

# TREES OF MILFORD

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TREE CITY USA SINCE 1982

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## A History of Milford's Trees

In the 1840's or 1850's a group of townspeople got together and decided they wanted to live in a town with tree lined streets. As each spring came, about twenty men and boys would gather at the firehouse and ride in lumber-box wagons down to the "swamps." They would spend the day digging small maple saplings that grew in the swamps and load them in the wagons. At the end of the day they would return to town for a chicken pot pie dinner. The next day the crew would journey down the selected town street digging holes and planting saplings as they went. Each year a new street would be planted starting with Harford and ending with Sarah – filling in the numbered streets along the way. In no time at all, Milford had become a lush and shady landscape of thriving trees.

Almost a century later, in 1932, the Milford Chamber of Commerce decided to honor the bicentennial of George Washington's birth with a fresh planting of maple trees to replace some of the original trees and fill in some gaps along the way. Then in 1952, the Milford Garden Club revived the spring tree planting event to replace decadent trees along the Borough streets. At one o'clock in the afternoon, a loud blast was sounded on the Firehouse alarm calling all able-bodied individuals to report for tree planting. A wagon drawn by a matched team of Clydesdale's pulled up with the first load of ten maple trees. Since that time each year we work to rejuvenate our Milford arboretum and keep it healthy, thriving, clean and green.



# Arbor Day

Arbor Day began in 1872 as the brainchild of J. Sterling Morton, a Nebraska farmer, newspaper editor and Secretary of Agriculture in the administration of President Grover Cleveland. While serving as the fiery editor of the Nebraska City

News, he had the visionary idea for a day set apart to plant trees. Arbor Day is his monument, and nothing would please him more. Morton presented his idea to the Nebraska State Board of Agriculture in 1872 and it resulted in one million trees being planted later that year on the very first Arbor Day. Since then it has become an annual event to plant, nurture and celebrate trees that has spread to every state and many countries overseas. Most importantly, it has been the initial inspiration for generations of children who grew to love trees and care about the environment. Arbor Day is a true grass roots idea – it is a community event ranging from a small gathering of school children to large groups of adults. There is no right or wrong way to celebrate Arbor Day – just plant some trees!



Image: Arbor Day/Canva

Each year, Milford Borough Council designates a day in the Spring or Fall to celebrate Arbor Day. On that day, groups of volunteers help the Shade Tree Commission plant and mulch new trees. If you would like to volunteer for Milford's Arbor Day or to help the Shade Tree Commission in other ways, please contact us at [milfordboro.treecommission@gmail.com](mailto:milfordboro.treecommission@gmail.com).

# Tree City USA

Tree City USA is a national program that began in 1976 and is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. It is a nationwide movement that provides the framework necessary for communities to manage and expand their public trees. More than 3,500 communities have made the commitment to become a Tree City USA, with 103 located in Pennsylvania. They have achieved Tree City USA status by meeting four core standards of sound urban forestry management:

1. Maintaining a tree board or commission nominated by the Borough Council and legally responsible for the care of all public trees in right of ways and parks





2. Having a community tree ordinance that is established in the state and Borough Codes which gives the force of law to the tree commission
3. Spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry that is invested in the health and maintenance of trees
4. Celebrating Arbor Day

In 2025 Milford was awarded our 43rd consecutive year as Tree City USA in only the 48th year of the program. Most likely you've seen the signs at each of the three main entrances into Milford. The Tree City USA logo is one of national recognition that reflects the values of the people who live in the community. It shows that the birthplace of the conservation movement is still committed to a greener, healthier world.

## The Shade Tree Commission

The Shade Tree Commission (Tree Commission) of the Borough of Milford ensures that the trees which line the streets of the Borough, and which so greatly add to the beauty and charm of the Borough, are protected and properly maintained. The Tree Commission is comprised of five volunteers appointed by the Milford Borough Council. You can contact the Tree Commission directly via email ([milfordboro.treecommission@gmail.com](mailto:milfordboro.treecommission@gmail.com)) or through the Borough office.





## The State of Our Trees

Milford is a town of beautiful tree-lined streets. The trees provide us with shade to cool us in the summer, beautiful colors in the fall and clean the air we breathe. They give Milford a stately and homey feeling. For most of us they shout, "this is a place I want to live!" As you've seen elsewhere in these pages the trees started as a community effort to beautify our town.

Many of the maple trees that line our streets and make our autumns so glorious were all planted within a few years of each other. Unfortunately, red maples have a life expectancy of only 80 or 90 years and now many of our trees are failing. As of 2020, maples made up almost 90% of our urban forest making it susceptible to various blights and invaders. Since then we've removed 113 trees before they had a chance to fall and damage property or worse – hurt someone. Falling limbs can be extremely dangerous

and though we love our trees, there comes a time when they must give way to the next generation. During the same time period, with the help of volunteers, we planted 152 new trees with the focus to greatly increase the diversity of our urban forest. We planted Sweetgums, Dogwoods, Oaks, Yellowwoods, Lindens, Elms, London Planes, Winter King Hawthorns, a few Maples and many others.

