

MTGF PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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My Swedish weather rock was swinging a few times this summer, but it did not get wet very often and our ornamental landscape plant materials were forced to take notice, often with very unfortunate results. Landscapes with sufficient irrigation, and the trees within them, held up pretty well, but the drought was severe and extended and happened at the height of the evapotranspirative demand for water in trees. While many hackberry, silver maple and boxelder trees dried up completely, even the normally drought-tolerant burl oak suffered. The rains have fortunately returned, the grass has greened up again, and there seems to be evidence of

recovery in some trees. You can bet that energy budgets have been stressed, and maybe even strained to the breaking point in some cases. My crystal ball has failed me so often recently that I had to put a towel over it, but I fear for the fate of many invaluable old shade trees that did not get to benefit from any form of supplemental water.

On a more positive note the Economic Impact Survey (EIS) the MTGF commissioned in 2006 is completed. Readex Research conducted the survey, which was reviewed and statistically verified by the UMD Bureau of Business and Economic Research in 2007. The green infrastructure maintenance industries we represent pump over \$8.2 billion through the Minnesota economy every year. That's billion, with a "b." We represent more than 54,000 jobs, more than the number of principal operators in farming (51,000), and manage over 508,000 acres, the 8th largest of individual agricultural commodities. The message is that we collectively have a major impact on the economic well-being of the State of Minnesota, and have dependable figures that show it. The challenge now is to take it to the bank.

Our mission to promote the green industries in Minnesota through support of research, education and outreach at the University of Minnesota and elsewhere remains unchanged. Our challenge is to

accomplish our mission more effectively, and our hope is that the EIS can substantially assist us in that regard. We are in the midst of preparing a white paper summary of our EIS to share with legislators, researchers, educators and other policy

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makers who can and do influence research, education and outreach priorities at our public institutions of higher learning. It's all about the money, and there is nowhere near enough of it. We granted over \$100,000 this year, enough to keep critical turf research and teaching programs at the University going that could not go on without it, but it was barely one third of the requests. We need a larger and more dependable revenue stream for our researchers and educators and believe we now have a powerful new lever to employ.

"Yes," you say, "but how or why does all this matter to me?" At a recent board of directors meeting with executives and officers of the associations affiliated with the MTGF we learned that due to a lack of effective reporting to the affiliates we have not adequately answered that question. While it always seems to be true that there is more need than money, the foundation has substantial success to report. Including more than \$408,000 the MTGF has directly granted since it was founded in 1993, more than \$1.15 million in cash and in-kind contributions have been made by our members in support of our mission. Grantees have included the departments of horticulture and plant pathology, the College of Natural Resources (CNR), the Landscape Arboretum and UMore Park, among others. The foundation has

funded teaching, research and outreach at the Turfgrass Research, Outreach and Education (TROE) Center and the TRE Nursery. There are too many projects to enumerate specifically, but close to me personally are experiments on planting depths for trees and research on Dutch elm disease tolerance in both hybrid elm trees and specific cultivars of American elm. We have reason to hope that we will some day have a local provenance, disease-tolerant cultivar of American elm, and a reason to be proud of the foundation's role in funding the research. The MTGF even helped the Minnesota Society of Arboriculture fund the development of a video on

preventing stem girdling roots of trees that went on to win an award at the International Society of Arboriculture Annual Conference in Seattle, Wash. in 2003. For the reasons cited above among many others, the MTGF and its actions and efforts matter to you.

At this point, and probably for the very long term, the Minnesota Green Expo is our principal source of revenue. Fortunately this collaborative effort with the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association has been an outstanding success, getting bigger every year with every new year being more promising than the last. Green Expo '07 drew more than 8,000 paid attendees, each of which contributed to the pool of money we were able to grant for the purpose of advancing our mission. Expo '08 will be bigger and better than ever. The two largest domes are already spoken for by our loyal industry vendors, and the educational programs promise to be stronger than ever. There are few, if any, better learning opportunities for green industry professionals than provided during the Green Expo, and now we get to use the Minneapolis Convention Center's newest facilities. So please set Wednesday, January 9 through Friday, January 11, 2008 aside on your calendar for the grandest green industry exposition ever. Pick a reason, any reason, you will not be disappointed.