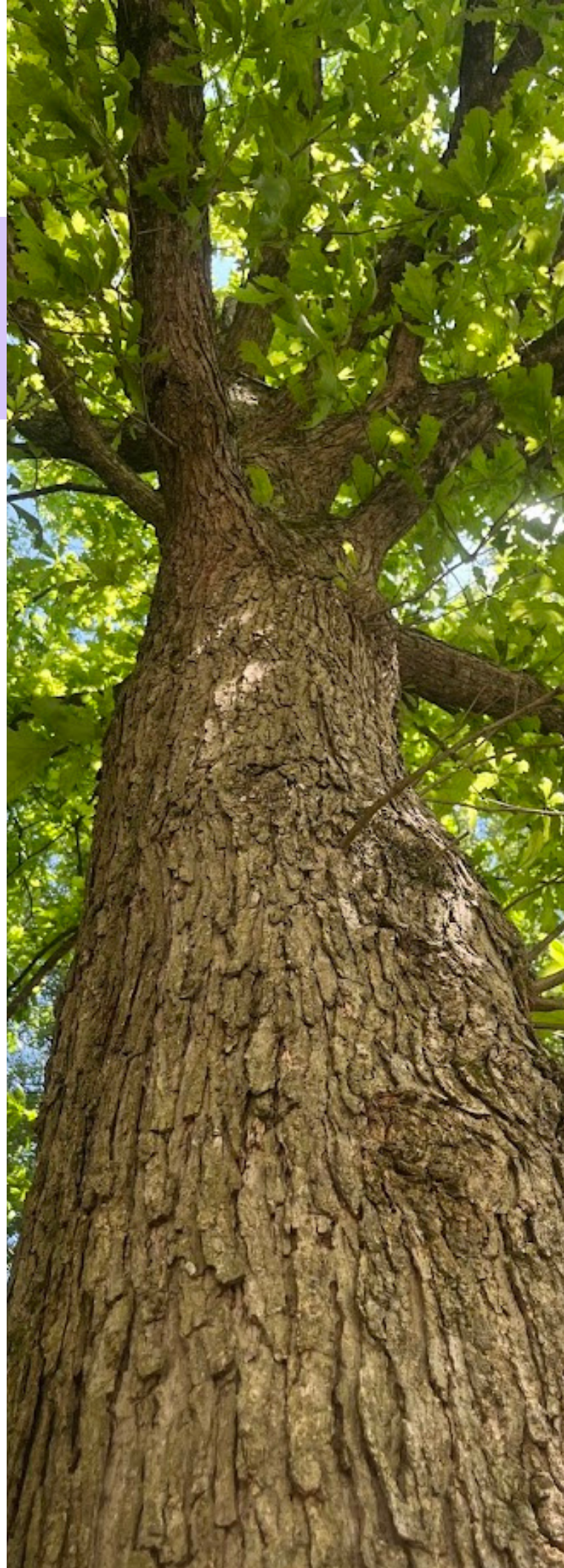


TREE CARE



1. Maintain and develop projects that support the ecological health of trees on campus as well as engagement with campus community.

- Continue Honor and Memorial Tree Maintenance
- Develop and implement an honor tree succession planting plan
- Continue Quarterly Pruning Plan Implementation
- Continue Mulch Plan Implementation
- Develop and Implement Invasive Species Management Plan





Continue Honor and Memorial Tree Maintenance.

History: Established in 2007, the Office of People & Culture, Office of Facilities, and Center for Sustainability began to offer staff and faculty the option to plant a tree as part of the employee recognition program to honor 25 years of service and additionally every five years after. Memorial trees are also available to be fundraised to honor campus and community members who have passed. The list of trees and potential planting locations is provided by the Campus Consulting Arborist with campus aesthetic and ecological considerations in mind.

Strategy: The fellow will update the Honor and Memorial Tree Map on ArcGIS with new plantings every February.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability + Arboretum Advisory Committee



Develop and implement an honor tree succession planting plan.

History: As our honor and dedication trees continue to mature, it is reasonable to consider a succession plan for tree replacement and to honor the spirit the individual tree represents to the number of faculty and staff that commit to sharing their time, talent, and care to this community. As part of any management of living species, trees on campus sometimes fail before the anticipated lifespan of the tree is reached. In order to continue the recognition of faculty and staff beyond the lifetime of their honor tree, the possibility of dedicating a space on campus as an "Honor Grove" is being explored by the Office of People and Culture and Center for Sustainability.

