



**MillionTreesNYC
TreeLC Program
Final Report
June 2013**



GIVE A LITTLE LC

MillionTreesNYC FY 2013 Report

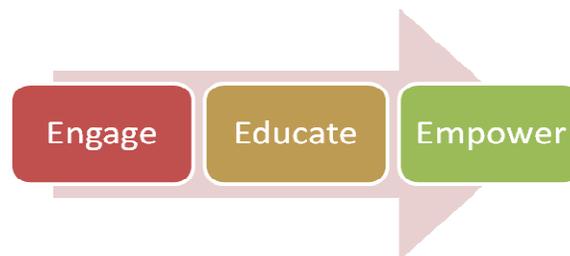
Executive Summary

Reporting Period: July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013

Submitted July 2013

OVERVIEW

MillionTreesNYC completed a successful year of “TreeLC” programs working toward our stewardship goal: to support, organize and track local groups who can commit to adopting street trees on a long term basis, and inspire a broad cross-section of New Yorkers to care about trees in order to ensure the survival of our growing urban forest. This year we continued to provide opportunities to volunteers at every level, while expanding our technical and educational support for advanced tree stewards—who are leading independent tree care projects in their own neighborhoods. We offered hands-on workshops appropriate to various skill-levels, tracked volunteer engagement and trees stewarded, hosted networking and skill-sharing events, and provided incentives and recognition. Through these strategies we are building coalitions of volunteers in all five boroughs who are committing to nurturing young trees. We hosted **253 events**, exceeding our goal of 100 days of tree care by 153%. We engaged **3,800 volunteers** in tree care, exceeding our goal of 1,000 volunteers by 280% and tree stewards **cared for 3,634 total trees** (1,777 adopted and 1,857 directly cared for during workshops), exceeding our goal of 2,500 trees by 45%.



All of our programs are designed to meet the needs of the individual: we aim to **engage** people, **educate** them in the essential steps of urban tree stewardship, and finally **empower** them with the necessary resources to continue caring for trees independently. We are committed to meeting people where they are, and providing the right education opportunities and tools necessary to move them to a higher level of engagement. To that end we piloted the new TreeLC Truck, a traveling toolkit of supplies and technical support that expanded the operational capacity of trained Care Captains. At our annual Summer Recognition Event we celebrated the accomplishments and commitment of tree care leaders city-wide, awarding winners of the **My Tree NYC Beautiful Tree Bed Contest**. Our Lead Partners, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and Trees New York, spearheaded stewardship education for both beginner and advanced volunteers throughout Brooklyn and Manhattan.

PROGRAMS

This year we continued to offer **introductory tree care workshops**, in which we teach basic tree care to volunteers who may have no previous stewardship experience. These basics include cultivating soil, removing weeds and garbage, and watering. At our introductory workshops we engage a broad range of volunteers from community centers and block associations to youth development programs and community development corporations. To increase our daily impact, maximize staff resources, and significantly beautify an entire block of trees at each workshop in neighborhoods with high concentrations of young street trees, we altered the workshop curriculum to spend more time outside doing hands-on tree care. We now steward an average of 9 trees per TreeLC workshop. We also partnered with New York Cares to recruit greater numbers of volunteers who are willing to travel to Trees For Public Health neighborhoods in order to care for multiple blocks of trees in one workshop.

EMPOWER: Supporting the People Who Support Us

We strategically improved **support for advanced volunteers** through the TreeLC Truck, the mini-grant program, Care Captain workshops, and increased water access. The TreeLC Truck completed **13** visits to various blocks city-wide and supported **207** volunteers in caring for **164** trees. We trained over **100 Care Captains** and awarded mini grants to **31** groups who collectively led over **66** tree care days, involving over **837** neighbors in caring for over **455** trees. By training and supporting these community leaders we successfully expanded our staff capacity far beyond the reach of our four full-time staff and three Civic Corps Outreach Coordinators.

