

Pine tree on West Lafayette campus listed as national champion

A 50-foot pine tree near the corner of Third Street and McCormick Road has been named a "National Champion Tree" by the American Forests National Register of Big Trees.

The jack pine (*pinus banksiana*) was recognized as the largest of its species growing in the United States. American Forests is a conservation group focused on reforestation and preserving trees.

Although common in sandy beach areas of Michigan, the jack

pine is rare in Indiana. It is an unusual tree in that it requires fire to reseed. Heat causes the pinecones to open and release their seeds.

The announcement came as a surprise to campus arborist Tim Detzner, the steward of Purdue's 7,700 trees.

"I nominated the tree as a state champion 10 years ago," he says. "It has held that distinction ever since, but just now caught the attention of the American Forests group."

According to American Forests, "National champs are a symbol of all the good work trees do for the quality of the environment and our quality of life. Big trees provide more cooling shade and more places for wildlife to perch and nest. They sequester more carbon dioxide, trap more pollutants, and purify more water."

Though the honor of having a National Champion Tree is largely symbolic, Detzner stresses, "It is an important sign of Purdue's

commitment to all our trees, as well as our willingness to do more to protect these champions from construction and other threats."

Purdue is home to one other national champion tree—the smoke tree that was relocated to the gravel pit area in October 2000. It was moved to make way for construction on Wood Street. A 25-foot coxspur hawthorn on Slayter Hill is also listed on the Indiana Big Tree Register.

For more information about trees on the West Lafayette campus, visit www.purdue.edu/physicalfacilities/grounds/trees/website/.

Tree Protection Policy proving helpful

In December 2002, Purdue initiated a concerted effort to reduce the loss of trees to construction on campus. Known as the Tree Preservation Policy, this set of recommendations and standards aims "to maintain a zero net loss of trees on campus through preservation and mitigation practices."

Before the policy, an average of 75 trees a year were lost, some unnecessarily, during construction activities.

"For two straight years early this decade, more trees were lost than were planted," says John Collier, director of campus planning.

Driving over root surfaces with trucks, cranes, and other vehicles frequently results in loss of the tree. Other trees that may have been "in the way" were removed before alternatives were considered.

Don Staley, senior landscape

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senior landscape architect

architect in Physical Facilities, says, "Root zone impact is commonly misunderstood as a tree's drip-line, but that is not a sufficient protective area. Compaction damage is usually not immediately noticeable, and declining crown growth may not show up for several years. The policy allows us to protect a larger, more realistic area."

The Tree Preservation Policy educates architects, engineers, project managers, and contractors about the value of trees, instructs how to protect and preserve them during construction, and defines the consequences of tree loss.

When a construction project that may impact trees is planned, the campus arborist along with the university landscape architect and the project manager conduct a walk-through of the site to determine which trees will be affected. They appraise the trees that will be protected or removed, assess the value of removed trees to the project, and plan to mitigate any tree loss by replacing trees at that site or with a contribution to the University's Tree Fund.

Purdue's arborist, Tim Detzner, believes the Tree Preservation Policy has made a difference already.

"Overall, it has been very

effective," he says. "It has made contractors more aware of the trees."

Big Tree Register initiated in Tippecanoe

In addition to the state and national "big trees," Purdue could soon be home to county-wide champion trees.

Tim Detzner, Purdue's arborist, along with the Lafayette Tree Advisory Committee, announced in April the creation of the Tippecanoe County Big Tree Register. Nominations are now being taken by the Tippecanoe County Extension Office, and the committee hopes to publish the champion list by Arbor Day 2009.

The list will be based on the Indiana big tree program, which includes over 100 varieties of trees native to the state. Anyone may nominate a tree using the form available on the county extension Web site at www.ces.purdue.edu/Tippecanoe/bt/.

Detzner says, "One of the goals of the Big Tree Register is to promote preservation, to get people interested in protecting trees so they can become large. We also want to get trees into the public view and promote awareness of the natural resources we have that many people don't even think about."

The Lafayette Tree Advisory Committee is a group appointed by the mayor of Lafayette, whose purpose is to advise the mayor on issues related to trees, and to promote tree planting and proper tree care. Kim Wilson, a professor in the Horticulture Department, is also a committee member.



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This jack pine, near the southwest corner of the Gold intramural fields, has been recognized as the largest of its kind in the United States and listed in a forestry register.