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## Plant legacy trees for a sustainable future

*Marian St. Clair*  
*Gardening*

It's been more than three decades since American journalist Bill Vaughan noted, "Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees and then names the streets after them."

Yet, by and large, much the same could be said today.

Even in Greenville, where a canopy of green shades Main Street, protection and preservation of green space is a concern. Local conservation groups estimate that in Greenville County as much as 10 acres a day is cleared for development.

It's not just the loss of trees, however, that affects the livability and sustainability of our community, it's also the choices we make in replacing them.

We compromise the environment by selecting unfavorable and short-lived trees for the landscape, especially when it comes to residential neighborhoods.

My own garden is not immune to this shortcoming. In past years, I've added a number of small ornamental trees, such as the blooming apricot (*Prunus mume*), which enlivens my February landscape with its rose-like pink flowers and fragrant perfume.

Chosen for their pleasure quotient, trees such as these add to the enjoyment of the garden, but make little contribution to the long-term health of the ecosystem.

On a recent trip to Mount Vernon, I noted the trees around the central lawn and surrounding the home. Among the hundreds planted on the estate by George Washington, at least 13 trees have survived the 208 years since his death.

Instead of the magnificent tulip poplars, white ashes and hemlocks at Washington's home, can you imagine Leyland cypresses and Bradford pears in their place?

The point is easy to see: Ornamentals have their value, but we must also plan and plant for a sustainable future.

The Green Umbrella is a consortium of local organizations and conservation groups (including Carolina Foothills Garden Club, City of Greenville, Friends of the Reedy River, Furman University, Greenville County, Greenville County Recreation District, Greenville Forward, Greater Greenville Master Gardeners, Greenville Tree Foundation, Trees Greenville, and Upstate Forever). Its flagship effort is the Legacy Tree Project, which is aimed at helping property owners and developers choose better landscape plants.

A legacy tree is one that will live at least 100 years when planted in the right location and given the proper care.

Our native forest is an oak-hickory community, and many of the trees (but not all) promoted by the project can be found growing there. In addition to oak and hickory, the list includes elm, black gum, maple, tulip popular, magnolia, beech, serviceberry, sourwood and eastern redbud, among many others.

If you want to learn more about the Upstate's current situation, projections for the future and how you can be involved in change, plan to attend the Green Umbrella's symposium, The Greening of Greenville: Embarking on a healthier future, Oct. 24 at Furman University.

Pedrick Lowrey, a member of Carolina Foothills Garden Club and event chairman, says, "This is not just a program for gardeners, it is for anyone who wants to become a better environmental steward."

Speakers include John Floyd, editor of Southern Living magazine; Marcia Bansley, executive director of Trees Atlanta; James Urban, landscape architect and author of Up by Roots; Vince Graham of I'On Group, creators of sustainable communities; and several others.

The event will also include a panel discussion moderated by David Shi, president of Furman University; a special presentation to Roger Milliken, president of Milliken & Company; and a tour of Cliffs Cottage and its gardens.

Breakfast, lunch, symposium materials and giveaways are included in the \$75 registration. For more information contact Gayle Warth, special events coordinator at Furman University, at [Gayle.Warth@furman.edu](mailto:Gayle.Warth@furman.edu), or call 864-294-2186. Registration is available at [www.furman.edu/hortsym](http://www.furman.edu/hortsym).

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