Strategy: Continue discussions with community members to determine tree succession process and finalize documentation when appropriate.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability + Arboretum Advisory Committee





Continue Quarterly Pruning Plan Implementation.

History: Starting in 2015, the college's consulting arborist recommended a new approach to continue to reduce risk and improve cohesive landscape aesthetics throughout campus. As outlined and captured in the college's 2020-2025 Tree Care Plan, the quarterly pruning program was established by creating campus zones. The zones were created based on how a user experiences or engages with the space.

For example, the Southern magnolias (*Magnolia grandiflora*) located in the Presser Quad have sweeping branches that sometimes touch the ground. This creates a space where students and community members climb the trees and use the three trees' canopy as shade and coverage for conversations in the adirondack chairs below. Whereas, the pedestrian sidewalk just west of Bullock Science Center is lined with maples, oaks, tulip poplars, and beech trees. These trees have their limbs pruned-up allowing sight lines to the Science Quad, McCain Library, and Campbell Hall. Few users of this space are stationary and primarily utilize this as a transitional space. Both of these spaces would require different pruning techniques and priorities.

As such, the quarterly pruning program allows the college to maintain a proactive risk reduction. While working with trees, there is never a 100% guarantee that there is never risk of tree or limb failure, the quarterly pruning intends to continue reducing that risk.

Strategy: Continue plan implementation and address gaps when necessary.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability





Continue Mulch Plan Implementation.

History: Building on the guidelines and goals set forth in the Canopy Management Plan (2012), a revised mulch-use plan was developed for campus that focused on increasing sustainability through the elimination of turfed areas to reduce water and chemical use, source sustainable mulch materials, and maintain the cycle of nutrients from trees to soil in leaf-litter degradation. Currently, leaves are being mulched on one plot off of main campus.

Strategy: Continue conversations with Landscaping Service Providers to mulch leaves on assigned plot. Build out leaf mulching areas on main campus and hold focus groups for community feedback.

Project Lead: Landscaping Service Provider + Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability



Develop and Implement Invasive Species Management Plan.

History: Agnes Scott has led formal invasive species management initiatives on the southern side of campus since partnering with Trees Atlanta. In 2018, the Center for Sustainability undertook the goal of getting a plot of land south of the Bradley Observatory certified with Birds Georgia through their Wildlife Sanctuary Program and a monthly invasive pull towards this effort was established. In 2024, this certification project was developed into a summer Invasive Species Management internship and has since been continued through the working development of a formal invasive species management plan for the north side of campus.

Strategy: Explore potential for fellow or student intern to manage this project.

Project Lead: Campus Consulting Arborist + Center for Sustainability

TREE CARE BEST PRACTICES AND POLICIES



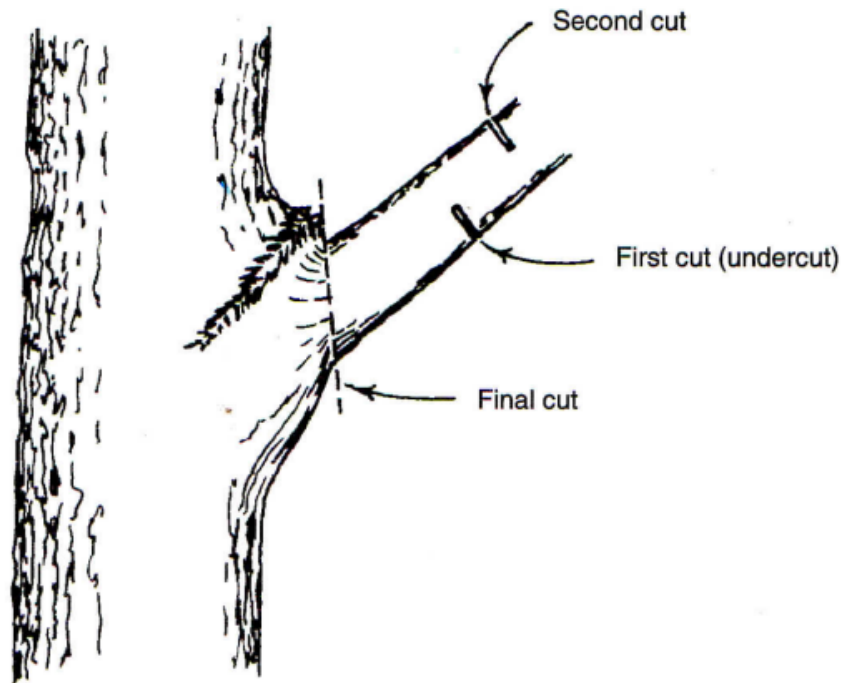
Pruning

- **Best Practices**

- Pruning is a preventative practice. Each quarter, campus zones are assessed in order to determine pruning priority based on potential risk.
 - Read more on preventative pruning on page eighteen of this document.
- As a pruning best practice, contracted arborists follow the three cut pruning method in order to preserve the health of the tree. The first cut is administered on the underside of the branch in order to prevent the bark from ripping. The second cut is from the top of the branch, beyond the first cut in order to remove the weight of the branch. The third cut is closest to the main trunk, taking care to expose the smallest surface area of the vulnerable cambium as possible. Find more detailed pruning best practices [here](#).

