

Dan Hoffman:

Hello, and welcome to part two of The Rouss Review, the City Works portion of our program. We're going to be talking trees today. Did we talk trash last time? We talk trash, we talk trees.

Amy Simmons:

We talked glass.

Dan Hoffman:

We talked glass. Did we talk glass last-

Amy Simmons:

No, it was radios. Radios was last.

Dan Hoffman:

Radios. We talked radios last time.

Amy Simmons:

It was glass, then radios.

Dan Hoffman:

Well, today the topic is trees. You all have trees. You all know what trees are. Today we're going to talk to the city arborist. We'll talk about what a city arborist does and stuff about trees, so let's go ahead and bring Jordan in. Hello and welcome, Jordan.

Jordan Herring:

Thank you.

Dan Hoffman:

Jordan, what's your last name? Herring?

Jordan Herring:

Herring, yep.

Dan Hoffman:

Herring.

Jordan Herring:

Like the fish.

Dan Hoffman:

Like the fish. You know what? In some countries they eat a lot of pickled herring.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, it's not a predatory fish.

Dan Hoffman:

No, it's not a predatory fish. Yeah, it's definitely not like a shark. Herrings aren't out there trying to kill seals, but herring, especially in the Nordic countries, a lot of pickled herring and cured herrings. It can be pretty tasty. It's not bad.

Jordan Herring:

Salty.

Dan Hoffman:

It's salty. You got to like it, and if you're not a fan of sardines, which I am not, or anchovies, which I am not, herring's probably not up your alley, but I can get with a little bit of herring. It's not so bad.

Amy Simmons:

Aren't they little tiny fish like anchovies?

Dan Hoffman:

They're not too big. They can be a little bigger.

Jordan Herring:

A little bit bigger.

Dan Hoffman:

Now, some sardines get pretty big. That's a misnomer about sardines.

Amy Simmons:

I see. I wouldn't know.

Dan Hoffman:

Yes. Amy's very cultured.

Amy Simmons:

No.

Dan Hoffman:

She knows all the fishes of the world.

Amy Simmons:

I do not.

Dan Hoffman:

But one thing that she would love to learn more about are all the trees of the world.

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Amy Simmons:

I do.

Dan Hoffman:

Jordan is here as our city arborist, so Jordan, you're relatively new to the city.

Jordan Herring:

I am.

Dan Hoffman:

You've been here for?

Jordan Herring:

I've worked here since April. I've been living here since 2019, but started the position April 4th, actually.

Dan Hoffman:

Got you. How does one become an arborist? Did you major in arborism?

Jordan Herring:

No. I get that question a lot, actually, but basically I didn't go to school for really arboriculture or anything like that. I went to school specifically-

Dan Hoffman:

Arboriculture? I didn't even know that word existed.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, that's the actual term for-

Dan Hoffman:

I thought horticulture was the general word. Is that just for smaller plants?

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, that's for smaller kind of landscape type plants. Arboriculture is arbor, like tree.

Dan Hoffman:

Arboriculture, got you. What'd you go to school for?

Jordan Herring:

I went for natural resources conservation.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay, it's related. I thought you'd be like fine arts, interpretive dance.

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Jordan Herring:

No, just a much more broader topic with wildlife, recreation.

Dan Hoffman:

No, it's very related. Yeah, absolutely. Then how'd you get into arborism?

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, I was actually working for the Virginia Department of Forestry since 2016. Yes, I was working up in northern Virginia working for the state basically, and this position opened up. I live in Winchester so why not work in Winchester as well?

Dan Hoffman:

Awesome, awesome. Well, welcome. April, that's not too long.

Jordan Herring:

No. I feel like I'm well seasoned at this point.

Amy Simmons:

Right.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Amy Simmons:

You jumped right in.

Dan Hoffman:

In the public sector, one year is basically like five years. It ages you quickly.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, and being the growing season too, April is right when things were starting to ramp up.

Dan Hoffman:

It's true. That's true.

Jordan Herring:

It's been a wild ride.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, I guess arborists aren't super busy in the winter, although there's a lot of trimming happens then, right?

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, some trimming happens, more so I think ice damage, branches coming down. We'll probably be busy in that regard, but yeah, it definitely slows down. I think the April through October time period is the very busy period.

Dan Hoffman:

Got you, yeah. The trees at my house, I could spend every weekend pruning them or trimming them or doing some type of maintenance to them because I've got a lot of trees, a lot of fruit trees, and oh, it's so much work this time of year.