Each year, we have to remove ten to twelve trees as some of our trees reach the end of their lives. As a result some parts of town look a bit less shady for a few years while the new trees catch up, but most of the new tree cultivars are expected to grow about 24" per year as long as they receive enough water and sun.

So, if there is a new tree planted along the street in front of your house, do your part and give it a drink every week for the first year or two. You'll be rewarded with a happy healthy tree to beautify your house and your neighborhood.





## Who owns that tree?

Tree ownership, maintenance responsibility and liability can get complicated at times. Below we will try and clarify the different scenarios that Milford residents should understand so they're not surprised by the trees in our community.

### **Street Trees**

Each of the streets of Milford Borough (but not our Alleys) has a strip of land right next to the pavement that is generally five to nine feet wide called the 'verge.' This land belongs to the Borough but by ordinance residents are obligated to mow and generally maintain the verge. Trees planted in the verge belong to the Borough and are often marked with a small metal disk on the side of the tree about six feet off the ground. Residents are not permitted to decorate, hang signs on, trim or cut down these trees. If one of these trees appears to be dying, has become

dangerous through falling limbs or is presenting a nuisance to the homeowner, the homeowner should contact the Tree Commission via email (milfordboro.treecommission@gmail.com) or through the Borough office for an evaluation. ***Trimming or removing street trees requires permission from the Tree Commission.***

The Tree Commission periodically surveys the street trees for potential problems so they can be addressed before becoming more severe. Under Pennsylvania law, it is the financial responsibility of the homeowner to remove any street tree that the Tree Commission has deemed dangerous. If a homeowner fails to remove a hazardous tree within 90 days, any damage it may cause could be the homeowner's liability. Once the Tree Commission determines that removal of a street tree is necessary, a letter is sent to the homeowner notifying them of a hazardous tree and providing an option to engage a licensed tree removal company of their choosing to remove the tree and the stump or to have it removed by the tree service that the Borough selected and be billed for the removal. The Tree Commission can often get better prices from local tree services due to the volume of work we provide.

## **Alley Trees**

All alley trees belong to the homeowner on whose property they exist. It is up to the homeowner to maintain the tree just as any other tree they have on their property. No permission is needed from the Borough to

remove or trim a tree on the alley. If you are still uncertain, please feel free to contact the Tree Commission via email (milfordboro.treecommission@gmail.com) or through the Borough Office and we will visit your property to verify tree ownership. Trees that straddle two properties are jointly owned by both neighbors.

## **All Other Trees**

All other trees are owned by the person whose property they are on with a few nuances that are easier to explain through several scenarios:

### *Overhanging Branches*

Neighbor A has a large mature maple tree whose branches overhang Neighbor B's property and interfere with her garage. Neighbor B is legally permitted to trim the tree's branches back to the property line at her own expense, without permission from Neighbor A.



### *Falling Branches or Tree*

Normal healthy tree: Neighbor J has a large healthy oak tree with no apparent defects. A windstorm sweeps through town and blows a branch or the whole tree onto Neighbor K's house breaking a window. Who has to pay? Since the tree was healthy and hadn't been deemed hazardous, Neighbor K must pay for their own window and each neighbor must pay for the removal of the portion of the tree or branch that fell on their property. Under these circumstances, each neighbor's Homeowners insurance policy will normally cover at least a portion of the damage subject to policy specific limitations and deductibles.

Hazardous tree: Neighbor Q has a large maple tree that appears dead. It has dropped numerous branches in the last year and Neighbor R has complained to Neighbor Q and the Borough about the potentially dangerous situation the dying tree presents. Neighbor Q drags his feet and refuses to address the situation. A windstorm sweeps through town, blowing the tree onto Neighbor R's garage destroying it. Since the tree was identified as hazardous and Neighbor Q was duly warned, Neighbor Q may be held liable for all damage caused by the falling tree. In this scenario, you should consult your insurance agent and/or insurance company to settle the matter.



**We hope this helps explain our trees a little better  
so you can enjoy them more fully and work with the  
Tree Commission to keep Milford green and  
beautiful.**





All photos by Sasha Hupka/2020  
All other images: Canva

Please visit us on Milford Borough website  
(<https://www.milfordboro.org>) under  
Departments/Shade Tree Commission or write  
to [milfordboro.treecommission@gmail.com](mailto:milfordboro.treecommission@gmail.com)