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# Urban Forest Stewards Course Syllabus 2020-2021

## Course Description:

The UFS course is an **online, adult-education program** that introduces people who are passionate about trees and forests to advanced concepts in tree biology, tree care, tree identification, urban forest ecology, and sustainable forestry. The goal of the course is to empower people to improve Austin's urban forest through knowledge and stewardship efforts taken beyond the UFS course.

## Course Information:

**Course Organizer:**

Collin McMichael, TreeFolks' Education Coordinator

**Email:** [collin@treefolks.org](mailto:collin@treefolks.org)

**Office:** (512) 443-5323

**Mail:**

TreeFolks  
P.O. Box 1395  
Del Valle, TX 78617

**Class Times:**

Independent Study

**Office Hours:**

By appointment (Zoom)

## Background:

Austin's urban landscape has been and continues to be intensely modified by human activity. City planners maintain the function of this environment through the use of appropriately established infrastructure such as noise barriers or storm-water detention ponds that mitigate the deleterious effects of human activity. The trees, natural areas, and green spaces present in urban areas can be considered "green infrastructure" that similarly help avoid or repair the more negative effects of human habitation like noise pollution and increased impervious cover. These urban forests also have measurable, positive effects on human health and well-being. The Urban Forest Stewards Course is designed to help everyday citizens understand the stewardship required to keep our city's urban canopy happy, healthy, and thriving. Experts and professionals in the field have lent their expertise to provide detailed lectures designed to encourage a life-time of urban forest stewardship.

## Course Structure:

The learning modules will include pre-recorded lectures, readings, fieldwork, and exams. Lectures are taught by TreeFolks' Education Coordinator, Collin McMichael, along with local professionals and experts in the field. Readings will serve to reinforce material covered in lectures, and fieldwork activities involve obtaining materials for collections highlighting native diversity. All collections together are 25% of your grade. There are also three exams. Each exam is another 25% of your grade, and each exam covers the material from a single learning module but may touch on other concepts presented previously. **TreeFolks requires a final grade of 60% or higher for a student to be officially certified as an Urban Forest Steward at graduation.**

## Workshop Structure:

All UFS workshops are optional but included in the price of UFS online instruction. Workshop material will not specifically be on the exams but may help with comprehension. Workshops will be pre-recorded or through a tele-conferencing service.

## Summit Structure:

The final session will be the UFS Summit. **The in-person UFS summit is tentatively scheduled for August 21, 2021** and consists of students presenting their final stewardship project proposal posters (see below) in person. This event is dependent on APH guidelines.

## Communications:

Upon registration, students will be sent information on how to access the course materials through the website and google drive and this syllabus. **The best way to contact the course organizer would be via email or the office number listed in this syllabus.** If it is urgent please feel free to reach out via cell phone with a call or text.

Office hours will be held in order to answer questions about the material and to consult about stewardship projects. Office hours locations are available as zoom meetings on a first come, first serve basis. Students can schedule office hours up to two weeks in advance by emailing the course organizer at [collin@treefolks.org](mailto:collin@treefolks.org).

Readings for each module will be made available on the course Google drive. Lectures, exams, and homework instructions will be available through the UFS course portal on the TreeFolks website. **If you do not have access to the readings, please alert the instructor immediately.** There is also a UFS Facebook page that will be used to share updated course information, current materials, and events that are relevant to the class throughout the program:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/419284581606003/>

## Online Learning Modules:

### **UFS210: Adaptations to Central Texas**

1. Introduction to TreeFolks and UFS – Andrew Smiley & TreeFolks Staff
2. UFS projects – Collin McMichael
3. How to Use a Tree Key – Collin McMichael
4. Trees of Texas – Neil Kaufman
5. Tree Biology: Texas Style – Brad Hamel
6. Fruit Trees for Central Texas – Ben Bertram
7. **EXAM 1**

### **UFS211: Urbanizations effects on trees**

1. Soils: abiotic to biotic – Collin McMichael
2. Stand Dynamics – Collin McMichael
3. Tree Permitting in Austin – Daniel Priest
4. Urban Development and Trees – Stephanie Simmons
5. Right Tree, Right Place – Colleen Dieter
6. C.O.D.I.T. – Leah Churner
7. **EXAM 2**