Jordan Herring:

It is, and with all this rain we've gotten, everything's been just growing like crazy.

Dan Hoffman:

Yep. I had to get on my roof and trim a bunch of branches over this past weekend.

Amy Simmons:

I'm glad you're still here.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, yeah. Well, I'm not completely incapable, Amy.

Amy Simmons:

You've could have fallen is my point.

Dan Hoffman:

It's not a podcast about my clumsiness. But every season, it's like okay, I got to get up and do this again because trees grown, man, especially around here.

Jordan Herring:

They do. There's a lot in Winchester, too, so you'll stay busy.

Dan Hoffman:

Yes, there are. You got into arborism. Is that even a word, by the way?

Jordan Herring:

No. Obviously more arboriculture is the-

Dan Hoffman:

Okay. Arboriculture.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah.

Amy Simmons:

There you go.

Dan Hoffman:

Arborism flows off the tongue a little more, but you arborists you can pick that up if you want, but for now I'll refer to you as arboriculturists.

Jordan Herring:

Kind of hard to say, yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

It doesn't roll off the tongue, so arboriculturists, in a public sector setting, obviously most folks are familiar with, especially if you own a home, oh, we got to go get a tree guy to trim this tree. Maybe if they're sophisticated they might call the person an arborist, but what in your particular position as a city arborist, tell me a little bit about the day in the life there?

Jordan Herring:

It could be a busy day, again, this time of year. Basically a city arborist is kind of responsible for all the trees on city property, so it gets a little confusing because what's a city tree? What's not a city tree? If you're walking downtown and you see a tree in a tree bed, like a mulch bed on the sidewalk, that's a city tree. You can also go through neighborhoods outside of downtown and the little area, the grassy area between the sidewalk and the road, that's basically city property, so any trees grown in those areas we have to prune.

Jordan Herring:

If they need removal because they're a hazard tree, they need to come down, so basically a day as a city arborist here in Winchester is getting calls about hey, this branch maybe isn't looking very good. I'm seeing dead branches in my tree. Can you come see? Not my tree, but the city tree outside my property, can you see what's going on? It's a lot of that. It's a lot of planning for tree planting, so areas of the city where we want to plant more trees, kind of planning that out right now because October and November is the best time for tree planting.

Dan Hoffman:

Really? Why?

Jordan Herring:

Really October and November is perfect because you don't have to water the trees as much. Say you plant in spring, you have to water them regularly all summer long because it's hot. They're not established in the soil yet so they really need a lot of water. But if you plant them in October, November, generally they can go through a whole growing season almost by that point and they're already established in the soil, so less watering. You still have to water some, but less than before.

Dan Hoffman:

Fascinating, so we're going to plant a bunch of trees during the October, November timeframe.

Jordan Herring:

We are, yeah. Before I got here, Shenandoah University and the Virginia Department of Forestry worked with the previous arborist on finding hot areas of the city, so they were able to basically, I'm not exactly sure how they got it, but they were able to gauge the temperature throughout the entire city. Now I have a map that says this area is really red at this time of day, which red is bad. We've got basically a grant where we found those hot areas and now we want to go plant trees to shade those areas and cool down people's homes because they're getting shaded. Yeah, we got that. We're planting a lot of trees in Jim Barnett Park as well and some of the outside parks like Weaver and any SW Park that are kind of lacking in entry canopy.

Dan Hoffman:

Got you. Got you. You're basically our tree guy.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

But when a resident calls you and says hey, this limb is over my neighbor's property. It's hanging over my fence and I think it's going to fall on my fence, come out, city arborist and tell me, what's your role in that situation?

Jordan Herring:

Yeah. I feel like I deal with that on a weekly basis because it is a sensitive topic. You don't want a dead branch hanging over your property and it's not even your tree so you can't do anything about it. Really our role, we can't do a whole lot about that situation. That turns into a civil matter at that point. If that's our tree on city property, then I can go get that branch pruned off. If the tree's dead or dying, I can get it cut down, but if it's a tree on someone's private property, we don't really have any say on what they can and can't do with it.

Dan Hoffman:

How about if a resident calls up and says hey, I've got this big tree in my backyard. I'm going to cut it down. Do we have any rules in place that say you can't cut it down, or that's a big tree that needs to be protected? Are there any rules, state rules around that?

