



Map based on information provided by the Oxford Tree Board

Seeing the Forest

FRESH AIR AND COOLER TEMPERATURES ARE AMONG THE MANY BENEFITS PROVIDED BY OXFORD'S ENDANGERED TREE CANOPY.

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL NEWSOM | ILLUSTRATED BY SARAH McCULLEN

If you know Oxford, you know Lamar Boulevard, with its stately homes and towering oaks arching overhead. Tour the shaded back streets, or take a walk around campus or through Bailey's Woods and it's easy to forget you're in the heart of a thriving, expanding urban area.

We may not think much about our urban canopy until it's not there anymore. But once the trees are gone, it takes decades for new ones to mature. Hume Bryant has spent years thinking about how those oaks, along with Oxford's cedars, pines, pecans, maples and magnolias, benefit the community and create a sense of place.

"Oxford wouldn't be Oxford without its canopy," Bryant said.

Bryant is co-chairman of the city's Tree Board, which is appointed by the mayor and Board of Aldermen. The group meets on the first Thursday of each month at 11 a.m. at City Hall. Bryant and the board are concerned about the effects of heavy development here over the last 20 years.

The city's tree surveys show that those concerns are well founded. Oxford, ideal in so many ways, doesn't have enough oxygen-generating, carbon-dioxide-absorbing, climate-change-fighting trees.

Cities east of the Mississippi River

should have 40 percent of their surface areas dedicated to the tree canopy, according to American Forests, a 140-year-old organization committed to restoring woodlands. Aerial photos show Oxford's canopy has been hovering around 38 percent for several years.

"Generally speaking, we are OK, but we're still under what American Forests considers to be a healthy [percentage of] canopy," Bryant said. "What's concerning is, all of this development [Oxford is undergoing] takes out a lot of canopy."

The results of a Yale University study published in Nature in 2015 revealed that

A Guide to Oxford's Historic Trees

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| <p>1 American Chestnut 25 feet tall
Near 1106 S. Lamar Blvd.
Survived chestnut blight; still blooms and fruits</p> <p>2 Eastern Red Cedar 45 feet tall
1209 Washington Ave.
Marks the boundary of an old brick carriage way</p> <p>3 Ginkgo 70 feet tall
14th Street and Madison Avenue
Ginkgoes are believed to be the oldest tree species on Earth (over 200 million years)</p> <p>4 Osage Orange 70 feet tall
South Fifth Street and University Avenue
Another is located at the L.Q.C. Lamar House</p> <p>5 Southern Magnolia 44 feet tall
911 E. Jackson Ave.
More than 100 years old</p> | <p>6 Black Walnut 56 feet tall
Tyler Avenue between 10th and 11th Streets
One of the most valued types of North American hardwood trees</p> <p>7 Southern Magnolia 70 feet tall
637 N. Lamar Blvd.
One of the largest magnolias in Oxford</p> <p>8 Southern Red Oak 85 feet tall
510 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
Faces entrance of Oxford Intermediate School</p> <p>9 Pecan 85 feet tall
South 16th Street and University Avenue
Though damaged, one of town's largest pecans</p> <p>10 White Oak 98 feet tall
904 S. 11th St.
Close to 100 years old</p> | <p>11 American Holly 54 feet tall
911 S. Lamar Blvd.
A large tree for its species</p> <p>12 American Sycamore 112 feet tall
512 N. 14th St.
Tallest tree in Oxford</p> <p>13 Eastern Cottonwood 75 feet tall
Washington Avenue
One of the largest cottonwoods in Oxford</p> <p>14 Loblolly Pine 70 feet tall
Bramlett Boulevard and East Jackson Avenue
One of the 918 million trees of its species planted in north Mississippi between 1948 and 1982 to control erosion</p> <p>15 Black Cherry 82 feet tall
Across 1400 S. 16th St.
Likely the largest of its kind in Oxford</p> <p>16 American Elm 68 feet tall
Near 1106 S. Lamar Blvd.
Has resisted Dutch elm disease</p> |
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humans cut an estimated 15 billion trees each year. All told, the global tree count has fallen about 46 percent since the start of human civilization. Though less extensive by comparison, local deforestation is still concerning to the Oxford Tree Board.