In March we hosted the second annual **Grow Our Grassroots Summit**, offered to connect and empower New Yorkers who are transforming their neighborhoods through tree care, composting, community gardening, and park stewardship by connecting them with City resources and learning opportunities. Grow Our Grassroots 2013 built on the momentum of stewards and gardeners city-wide by providing technical information and skills, community organizing education, and up-to-date information about City agency resources and programs. Attendees had ample networking opportunities and attended sessions including “Creative Composting Panel,” “Planting and Pruning Our Urban Forest,” “Community Organizing with Citizens Committee for New York City,” “Beautiful Tree Bed Gardening with the Brooklyn Botanic Garden,” and Tree Guard Building 101.” 116 New Yorkers attended and pledged to care for over 100 trees throughout the five boroughs, and offered feedback through our post-summit survey. At the end of the event, we offered a survey to gather feedback that we will utilize to shape the workshops and panels offered at Grow Our Grassroots 2014. From the 71 survey responses we learned that water management and access is still an important topic for our stewards. Additionally, nearly 100% of respondents indicated they connected with a new organization or individual at the event, which reinforces the powerful networking opportunities at the event. To fulfill our goal of making it even easier to connect people with resources, we updated the **TreeLC Resource Guide** to include revised information about mulch, compost, water access and education centers (attached). Equipped with this tool, our volunteers will feel fully prepared for every seasonal step of tree stewardship.

The **pilot mini-grant program** empowered tree stewards to find creative, community-based methods of engaging over 600 volunteers in caring for 258 trees (see *Mini-Grants 2012: Final Report*). On average, each group cared for 20 trees, engaged 51 volunteers and spent \$738 in grant funds, averaging a programmatic cost of about \$37 per tree cared for. Working to strengthen the 2013 mini-grant application pool, we offered community organizing trainings in collaboration with Citizens Committee for New York City’s *Neighborhood Leadership Institute*, hosted multiple Care Captain trainings, and hosted a panel discussion on applying for—and implementing—mini-grants at the Grow Our Grassroots 2013 Summit. This spring we awarded grants to 18 mini-grantees and look forward to supporting each group as they leverage tree care projects city-wide. We worked to renew and expand our permit with the Department of Environmental Protection to allow trusted Care Captains hydrant access to **facilitate water access** in an effort to overcome the primary barrier to successful tree care many stewards face.

We thought extensively about what Care Captains need in order to fully promote and make more visible and efficient the local tree care projects they host. To better support them we expanded our materials to include new **Care Captain pins, tree bed signs, compost, and flowers**. In partnership with the Department of Sanitation’s Local Organics Recovery Project, we composted around young street trees in East New York (Brooklyn) and Ridgewood (Queens), and gave away bagged compost to Care Captains. Our Spring 2013 flower giveaways were a huge success: with support from the Parks Citywide Nursery, we were able to give over **5,000 free flowers** to volunteers from all five boroughs as well as plant flowers during TreeLC workshops. We maintain that these materials help the Care Captains feel more connected to our program, while increasing opportunities for them to demonstrate pride in their work and sustain a lasting positive impression in the eyes of their neighbors.

ENGAGE: Spreading the Good Word

Our volunteers are outstanding examples of committed, local tree care, and they continue to inspire more and more neighbors to join the tree care movement. To maximize their efforts to promote tree care and continue to recruit more volunteers, we are committed to highlighting the current volunteers to a broader, city-wide audience. The pilot **My Tree NYC Beautiful Tree Bed Contest** invited tree stewards to compete for prizes and fame by submitting photos of their flower-filled tree beds to the MTNYC Facebook account. As a result of the increased focus on engaging our constituency in social media, our Twitter feed connects with over 3,900 followers and our Facebook page is “liked” by over 3,400 people who consistently share ideas, comment on events, and spread the word about our program by sharing TreeLC photos with their friends. We are grateful for the generous assistance of the marketing group Infinia, who redesigned our entire website with special attention to articulating the steps of tree care thoughtfully and clearly. With Infinia’s help we also redesigned our monthly TreeLC newsletter and now increasingly use it to recruit Care Captains to co-teach with us, while advertising events they are running and celebrating local tree care accomplishments.



Infographic from redesigned “CARE” page (<http://www.milliontreesnyc.org/html/care/care.shtml>).

MANAGING WHAT WE MEASURE

New York is full of self-selecting tree advocates, and we continue to strategically invite them to join our program and identify as MillionTreesNYC volunteers. As part of an ongoing evaluation effort, in March 2013 we sent an online survey to New Yorkers across the city who requested a street tree, and invited the respondents to attend a TreeLC workshop. The intended purpose of the New Street Tree Request Survey is to receive feedback to shape the program policy, as well as recruit individuals who are more likely to become tree stewards. Those who elect to have a tree planted in front of their home, building or business, may be more likely to engage in stewardship activities to ensure the trees' long-term health. We found that participants of the New Street Tree Request Survey intend to care for the tree that they requested. A small proportion of the survey participants already care for trees in their neighborhood, and are most commonly watering, removing litter and dog waste and/or weeding the soil.

