# OF POTENTIAL INTEREST TO ALL

# Study: Fungus behind deadly disease in walnut trees mutates easily, complicating control

http://www.sciencecodex.com/study_fungus_behind_deadly_disease_in_walnut_trees_mutates_easily_complicating_control-145544

**This is a canker on an eastern black walnut tree. The beetle that carries the fungus causing thousand cankers disease is visible in the canker's upper left corner.(Photo Credit: (Colorado State University photo/Ned Tisserat))**

Science Codex, November 13, 2014 - 8:30pm
WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Researchers from Purdue and Colorado State universities have discovered that the fungus responsible for thousand cankers disease, a lethal affliction of walnut trees and related species, has a rich genetic diversity that may make the disease more difficult to control.
Adjunct assistant professor of forestry Keith Woeste and fellow researchers analyzed the genes of 209 samples of Geosmithia morbida from 17 regions of the U.S. to determine the genetic diversity of the fungus, its possible origin and how it spread throughout the West and to parts of the East.
The researchers identified 57 distinct haplotypes, or genetic races, among the samples, a curious finding for an organism that reproduces by cloning itself. The high diversity of Geosmithia morbida likely indicates that the fungus mutates readily, said Woeste, who is also a hardwood specialist with the U.S. Forest Service.

"The high mutability of this fungus means we can expect the unexpected," he said. "We can't count on the fungus' genes to be the same year after year, which certainly makes it harder to control. It will also be harder to breed trees resistant to this disease."
First reported in the early 1990s, thousand cankers disease is deadly to black walnut trees and their relatives, such as butternut and wingnut trees. Black walnut trees are prized for their dark, high-quality wood and play a valuable role in the forest ecosystem as a food source for wildlife.
A tree becomes infected with the disease when walnut twig beetles, natural carriers of Geosmithia morbida, burrow deep into its bark, carving out finger-shaped "galleries." The fungus spreads into the galleries, forming multiple cankers in the wood, which eventually leads to the tree's death.

The disease has been found in trees throughout the Western U.S. and in several Eastern states, including Tennessee, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio. It has also been found in Italy. Similar to emerald ash borer, the disease is spread primarily through the transportation of infested wood.

A single log can contain thousands of walnut twig beetles and multiple haplotypes of Geosmithia morbida, Woeste said. Spotting infested wood is difficult due to the small size of the beetles - "about the size of pepper flakes," he said - and the fact that the cankers lie hidden beneath the bark.

"It would be almost impossible to know if a log was infested unless you started peeling the bark away," Woeste said. "There probably isn't going to be a way to get thousand cankers disease out of our forests in the East, but there might be ways to control it. Sanitation, attentiveness and care are just going to become part of the everyday routine for forest landowners."
The study showed that thousand cankers disease likely originated in Southern California, rather than Arizona or New Mexico as researchers previously thought. The study also revealed that Geosmithia morbida is native to the U.S., as is the walnut twig beetle. Woeste said the fungus and beetle might have caused only minor damage to trees in the West for thousands of years before suddenly emerging as an important pathogen.

"This is an example of evolution that surprised us," he said. "I don't think anyone could have predicted this explosion out of what must have been small, isolated pockets of this beetle and fungus living in harmony with the ecosystem in the Southwest for many years. What forces drove that change, we don't know."

Future research could help determine why the fungus became so aggressive toward its host trees, he said.

Woeste advised landowners and companies that use and transport wood to stay informed.
"It's too early to panic," he said. "There's still a lot of walnut in the U.S., and there's going to be for a long time. However, people should stay abreast of changes as we continue to learn more about this disease and how landowners and companies can protect their resources."

Information about the disease and resources for homeowners, industry and researchers can be found at http://www.thousandcankers.com.

The study was published in PLOS ONE on Thursday (Nov. 13).