Jordan Herring:

No. No, there's really no state rules at all. Even when I was working for the state, there's really no guidelines or laws that you have to follow. If it's on your private property, then you can really do whatever you want with it.

Dan Hoffman:

Geez.

Amy Simmons:

Shame.

Dan Hoffman:

That's pretty different. I mean even in Florida, which was kind of the wild, wild west when it came to development, there were really strict tree rules. If it was a live oak of a certain diameter, really for live oaks in particular, they were untouchable. If you were a developer and you were going to build and you had to cut down a decent size large oak, you paid in some cases \$100,000 to cut down that tree.

Amy Simmons:

Wow.

Dan Hoffman:

It went into our tree fund to plant other trees.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, it's a big operation.

Dan Hoffman:

It was a big operation, so interesting that we don't have rules to protect, I get that you're going to get a lot of scrub trees and invasive trees and stuff, but around here what would be our heritage tree that might be protected?

Jordan Herring:

There are some diminished species in Virginia, not so much in this area. We don't really have any endangered species tree-wise that we're really like we need to protect these trees, especially in kind of urbanized areas. I think really the focus is trying to protect the non-urbanized areas and keep them from becoming fragmented or urbanized, but yeah, when it comes to city trees, maybe you have a champion tree. There are champion trees in Virginia.

Dan Hoffman:

What's a champion tree?

Jordan Herring:

That's basically the largest tree of a certain species in the state. They have hundreds of species and they have basically one that's the biggest, and you can go online. Look up Virginia Big Tree Registry, and it'll show you where every champion tree is located.

Dan Hoffman:

Virginia Big Tree Registry.

Amy Simmons:

I want a champion tree.

Dan Hoffman:

I want that too. I also want to go and find, these are like celebrity trees?



Jordan Herring:

Yeah, pretty much. Yeah, you can search for any one in Virginia.

Dan Hoffman:

Are they ranked? Is there like a second place or a third place, or is it just the biggest one listed there.

Jordan Herring:

I think it's just the biggest one.

Dan Hoffman:

Well, they must know the second biggest tree because what happens when the biggest tree falls? They have to go find the second biggest tree.

Jordan Herring:

True. Yeah, maybe they keep that on the back burner just in case.

Amy Simmons:

On the down low.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, maybe there's a quiet list of trees in waiting to become the champion tree.

Amy Simmons:

That's so sad.

Jordan Herring:

Some of these trees are on private property and in somebody's backyard.

Dan Hoffman:

Are they protected?

Jordan Herring:

I wouldn't say they're protected.

Dan Hoffman:

We don't even protect the champion trees? Come on, Virginia.

Jordan Herring:

I guess it's the private property trees. I guess it kind of opens up a can of worms. If we're going to go and tell you what you can do on your property in this regard, then what can we do later on?

Dan Hoffman:

If you got a 200 year old tree.

Jordan Herring:

I don't think anybody would be cutting those down. I would hope not.

Dan Hoffman:

Well, I would have to imagine it's going to diminish your property value a lot. I've got a huge Chinese chestnut in my backyard that I mean, dang, if anything happened to that tree my backyard would be so diminished.

Jordan Herring:

It changes everything really.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, yeah. I'm pretty sure that adds a tiny bit to my home value. Well, not just a tiny, that probably adds a noticeable amount to my home value.

Jordan Herring:

Oh, it definitely does.

Dan Hoffman:

The quality of trees that I have in my yard.

Jordan Herring:

If it's shading your home, too, you're saving money in energy costs.

Dan Hoffman:

It does. That's a good point.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, that's why trees are so important in these areas, and I'm actually going through that. I just bought a house here in the city.

Dan Hoffman:

You bought a house in the city?

Jordan Herring:

I did, yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

You live in the city?

Jordan Herring:

I do.

Amy Simmons:

Yay.

Jordan Herring:

But we've got a massive silver maple in the front yard. It's kind of funny this is happening today because last night at 2:00 in the morning there was banging on my door and I went down there and it was police asking me who's car was out front because my tree, a large branch had snapped off and was hanging in the telephone lines. It was kind of weird because it was all on the road and the sidewalk so it's my tree, but it's also my job as the city arborist to get rid of that.

Dan Hoffman:

Did you tell them that I'm the city arborist and this is my tree, it's my jurisdiction?

Jordan Herring:

I was in a daze, but yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

Tell them hey, I'll take over the case, guys.

Jordan Herring:

At 2:30 in the morning, yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

When you go out are you actually trimming the trees or are you more like the guy that says yep, that limb needs to go. Guys, take care of it?