These care activities are emphasized in our existing TreeLC materials. However, survey participants indicated that they are interested in learning how to improve soil quality (including mulching and composting) and how to prune trees. We will continue to utilize this survey to not only shape the Street Tree Request System, but to focus MillionTreesNYC education and outreach materials on topics of interest to our volunteer constituency.

PARTNERSHIPS: Expanding MTNYC Staff Capacity

Trees New York (TNY) and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG) shifted their focus in this fourth year of their Lead Partner status. TNY piloted a structural pruning workshop series to equip elite, highly active Citizen Pruners with the knowledge necessary to prune young trees out of guarantee. Working closely with the Central Forestry office at the Parks Department, TNY created a cohort of pruners who are strategically shaping the structural integrity of young trees in East Harlem (MN) and Stapleton (SI), two Trees for Public Health Neighborhoods. Through structural pruning we can ensure tree survivability and reduce growth issues that make trees susceptible to storm-related damage, such as competing “leader” trunks and crossing branches. In light of Hurricane Sandy and its impact on our urban forest, highly skilled pruning and stewardship is essential to our long-term investment in New York’s street trees. This effort was complemented by a special Winter Pruning Program with the Parks Department’s Borough Horticulture Crews. Fortunately this program will continue each winter and will expand to other neighborhoods. Additionally, in April we coordinated with Trees New York on a mass mailing to all Citizen Pruners, inviting them to attend a Care Captain training and learn how to lead tree care work days. TNY continues to incorporate the MTNYC tree stewardship curriculum into their existing programs including *Citizen Pruner*, *Young Urban Forester*, and *Schools and Trees Program*. BBG focused their outreach in East New York and Bushwick, two neighborhoods with high concentrations of young trees needing care. In addition to teaching workshops, BBG empowered Brooklyn Urban Gardener volunteers to lead tree care programs as part of the mandatory BUG certification service hour requirement. The Lead Partners round out our program by providing focused outreach in highly planted neighborhoods, and connecting the tree care message with their educational programs in order to bring highly motivated, self-selecting volunteers into the steps of “TreeLC.”

Through our entry-level workshops we cultivated strategic partnerships with community-based non-profits including Fordham Bedford Housing Corporation (Bronx), the Gowanus Canal Conservancy and Cypress Hills LDC (Brooklyn), BIG!Compost and the Local Organics Recovery Project (Queens) and the NYC Compost Project for Staten Island. Perceived by their local communities as sources for up-to-date information on resources and programs, these organizations help MillionTreesNYC spread information about our workshops and continue to connect us with a diverse array of community members throughout the city.

PROJECTIONS

It is not enough to just recruit volunteers, we must sustain momentum. Volunteers continue to tell us they are motivated by learning opportunities, and we are responding to this feedback by launching our first urban forestry lecture series, **Tree Talks with Parkies**, whereby we are inviting Parks Foresters to present public lectures on topics including tree preservation in construction zones; NYC Parks’ response to Hurricane Sandy; and tree species selection for block plantings. These lectures will increase transparency about Parks’ policies while expanding the knowledge base of Care Captains who represent our program throughout the five boroughs. This lecture series is inspired by the work of urban tree planting campaigns in Philadelphia and DC, who invest staff time in supplemental volunteer education and attribute lectures to high rates of volunteer retention. In addition to the lecture series we plan to host a “Videography 101: How To Make Your Own Tree Care Video” workshop for Care Captains and volunteers who want to promote tree stewardship through digital media.

Continuing our Summer Tree Watering Press events, we will co-host with our mini-grantees local press events throughout July and August, celebrating their commitment to tree care while inspiring the wider community to water street trees during the hottest months of the year. We will engage local elected officials and community

boards in these events, which will both highlight these hardworking, local groups as well as the importance of summer watering.

Through increasing the volunteers' technical skills, social networks and access to resources from the Parks and our partners, we look forward to continuing to develop the growing coalition of New Yorkers who care for street trees throughout the five boroughs.

SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS BY PARTNER:

| | Tree Care Events | Attendees | Trees Adopted | Trees Cared for | Workshops in TPH |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| MillionTreesNYC | 66 | 1,438 | 662 | 538 | 19 |
| Care Captains/Mini Grantees | 106 | 983 | 396 | 401 | 13 |
| TreesNY | 20 | 228 | | 510 | 19 |
| Brooklyn Botanic Garden | 48 | 944 | 536 | 244 | 6 |
| TreeLC Truck | 13 | 207 | | 164 | 2 |
| Trees Adopted Online | | | 183 | | |
| 2012-2013 TOTALS | 253 | 3,800 | 1,777 | 1,857 | 59 |