# Oriental bittersweet: An aggressive, invasive plant

**A beautiful plant along the roadways in late fall, Oriental bittersweet is a threat to native environments by aggressively choking out other woody plants. Collecting can cause spreading.**

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/oriental_bittersweet_an_aggressive_invasive_plant

**Vigorous, twining growth can easily girdle large trees. All photos by Rebecca Finneran, MSU Extension**

by Rebecca Finneran, Michigan State University Extension, November 13, 2014

Someone should produce a horror flick about how Oriental bittersweet (Celastrus orbiculatus) can single handedly strangle neighboring mature trees if left to its own vices. This woody vine grows rapidly and has a twining nature that clings to anything going up or down. It can easily climb trees up to 90 feet tall. As the plant grows in diameter, it literally chokes or girdles other plants that it is clinging to. Its rate of spread is a bit like a Jack-in-the-bean-stalk fairy tale and it has been observed covering half-acre wood lots in just seven to 10 years. Between the girdling growth habit and sheer weight, whole canopies of a forest can tumble down during the growing season or an ice storm.

Bitter beauty – bittersweet aptly named

Why all the interest right now? At the close of the season when leaves of other trees have descended to their winter bliss, the intensely colored, conspicuous fruits of Oriental bittersweet climbing fences, trees and telephone poles are highly noticeable. Conjuring up comforting scenes of autumn, this red and gold fruit entices the fall decorator to jump out of the car to clip stems and transport them home. Unknowingly, the decorator has just become an “accessory” to the spread of this prolific and invasive plant.

According to Michigan State University Extension, Oriental bittersweet is a relative to our native bittersweet (Celastrus scandens) and has several closely linked characteristics. The fruit of both species is made up of an orange outer skin that opens to reveal a red, fleshy fruit. The native bittersweet produces the fruits at the ends of the vines while Oriental type produces its fruit all along the stem.

Oriental bittersweet

Fruits of Oriental bittersweet show a golden capsule opening up to reveal a crimson seed.

The seeds of Oriental bittersweet will germinate in open grass lands or shady woodlands and are an attractive food to birds late in the season. Literature suggests that seed can remain in the birds’ stomach for weeks, allowing it to be “deposited” long distances away from the original infestation.

Oriental bittersweet commonly occurs along the edge of a road where infestations are easily noticed and harvested by “unsuspecting” collectors. Broadly-oval, glossy leaves bear fine teeth and can be 2 to 5 inches long. Insignificant, light-colored flowers appear in May and June on separate male and female plants, like holly. This can be seen this time of year when some plants are clearly without fruit, growing right next to one that has fruit.

Oriental bittersweet

Bittersweet plants are easy to spot this time of year. Brightly colored fruits entangle other woody plants along the roadside.

Oriental bittersweet also reproduces readily by spreading underground roots, making it very difficult to eradicate by digging. One might notice a “clump” of this vine in their front yard that seems somewhat benign at first. The clump spreads, eventually reaching a tree or fence where it can climb. Don’t be fooled if the plant never bears fruit – you just have the “male” plant.

While environmentally savvy gardeners seek to reduce pesticide use, this is one plant it would be best not to try to control solely by manual methods. In combination with chemical controls, methods such as cutting or hand digging can be effective for established populations over time. Herbicides can be applied to freshly cut stems or through other techniques. Refer to a Michigan DNR fact sheet for best control practices of Oriental bittersweet.

Remember to read and follow all pesticide label directions. When manually removing established populations, it is imperative to continue to observe the patch for newly germinating seedlings or sprouts from underground plant parts.

Additional information:

Midwest Invasive Species Information Network (MISIN)

Oriental bittersweet fact sheet from MISIN

MISIN Resources from MSU Extension

Report invasive species quickly and easily and look good doing it!

Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN)

For more information on a wide variety of smart gardening topics, or to find out about smart gardening classes and events, visit www.migarden.msu.edu.

# ILLINOIS

# Will County forest district cuts budget by $3 million

http://www.theherald-news.com/2014/11/13/will-county-forest-district-cuts-budget-by-3-million/a55hz1z/

By LAUREN LEONE–CROSS Herald-News (IL), Thursday, Nov. 13, 2014 11:19 p.m. CST
JOLIET – The Forest Preserve District of Will County is shifting its focus next budget year with its multi-year, multimillion-dollar land acquisition program coming to a close and capital improvements slowing down.