“I don’t want it to look like Southaven,” Bryant said. “[Trees there] have all been chopped down for subdivisions and shopping centers and strip malls. While that happens here, at least we have some requirements that they plant them back.”

For many years, clear-cutting land in Oxford was permitted with little intervention from the city. In February 1996, the Board of Aldermen took the first steps toward managing the city’s urban forest by passing an ordinance that governed city trees. The Tree Board was established, and the city superintendent of buildings and grounds became the tree supervisor. As a result of these steps, news about the city’s trees hasn’t all been bad.

“The Tree Board has worked with the tree supervisor to achieve the goals [established by the Arbor Day Foundation] that resulted in Oxford becoming a Tree City USA community for the year 1997 and

being recertified every year since, the latest being 2016,” Bryant said. “Oxford was also first awarded the Growth Award in 1998 and has received it over 10 times, making Oxford a Sterling Tree City USA, one of three in the entire state.”



In 2006, the city’s tree canopy coverage was at a healthy 44 percent. But in just four years, during a period of rapid development, the city lost nearly 300 acres of trees and has been below that 40-percent benchmark ever since.

The Tree Board’s data shows that 300 acres will be replaced by 99 acres of new

parking, 40 acres of roofs and 155 acres of impervious surfaces unable to soak up rainwater. A single tree can hold up to 100 gallons of water, so the tree acreage lost combined with impervious surfaces gained could cause 197 million gallons per year of stormwater runoff.

Besides contributing oxygen and mitigating storm drainage, tree foliage creates shade and deflects heat. Impervious surfaces like parking lots can elevate air temperature by as much as 20 to 40 degrees. To lessen this effect, current plans are for 40 percent of the new parking lots built to be covered in trees, resulting in up to 187 acres of new canopy. About 1 degree of temperature reduction is associated with each additional 10 percent of tree canopy cover. New parking lots with more than 20 spaces are required to have a tree within 50 feet of each space.

The city also has an ordinance that requires developers to plant a 2-inch-diameter tree for every 5-inch tree removed. If a 10-inch tree is removed, two 2-inch trees must be planted. But a 2-inch tree doesn’t offer much shade or the other benefits of larger trees.

“To go from a 2-inch tree, which is what usually gets planted, back to a tree that shades is 20 to 30 years at best,” Bryant said. “What you take out today, even if you plant it back, is going to take 20 to 30 years to mature.”

Bryant sees these as small steps in the process to protect the trees.

“You do what you can,” he said.

Both Oxford and the university have programs that provide “TreeLC.” Oxford ReLeaf has brought trees back to newly built neighborhoods like Community Green and Windsor Falls. The Tree Board sponsors seminars where attendees can receive Oxford Community Foresters training. The university has a “tree trail” and two “champion trees,” a northern catalpa and an Osage orange. You can see a map of the UM tree trail at olemiss.edu/depts/landscape/trail.html.

Oxford protects its most prized trees with “historic specimen” designations. Among these are a 68-foot American elm, a 100-foot white oak and a 70-foot ginkgo. Others are described in the map on pages 36-37. Do you have a tree that you think qualifies? Email your suggestion to the Tree Board at urbanforest@oxfordms.net.

For more information, contact the Tree Board at oxfordms.net/tree-board.

AUSTIN’S SHOES

Compliments of the Canopy:



- The cooling effect of a young, healthy tree can equal 10 room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day.
- Adding trees on the south and west sides of a home can help reduce your power bill during the warm summer months by as much as 50 percent, and up to 65 percent for mobile homes.
- Trees help purify the air by absorbing exhaust gases and giving off pure oxygen.
- A mature tree can soak up about 1,000 gallons of rainfall per year, reducing erosion and runoff from storms and providing cleaner water. Trees muffle noise, provide visual screens and contribute to surrounding property values.
- Unshaded asphalt surfaces can reach temperatures as high as 160 degrees. Adding shade can keep peak surface temperatures below 100 degrees.
- Breaking up the massive expanse of a parking site with trees provides a sense of scale that makes people feel more comfortable.



OXFORD DENTAL