### **UFS212: Fostering a healthy urban forest**

1. Ecosystem Services – Lana Denkler
2. Riparian Forests – Staryn Wagner
3. Finding Funding – Carolyn Weaver
4. Carbon Credits: TCFRP – Collin McMichael
5. Engaging and Motivating Volunteers – Sydnie Tafolla
6. Public Advocacy – Ryan Rosshirt
7. **EXAM 3**
8. **Tree ID Quiz**

## Stewardship Projects:

**Each student must develop a fully implementable Stewardship Project that addresses one identified problem effecting Austin's urban forest in order to be certified.** Students are expected to accomplish these projects through their own time and volunteers in the year following the course, but certification as an Urban Forest Steward is not contingent on completion of stewardship projects.

Students are encouraged to develop these projects on their own, but projects representing a significant amount of personal time may be split among students with permission. These projects should be geared towards solving urban forestry problems in Austin and the surrounding areas. Projects should address something that participants are passionate about. **The goal of this exercise is to show the knowledge gained through the course and apply it to real world situations once you have graduated.** A list of some of the previous projects is featured below this section.

Be sure to use the following guidelines when developing your project and presentation:

1. Have your project topic **approved no later than June 19, 2021.**
2. **Sign up to present a poster** on the form that will be emailed out in summer of 2021.
3. Plan for an informal, **five-to-seven-minute talk about your project** with about 2 minutes for questions after.
4. **Projects must be presented on a poster at least 22" x 28" and must include project title, name, an abstract, proposed methods, and conclusion.** Poster may include photos, graphs, or any other materials that help illustrate your project.
5. Be sure to address the five following points in your poster:
  - a. **What is the problem you are addressing?**
  - b. **Why did you choose this particular issue?**
  - c. **What have you done so far?**
  - d. **What else are you planning to do?**
  - e. **What are some ways you might accomplish these goals?**

Students are encouraged to attend office hours to further discuss project guidelines, development, and implementation. Students are required to present the stewardship project posters they have developed during the UFS course during the Summit session on August 21, 2021. **If you are unable to attend the UFS Summit but wish to present a UFS project, please email me at [collin@treefolks.org](mailto:collin@treefolks.org) as soon as possible.**

## Previous UFS Stewardship Projects:

<u>UFS Student</u>	<u>Project</u>
1. Gillian	<p><b>Low Cost Riparian Restoration</b>  <i>Gillian planned to restore streamsid es with whip plantings and other low-cost restoration methods.</i></p>
2. Anthony & Jocelyn	<p><b>Ligustrum Girdling in SFC Community Garden</b>  <i>Anthony and Jocelyn planned to eradicate the invasive Ligustrum at the SFC Community Garden.</i></p>
3. Jacob	<p><b>Tree Bike Map of Austin</b>  <i>For a joint project with Texas Master Naturalists, Jacob found notable tree specimens across Austin and planned a bike route between them that will be published in a pamphlet.</i></p>
4. Jack	<p><b>Fruit Trees for a Student Run Organic Farm</b>  <i>Jack used his UFS knowledge to choose several fruit trees for his UT student farm and coordinated with NeighborWoods to get them planted.</i></p>
5. Tinisha	<p><b>Advanced Workshop Series: Soils!</b>  <i>Tinisha enjoyed the Advanced Workshop Series so much so decided to plan the next event: a panel of experts on soils!</i></p>
6. Katherine	<p><b>Community Activated Park Project: Shoal Creek</b>  <i>Katherine worked with PARD and her community to develop a plan to build a park in her neighborhood along Shoal Creek.</i></p>
7. Adam and Bill	<p><b>Trees for Riverside Golf Course</b>  <i>Bill and Adam worked with their favorite golf course to identify potential planting sights to enhance enjoyment of the game.</i></p>
8. Tuulikki	<p><b>Hikes for Girl Scouts</b>  <i>Tuulikki identified education hike routes for her local Girl Scout troup s to follow to learn more about Central Texas ecology.</i></p>

## Urban Forest Steward Certification:

This class is certified by TreeFolks to provide the most up-to-date and relevant urban-forestry education available to lay persons of Central Texas. **In order to receive an Urban Forest Steward Certificate from TreeFolks students must complete the Urban Forest Stewards Course with a 60% or greater score and present their Urban Forest Stewardship Project to the class in the UFS Summit.** All grades are final. Students with grades lower than 60% will be notified after the final class session that they are not eligible for certification as Urban Forest Stewards, but are still welcome to create a stewardship project and present in the UFS Summit if they so choose.