The priority now will be maintaining existing land and streamlining operations, Executive Director Marcy DeMauro said Thursday after a meeting of the forest preserve board.
The board approved a $46.6 million budget for 2015, trimmed from the 2014 budget of $49.7 million. Much of the decrease is because of the district paying off bond debt.
The 2014 estimated levy, including debt service, will be about $35.6 million, representing a $211,836 decrease from 2013, DeMauro said.

The decrease is because of a reduction in debt service, she said.
Based on the reduced levy, residents will pay $117.50 in annual property taxes based on a $200,000 home, said John Gerl, the district's director of finance and administration. That's down from $119.51 in 2014.

The district was able to hold the line on taxes this year, as was the case in five of the last six years.
Restructuring, downsizing
To avoid a potential $400,000 budget shortfall, the district is restructuring operations and introducing an early retirement plan starting next summer.
Employees who are at least 50 years old and have 20 years of experience with the forest preserve district are eligible to retire early under the incentive program, DeMauro said.
Of the district's 121 full-time employees, 21 are eligible to participate in the program, which is expected to save $2.2 million over the next five years.
Thirteen employees have expressed interest in the program, she said. Of those, six positions will be eliminated, while others will remain full-time or be scaled back to part-time, DeMauro said.
Supervisor positions – most of which were created during the district's "intense growth period" – have been targeted for elimination, and the district plans to hire internally for positions left vacant because of early retirees, she said. The new organization model will have a two-person leadership team that reports directly to the board president.

The district budgeted $16.45 million for operating expenses, up from $15.8 million from 2014.
DeMauro said the increase represents money from the district's cash reserve fund to complete scheduled capital improvements with $400,000 going toward infrastructure and $250,000 going toward the removal of diseased ash trees.

Capital improvements include work on some of the forest district's 137 miles of trails.

# Evergreens, especially young ones, may need autumn watering

http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/home/ct-home-1121-garden-qa-20141112-story.html

**If autumn conditions are dry, it's important to water evergreen trees and shrubs, especially young ones. (Gloria Ciaccio / Chicago Botanic, Handout)**

By Tim Johnson for Chicago Tribune (IL), 111214

I had a lot of evergreen trees installed this summer. Is there anything special that needs to be done to help ensure that they will make it through the winter?

— Barbara Jones, Wheeling

Any evergreens planted over the last three years should be watered in late fall if conditions are dry.

It is easy to forget about watering during the colder weather in November. However, if evergreens that have been recently planted go into winter under stress from being too dry, it will increase the chance of winter burn and possible loss of the trees.

In winter, when temperatures are freezing and cold winds blow, evergreens can lose moisture from their leaves faster than the roots can replace it. This is particularly a problem once the ground freezes, especially if it was dry in fall and the plants' roots could not absorb much water.

The newer the tree or shrub, the more important it is to water in late fall. New plants have not had time to grow many roots to collect and store water. Over time, the new trees will grow roots out into the garden soil, making autumn watering less crucial.

When you water an evergreen tree or shrub, place the hose directly at the base of the plant to make sure the root ball is thoroughly moistened. Densely branched evergreen trees can shed rain or water from a sprinkler away from the root ball.

It is also a good idea to add a 2- to 3-inch-deep layer of mulch around the trees. This will help conserve moisture, mitigate temperature extremes and keep the soil warmer later in the fall for root development. Keep the mulch about 2 inches away from the bark at the base of the tree. The mulch also will look nice and help keep weeds down next year.

Despite the need to water the evergreens, it is a good idea to disconnect garden hoses from outdoor spigots as the nights get colder to eliminate the risk that trapped water may freeze and damage your faucet and plumbing. Reconnect hoses temporarily to water the new evergreens as needed during warm spells in late autumn and early winter.

Once you have finished watering for the season, disconnect hoses for the last time and open all faucets to drain out any remaining water. Then turn off the water supply inside your house and close the outside faucets tightly. Water left in outdoor faucets during the winter can freeze and expand, causing cracks and breaks and even bursting pipes.

You may have frost-free outdoor faucets. A frost-free faucet looks the same as a regular spigot from outside the house, but has a long pipe on the back end that extends through the side of the house. The valve that controls the water supply is inside where it is protected from freezing.

A properly installed frost-free faucet will have a slight downward pitch toward the outside faucet so water drains away from the connection when the water is turned off, leaving no water to freeze in the pipe. If you are unsure whether your faucets are frost-free or whether they are installed properly, it is wise to have your plumber inspect them to avoid a broken water line.