- **Communications**

- Pruning will occasionally be mandated by external service providers on campus, such as Georgia Power. In such cases, pruning information must be communicated to all related parties: Georgia Power Campus Representative, Director of Facilities, Campus Consulting Arborist, and the Center for Sustainability.



Construction and Filming

- **Construction**

- Since 2015, there have been no new buildings on campus. However, from 2021-2024 historic Main Hall underwent a significant renovation. Tree protection during construction best practices are outlined below:
 - The CRZ will be marked with 4' fencing that must be checked weekly through the construction process by the Department of Facilities.
 - The area within the CRZ shall be mulched 6" depth through the duration of construction.
 - Post construction measures to promote tree health will include soil improvements, such as vertical mulching, and any required pruning to ensure healthy canopy development. Any trees that cannot be preserved during construction shall be replaced with a tree of similar maturing stature within the same area of campus.

- **Filming**

- Filming on campus is an integral revenue stream for the college. With increased equipment and foot traffic, there are three ways in which intensive uses of outdoor spaces see impact from film shoots - 1) Unintentional damage, 2) known and proactive impact reduction, and 3) general wear and tear. As such, the Office of Facilities, the Center for Sustainability, the Office of Special Events and Community Relations, and the landscape service provider are working to establish universal contract language to cover the anticipated and unanticipated costs of impact from filming and implementing a \$500 flat fee per week.

Removals

- Trees are removed on campus when they present a hazard to the safety and operations of the academic environment or if they are in a position that limits the growth and maturing of more desirable or long-lived trees surrounding it. Assessments are made by the Campus Consulting Arborist in these cases to ensure trees are removed only when absolutely necessary. Agnes Scott College will notify the City of Decatur as detailed in the MOU. Trees that are failing, but are not a danger to the Agnes Scott or its surrounding community will be left to naturally degrade as a snag to benefit the surrounding ecosystem.



Wood Reuse Program

- Previously, few trees that were removed from the campus were salvaged and used at local companies or in renovation/construction projects on campus. These trees were determined to have significant historic value to the college and therefore the project management, design and production cost were determined worthwhile to prioritize the salvage of the tree(s). Future opportunities will be decided on a case by case basis.

Tracking and Assessment

- **Canopy**
 - At least 45% canopy coverage and a long-term goal of 50% coverage. When trees are removed on campus for any purpose, new trees will be replanted in a thoughtful manner to eventually replace the lost canopy. Using i-Tree Canopy, the College's canopy coverage will be updated every three (3) years.
- **Inventory**
 - The Arboretum Inventory will be fully updated every five (5) years, including data about the location, height, canopy spread, DBH, condition, and any notes about the tree. As per the MOU with the City of Decatur, the College will send the Arboretum Inventory for their records every two (2) years. The inventory will continuously be updated using a GIS program, meaning any time a tree is removed or a tree is planted, it will be reflected in the inventory immediately by the Campus Consulting Arborist.

Funding

- The Director of Facilities oversees the budget for landscape management, which includes the Agnes Scott Arboretum. An annual budget of \$70,000 will be put aside to be specifically used to help manage, sustain, and grow the Arboretum as well as fund the Campus Consulting Arborist.



Acknowledgements

The 2026-2030 Tree Care Plan could not have been possible without the help of our Agnes Scott College community.

A special thank you to the Executive Director of the Center for Sustainability, **Kimberly Reeves '12**, our Campus Consulting Arborist, **Chris Hughes** of Brookwood Tree Consulting, our contracted landscaping team, **All Outdoor Lawn Services**, and our Arboretum Advisory Committee: **Belinda Reese, Corey Wilson, Dr. Jennifer Kovacs, Dr. John Pilger, Kate McAlpin, LeAnna Rensi, Sara Relaford, Indie Lorick '26, Janaysia Bridges '28, Casey Westerman, Lucia Reber-Vinas '28, and Dr. James Diedrick.**

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