- Students ineligible for certification who have not presented projects will receive a tuition waiver for 75% of the registration fee for the following year's UFS course.
- Students ineligible for certification that have presented projects in the UFS Summit will receive a tuition waiver for 100% of the registration fee for the following year's UFS course.

## Skilled Volunteerism:

Urban Forest Steward Certification is required for skilled volunteerism under the TreeFolks Education Program. Any Urban Forest Steward interested in leading or assisting with Tree ID Walks, Workshops, and Sapling Adoptions as a **Tree ID Docent** is encouraged to email the Education Coordinator at [collin@treefolks.org](mailto:collin@treefolks.org) for more information. If you are interested in providing skilled volunteer work for another program, please email the Education Coordinator to get in touch with the correct staff member. The TreeFolks Education Program is proud to offer our UFS600 Service-Learning Series for all certified stewards and their families, which bring the skill and dedication of our students to other TreeFolks programs.

# The UFS Workshop Series

*UFS workshops are a great way to expand your stewardship knowledge. The UFS Workshops will explore areas of urban forestry that we are unable to cover in the course. Workshop material will not be covered in exams.*

## **UFS201: Practice with pruning**

Pruning guidance through lecture and practice. Pruning instructions will focus on structural pruning for young trees and pruning fruit trees for Central Texas. Practice examples will take place on orchard trees and/or nursery stock. This event will be held digitally.

## **UFS203: Leaves are Dumb! (Practice with Winter Tree ID)**

Winter Tree ID guidance through pre-recorded fieldwork and lecture elements. These workshops are volunteer lead by previously certified Urban Forest Stewards.

## **UFS202: Practice with propagation**

Propagation guidance through lecture and practice. Propagation instructions will focus on low-cost methods for increasing tree stocks of native species and fruit trees for Central Texas. Cuttings, grafting, seed sowing, and marcottage will all be shown through examples. This event will be held digitally.

# The UFS600 Series

## (Postponed until Fall 2021)

*UFS600 Series are a great way to meet previous UFS students and put your stewardship knowledge into practice. UFS600 Series events consist of intense, 1-day service-learning projects designed to tackle an issue facing Austin's Urban Forest. Participants are encouraged to bring their own tools when applicable, but sanitized tools will be provided if meeting in person. Also, be sure to bring your own water and a lunch if necessary, and wear closed toed shoes, sunscreen, and a face mask if required. We welcome all levels of ability at our events and can promise that you will be put to work! But please contact [collin@treefolks.org](mailto:collin@treefolks.org) if you have any concerns. Expect moderate to strenuous activity.*

### **UFS610: Tree Seed Hunters**

This service-learning experience supplies TreeFolks partnered growers with material to grow out for our reforestation and sapling days offerings. Attendees will get to practice seed and tree ID. These events offerings are contingent on APH recommendations.

### **UFS620: Riparian Tree Friends**

This service-learning experience supplies the Reforestation Program with skilled volunteers. Attendees will get to discuss riparian forests and reforestation with event attendees at these tabling events. These events offerings are contingent on APH recommendations.

### **UFS630: Urban Forest Emissaries**

This service-learning experience supplies the Education Program with skilled volunteers. Attendees will get to discuss Austin's Urban Forest, Tree ID, and Tree care with event attendees at these tabling events. These events offerings are contingent on APH recommendations.

### **UFS640: NeighborWoods Liaisons**

This service-learning experience supplies NeighborWoods with skilled volunteers. Attendees will get to practice tree ID, exercise their Right-Tree-Right-Place expertise, and teach Austin residents how to plant a tree. These events offerings are contingent on APH recommendations.

#### **Prerequisites:**

Enrolled in UFS201, Urban Forest Steward Status, Tree ID Docent Status or TF Ambassador Status