Tim Johnson is director of horticulture for the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe; ctc-realestate@tribune.com.

# IOWA

# DNR offering free forestry training

http://globegazette.com/news/local/dnr-offering-free-forestry-training/article_12b53788-7ced-54df-8dee-d63c16b2c9dd.html

John Skipper Globe Gazette (IA), 111314

MASON CITY | Mason City has been selected to receive sustainable urban forestry training and assistance from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The free training is to provide city staff and volunteers with help in maintaining a forestry program and be better prepared for addressing the emerald ash borer. The public is invited.

The sessions will include: tree identification; technology training; tree health; tree inventory; risk assessment methods; tree planting, pruning and maintenance; ordinances; and community outreach. The first session will be on Tuesday, Dec. 2, at 1 p.m. in the Mason City Room of the Mason City Public Library.

Presenters will include Laura Wagner, DNR grant coordinator; Emma Hanigan, DNR state urban coordinator; and a DNR forester.

Anyone seeking further information is asked to contact Beth Enright at 641-424-7154.

# MICHIGAN

# Volunteers to plant cherry trees on Belle Isle

http://wwmt.com/template/inews_wire/wires.regional.mi/29157f16-www.wwmt.com.shtml#.VGX5SfnF-So

Associated Press (MI), November 13, 2014 08:25 EST

DETROIT -- Volunteers will plant 115 flowering cherry trees on Belle Isle in Detroit with support from a $150,000 federal grant.

The state Department of Natural Resources said Wednesday that up to 150 volunteers will work on the project Friday at the park's Scott Memorial Fountain. The U.S. Forest Service grant will also pay for tree removal, a tree regeneration program and a tree inventory and management plan on the island.

Detroit's sister city in Japan donated flowering cherry trees in 1994, but many planted on Belle Isle have died or been removed because of disease and insects. The volunteers will plant a disease-resistant species to fill the gaps.

Belle Isle is a state park in the Detroit River.

# After battling icy roads and traffic, U.S. Capitol Christmas tree finally arrives in Grand Rapids

http://www.mlive.com/business/west-michigan/index.ssf/2014/11/after_battling_icy_roads_and_t.html

**Foresters Mike Theune and Mary LaPlant accompanied the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree as it stopped in Grand Rapids on Nov. 13, 2014 on its way to Washington D.C. from the Chippewa National Forest in northern Minnesota. Jim Harger | jharger@mlive.com**

Jim Harger MLive.com, November 13, 2014 at 7:22 PM


GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Thanks to snowy roads and traffic accidents along the way, the U.S. Capitol Christmas tree was a couple of hours late in arriving at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum on Thursday, Nov. 13.

The 105-foot-long semi-truck carrying an 88-foot-tall white spruce and its companion vehicles were held up coming out of Chicago and along U.S. 131 on their way to an afternoon reception in Grand Rapids.

Kentwood resident Jennie Hodges brought her sons, Ryan, 9, and Kyle, 5, to the museum see the tree and sign the mitten-shaped stickers that were attached to the side of the enclosed trailer.

"I just wanted them to see the spectacle of it," said Hodges as they waited for the convoy to arrive.

Smokey the Bear, Christmas carolers and musicians from the Grand Rapids Symphony kept the crowd entertained as they awaited the big tree's arrival.

Though some of the school field trips had gone home by the time the rig arrived at 3 p.m., the tree was welcomed by well-wishers and city officials as they arrived at the riverfront museum with a police escort.

"It was that lake effect that Michigan is so well-known for," said Mike Theune, a U.S. Forest Service employee who has accompanied the 13,000-pound tree since it was felled on Oct. 29.

The tree was kept from drying out during the long trip by Mary LaPlant, a U.S. Forest Service employee who tended a bladder designed to give the tree up to 45 gallons of water a day.

Except for a few access windows, the tree remained shrouded in the trailer to keep it in a dormant state, she said.

Weather permitting, the convoy will leave Grand Rapids by 8 a.m. Friday for East Lansing, where it will visit Michigan State University. The tree will make an appearance in Dearborn on Saturday, Nov. 15 before it continues on to Cleveland, Ohio.

