



# Montreat Tree Board

How a spunky little town organized a tree board, adopted a tree ordinance, became a Tree City USA, saved some hemlocks, and took stock in its natural environment



# Montreat

- Located in Western North Carolina, 20 minutes outside of Asheville
- The Mountain Retreat Association (M.R.A.) was incorporated in 1897, with the powers associated with a city or town
- Spiritual and physical retreat
- In 1967, Montreat was incorporated as a full fledged municipality



# Montreat

- Square miles: 2.7
- Year-round population: 868
- Seasonal population: 3,000
- Annual operating budget: \$1.8 million

# Montreat

Early Montreat had some primal forest areas, several of which were large stands of the American Chestnut. It's boundaries also included a sheep farm and much open space. That is no longer the situation.



# Montreat the Conference Center, Montreat the College, and Montreat the Town

Montreat is home to a large conference center of the Presbyterian Church (the M.R.A.) and a four-year liberal arts college (Montreat College). A majority of the original 4,000 acres of land is maintained in a forest conservation trust. The Town is a popular place for outdoor activities, especially hiking, and has been designated a Community Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation for 14 years.





# Local Institutions

The largest land owners in Montreat are tax exempt. Montreat is home to the Mountain Retreat Association, Montreat College, the personal office of Billy Graham, several churches and church-owned lodges.

**Only 40% of land in Montreat is taxable.**

# Community Effort: Landcare

In 2015, the Montreat Landcare Committee, an umbrella group of eight key community organizations, each with environmental protection as part of its mission, applied to the Arbor Day Foundation for Montreat to become a certified Tree City USA. As a part of that process, all general and zoning ordinances pertaining to tree care were consolidated into a new Tree Ordinance. The new ordinance also established a Tree Board. In February 2016, the Board held its organizational meeting.





# The Tree Board

The Board's membership currently consists of 5 voting members and one non-voting staff member.

- Environmental Commissioner
- Chair of the Landcare Committee
- Three members-at-large from the community
- One non-voting member from Town staff





# Native Plant Sale and Arbor Day Celebration

The Board continues to work closely with Landcare, especially with the annual Native Plant Sale and Arbor Day Celebration. This event has grown from being just an opportunity to purchase native plants to one that also includes various educational opportunities and displays to enhance and expand the community's awareness of its environmental issues.



# Native Plant Sale and Arbor Day Celebration

Over the last several years, the Tree Board has helped to arrange speakers from the North Carolina Forest Service who have covered the Firewise project, tree health and best care practices, the president of the local American Chestnut Foundation chapter, and the coordinator of the Hemlock Restoration Initiative. Last year a local arborist and tree service did an onsite demonstration of proper pruning.



# Native Plant Sale and Arbor Day Celebration

In addition to arranging for speakers for the event, the Tree Board also provided an informational table and display for community members. At the table, information was available regarding familiar tree species in Montreat, about the importance of trees in managing stormwater, and an opportunity to volunteer to help with the Town's second At-Risk Tree Inventory data collection.







# At-Risk Tree Inventory





## At-Risk Tree Inventory

# Risk Assessment of Trees on Assembly Drive Montreat, NC



**Legend**

- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Dead
- Main Roads
- Assembly Drive Buffer

Coordinate System: GCS North American 1983  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Degree  
Service Layer Credits: Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



# Tree Management Guide

Having begun the At-Risk Tree Inventory, the Board can now concentrate on a Planting Plan for the Town. As part of the inventory, the town has begun to keep track of where there are areas of “too many” trees for a healthy tree stand and where there are areas that need to be replanted. One of the goals of the Board is to work with the Public Works Department and ultimately the MRA and College to begin an introduction of a hardier species of the American Chestnut.

## TOWN OF MONTREAT TREE MANAGEMENT GUIDE



July 2018

# Hemlock Restoration Initiative

Students and staff of Montreat College and Hemlock Restoration Initiative volunteers created an interpretive sign about the Hemlock woolly adelgid. Volunteers continue to work with College students and faculty in the monitoring of the multifaceted Hemlock woolly adelgid biocontrol efforts.



# Youth Education

The MRA Ranger hut, or the Nature Hut, has become the central location for the Backpacks in the Park program organized by the Landcare committee. This program is a part of the National Park Service's Track Trails program and the North Carolina Arboretum's EcoExplore program.



# Youth Education

The Ranger station is also “base camp” for the MRA’s children’s and youth summer club program’s environmental component. The Montreat College library is the pick-up and drop-off location for the backpacks during the remainder of the year.



# Ongoing Outreach and Education



Thank you!