The tree is scheduled to finish its 2,000-mile journey in Washington D.C. on Nov. 21. Speaker of the House John Boehner will light the tree on Dec. 2 in a ceremony that will be broadcast live on C-SPAN.

Except for the salaries of the U.S. Forest Service employees, the convoy and its expenses were paid for by private donors, said Bruce Ward, president of Choose Outdoors, the non-profit group that organized the trip.

“Our mission is to connect all Americans to our public lands through outdoor recreation,” said Ward, who was selling souvenir books, T-shirts and buttons from a tent outside the doors of the presidential museum.

“For many of us, our concern is that many kids don’t get out into the environment,” Ward said. “This has been a catalyst for our schools to talk about the importance of the outdoors.”

The entire Capitol Christmas tree project costs about $500,000 from the time the tree was felled in north central Minnesota to the time will be lit in Washington, D.C., Ward said.

Besides the big tree, the convoy also carried 70 smaller trees from the Minnesota Tree Growers Association to decorate the U.S. Capitol building and other sites in Washington, D.C..

# Good news for tree damaged by storm

http://www.daily-journal.com/life/good-news-for-tree-damaged-by-storm/article_2396b672-61fc-5a81-8068-9a7bc3a9cb88.html

Daily Journal (MI), Tuesday, November 11, 2014 8:43 pm

Q: Last year our maple tree was damaged by a storm and had to be sawed off to a stump. It has grown shoots and, during this past summer, the foliage has been gorgeous. Now the leaves are a beautiful red, and they are dropping in a very natural manner. The shape of these shoots is quite symmetrical, too. The overall height of these shoots is about 10 feet. Can I nurture this stump to grow as a bush or another tree? Any advice will be greatly appreciated. — Joy

A: I'm sorry your tree was damaged, but the good news is that you now have a clump maple. And with a little care, you can allow the new growth to mature.

Clump trees are actually created by cutting off the central leader and allowing new growth sprouts to form. You need to use some caution in caring for the tree, especially near the base. I would lower the stump to a couple of inches if it is possible to get in there and do that without damaging the new growth. Don't pile any mulch on or up against the bark, since this could invite moisture to damage the base where the sprouts meet.

Spray this area occasionally with baking soda to inhibit fungal infections. A couple of tablespoons in a half gallon sprayer should do the trick.

Clump forming trees should be limbed up as they mature to allow sunlight to reach the soil beneath them. Too much shade on the ground can keep the roots near the surface, making them vulnerable to storm damage.

Q: You included Norway maples in a list of trees that could be planted to replace ash trees. I have read that they are becoming weeds in natural areas and should not be planted. What gives? — Leonard
A: Any tree that is not already a part of the plant matrix in a natural area has the potential to become a pest. This is true of silver maples, poplar, mulberry, elm and a host of other native trees, just as it could be true of non natives like Norway maple.

We live in a time when so many plants are introduced into gardens and landscaped settings that any and all of them could impact our remaining 2 percent of natural prairie and woodland.Some of those, such as kudzu, garlic mustard, Japanese honeysuckle and buckthorn are out of the barn and running wild. Others, such as Norway maple still are considered just a potential threat.
Use common sense. A Norway maple is not going to have any effect on most neighborhoods and streets, but if you want to be very careful, you might consider not planting one at the edge of a forest preserve or other natural woodland.

Q: My mums are changing color! They started out bronze but some of them have a single branch of flowers that are either pink or yellow. I need them to stay bronze, so what should I put in the soil to keep them that way? Cyndi

A: Mums will do that. There are several reasons for this color change. Sometimes cold snaps will turn mums, especially white ones, a sort of purplish color. Other times, the hybrid mums you planted will succumb to the stronger parent when seedlings grow and overtake the original planting. This is usually what happened when an entire bed of mums changes to yellow.What you are describing sounds like a natural color 'sport' or mutation. This is often seen in just a single stem of flowers. You can simply clip off the offending flowers, or dig out the stem, getting some root along with it. But I would just clip them off at the base. Bring them in and enjoy them in a bud vase on your table.

Q: I have three kinds of hydrangeas and I don't know when to cut them back. How can I identify them and find out which ones they are and when to cut them back? — Pam
A: From an earlier response on hydrangea questions:
Hydrangea arborescens , which includes 'Annabelle' 'Invincabelle Spirit' and 'Incrediball', is a large, spreading plant that loves water and does best with at least a half day of sun. You can tell it by the large, soft and downy leaves. You may cut it back to the ground if you wish to rejuvenate it, but do so before June 1st.

Hydrangea macrophylla which includes 'Endless Summer' 'Blushing Bride' and 'Lemon Wave', is the most difficult of the hydrangeas to grow well. You can easily identify it by its thick, glossy leaves and smaller stature. Since many of these macrophylla cultivars will bloom on old wood, or a combination of old and new wood, it can be tricky to know when and how to prune them. Your best bet is to simply leave them alone.

Hydrangea paniculata represents the largest group of hydrangea cultivars and includes 'PeeGee' 'Limelight' 'Tardiva' 'Unique' 'Quick Fire' 'Little Lamb' 'Pink Diamond' 'Pinky Winky' ' Vanilla Strawberry' and the new 'Swan'. Look for a medium sized, soft leaf with serrated edges. These are the largest plants as well and can be pruned into small trees. They like a lot of sun and water when it is dry. Give them room, leave them alone and stand back for a show.

There is no need to cut them back at all, unless you are just clipping off spent flowers heads or broken branches.

# Michigan Tech researcher forges ahead with global warming research

http://up.secondwavemedia.com/features/climateresearch111214.aspx

**Molly Cavaleri at Michigan Technological University.**
KELLE BARR SecondWaveMedia.com (MI), WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2014

Using a project called TRACE, Molly Cavaleri studies the effects that climate changes are likely to have on tropical forests worldwide.
A couple handfuls of tree species exist in these parts--sugar maples, white pines, red pines and aspen all sound familiar, right?
But you may have never heard of the kapoks, durians, mangroves or tualang trees--a small example of the species growing in tropical forests across the world.

"There is so much diversity among them," says Molly Cavaleri. "There are literally hundreds of different species growing in the tropical forests."
Cavaleri, of Michigan Technological University's School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science, is an ecophysiologist who spends her life's work examining the ways ecosystems respond to climate change.

Since Cavaleri was a small child, trees have fascinated her.
"I climbed them all the time and have always liked to be around trees. Now I get to do that for a living."
She's part of a team that, thanks to a three-year $960,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy and additional support from the U.S. Forest Service, gets to do so in the Tropical Response to Altered Climate Experiment (TRACE), located within the 28,000-acre El Yunque Rain Forest. El Yunque is a cool, mountainous, subtropical rainforest located on the eastern side of the Luquillo Mountains in Puerto Rico.

If this project sounds like a big deal, well, it is.

"This is the first field experiment of its kind ever done in a tropical forest," she says. "We will be manipulating the environment, warming the leaves and branches of the canopy as well as the smaller plants on the forest floor, not just observing."
The rest of her scientific team consists of other research ecologists to head the study. They are Tana Wood, of the Puerto Rico Conservation Foundation and adjunct scientist with the U.S. Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry, and Sasha Reed from the U.S. Geological Survey. Eoin Brodie of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory will collaborate to help the three work together with their graduate students and conducting research.

"It's unusual for three early-career women to be spearheading a project of this size and significance," says Cavaleri, who is 39.

Michigan Tech graduate student Alida Mau is already in Puerto Rico, taking measurements in the forest. Cavaleri and her colleagues, when they make the trip again, will heat the soil and small trees on the forest floor with infrared lamps. They'll string warming cables under the leaves of the canopy of full-grown trees, to collect data they'll use to measure the responses of leaves, roots, and soil to the warming that she feels is happening at an alarming rate.
Once they have warmed the trees and measured the changes, the teams will use the data to help develop better predictive models of the effects of climate change on tropical forests, an effort funded by the USGS Powell Center.

"The data will help us understand what is happening globally and what is likely to happen in the future," Cavaleri says.

"Michigan Tech's School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science is doing quite a bit of research on the impacts of climate change, but her work in the rain forests is unique," says Jennifer Donovan, director of news and media relations at Tech.. "Michigan Tech is working hard to recruit outstanding women to our faculty, and Dr. Cavaleri is a perfect example of the kind of woman we want teaching and doing research at Michigan Tech."

Kelle Barr is a Michigan-based freelance reporter who can be reached at Kellebarr@gmail.com or on Twitter at @BarrKelle.

# WISCONSIN

# Madison operating budget raises taxes on average home 2.8 percent, adds urban forestry fee

http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/writers/bryna-godar/madison-operating-budget-raises-taxes-on-average-home-percent-adds/article_f1aad366-6a3d-11e4-957d-afd6572ee07e.html

BRYNA GODAR Capital Times (WI), 111214

The Madison City Council voted Tuesday night to raise expired meter parking fines and increase revenues from a newly created urban forestry charge in a series of amendments to its final operating budget.

Finalized Tuesday night, the operating budget totals $283.1 million and raises taxes on the average home about $61, or 2.8 percent.

In addition to the property tax increases, Madison residents will see an urban forestry charge next year and pay $5 more for expired meter parking tickets.

The changes are ways for the city to increase alternate revenue while dealing with strict state limits on how much the city can raise taxes. Those state levy limits went into effect in 2012, tying the amount municipalities can increase their levies to the amount of new construction. That has translated to smaller increases over the past four years than in previous ones, fostering frustration at the city level.
“I think the mayor and the council have found the limits to really restrict their ability to respond to local priorities, including economic development,” said city Finance director Dave Schmiedicke.
With help from the additional revenues, however, the operating budget came in $288,000 under the limit, far more than the past two years.

The parking fine changes raise the fine from $20 to $25 for expired street meters and from $25 to $30 for expired meters in municipal lots and expired meter/multi-space.
As for the urban forestry charge, the details are yet to be determined. The budget originally included $527,500 in revenues from the newly created fee, but Tuesday’s amendment increased that to $1 million.

District 9 Ald. Paul Skidmore said some constituents who initially supported the charge now oppose it, calling the increase a “bait-and-switch.”

District 19 Ald. Mark Clear has said the charge will likely appear on monthly municipal service bills and be assessed per parcel. In a memo he sent to fellow alders, Clear detailed a hypothetical scenario with costs varying by parcel that would charge, as examples, $8/year for single family homes, $12/year for two-unit homes and $200 for 50+ unit parcels. The previously preferred method centered on linear street frontage, but staff established that method would be extremely difficult to implement from an administrative perspective.

In addition to the revenue increases, council members approved a series of expenditures, including raising their pay by $2,000 per year, adding a comprehensive community planner position and funding initial community and employee engagement for police body cameras. They also transferred $100,000 to the Madison Area Sports Commission from the room tax fund and provided a cost-of-living increase for Community Development Division purchase of service contracts.
The council voted down a pay raise for future council presidents that would have essentially made the position full-time with benefits and a proposed $15 annual fee for organizations participating in the city's Madison Out-of-School-Time program.

At the end of the night Mayor Paul Soglin and others circled back to the urban forestry fee and questioned the strategy of paying for city needs with fees instead of taxes.
“I have serious reservations about raising fees as opposed to taxes,” Soglin said. “Overall, fees are biased and they hurt lower-income folks more than upper-income.”

District 1 Ald. Lisa Subeck proposed lowering the urban forestry revenues again by the $288,000 window left in the levy limit and raising taxes instead. That proposal failed, and the final levy totaled $202.9 million, an increase of 2.2 percent from this year.

# Forestry fee part of Madison budget

http://www.wiba.com/articles/madison-news-118857/forestry-fee-part-of-madison-budget-12958179

WIBA (WI), Tuesday, November 11th 2014 @ 1pm by 1310 WIBA

The Madison City Council gets down to work tonight on next years budget. A big item is a new urban forestry fee.

Council President Chris Schmidt says it is necessary to pay for the fight against the emerald ash borer, which was discovered in Madison about a year ago. Schmidt says they're still working on who should pay the fee, and what they will be charged.

As the budget stands now, the average homeowner in Madison would pay about an extra $60 a year. The meeting tonight begins at 5:30. If the council doesn't wrap up, another hearing will be held tomorrow