Jordan Herring:

It depends. If it's easily accessible, here in downtown we've been pruning a lot the past couple weeks, raising the canopy, so you're not walking downtown you don't get hit in the face with a branch.

Amy Simmons:

That's good.

Dan Hoffman:

That would be undesirable.

Jordan Herring:

We do do a lot of that. We do have a bucket truck that if we can get to it, ours isn't a huge bucket truck, but if we can reach the broken branch, the branch that needs to be trimmed, and it's not around a power line, then we will attempt to get it. But we also contract a lot of work out, so anything near power lines I generally contract out.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, don't do that.

Jordan Herring:

I don't want to deal with that, or any really big or complicated tree, we'll just contract that out.

Dan Hoffman:

Now is the electric company responsible? They're responsible for trimming around their lines, right?

Jordan Herring:

They are, yeah. They will prune all around the power lines. We actually have a program called Right Tree, Right Place here in Winchester, so it's a program that you're not supposed to have large canopy trees in the power lines. It's a hazardous situation. They're always pruning them up, so they're injuring the trees every year.

Dan Hoffman:

And they look dumb.

Jordan Herring:

They do. They do not look good.

Dan Hoffman:

After awhile, there's one on what is it, Loudoun, no, not Loudoun, it's on Braddock over by Handley, that oh, it looks-

Jordan Herring:

It turns into a U.

Dan Hoffman:

It turns into a giant U. It's just dumb looking.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, and it's not good branch structure for the tree. It becomes imbalanced, those branches can snap easily. Really, trees, if they're touching power lines they can be dangerous, so Shenandoah Valley Electric, we do have a program with them, we work closely, where they will pay to get those trees cut down for us and then they will also pay to replant a more appropriate small to medium size species.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, good for them.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, they really help us out here in the city.

Amy Simmons:

We have information on that on our website if somebody's curious.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, so one last thing. Winchester is known for our apples, and obviously then, apple trees. What about, and this is really not an arborist, well, it's an arborist question but not city arborist question. What about the area around Winchester makes it so good for apple trees?

Jordan Herring:

Oh, that is a good question. Really, we've got a good temperate environment. Trees just grow well in Virginia, especially in this area, but really, I'm not from Winchester so I don't know that answer completely, but I just think that back in the day orchards kind of got started up here and they just ran with it.

Dan Hoffman:

Planted what worked.

Jordan Herring:

They've got orchards down south or where I'm from, Rockingham County, but yeah, you don't see near as many like you do up in this area.

Dan Hoffman:

Do we have any city fruit trees around?

Jordan Herring:

Not fruit trees in regards to an apple tree or a pear tree, something like that, because that's going to be a nuisance falling all over the sidewalks and the roads, but there are some native species that we plant that more so we plant for wildlife reasons or bird reasons. We plant serviceberries that are really good trees for birds. They have little berries that birds and mammals will eat.

Dan Hoffman:

People don't eat serviceberries, though, do they?

Jordan Herring:

You can, I think.

Dan Hoffman:

You can?

Jordan Herring:

Don't take my word on that, but yeah, no, you can. It's a native tree.

Dan Hoffman:

Kids, don't go out and try to eat random berries. This is purely just for conversation.

Jordan Herring:

There's black gum. They also have some smaller fruits, hackberry trees. They're all native species that we will plant.

Dan Hoffman:

Mulberry ain't bad.

Jordan Herring:

Mulberry, yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

Is that technically a tree?

Jordan Herring:

It is, yeah. Yeah, they're trees.

Dan Hoffman:

It looks like a weed.

Jordan Herring:

There's a non-native. There's a Chinese variety and then there's a native, but that's my favorite fruit to eat, is a mulberry tree.

Dan Hoffman:

Really?

Jordan Herring:

Yeah. They're not good trees for street trees because the fruit is kind of big and it gets splatters all over the ground.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, and it stains. Yeah. I had a big mulberry tree a few houses back, and it went pretty good. They're so fragile, though.

Jordan Herring:

They are. They're not the prettiest trees either.

Dan Hoffman:

No, no. You're better to just pop the berries off and eat them.

Jordan Herring:

But they're delicious, though, yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

They're tasty.

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, my favorite.

Dan Hoffman:

Fascinating.

Amy Simmons:

We need to ask about Tree City USA.

Dan Hoffman:

Well, Amy, ask about Tree City USA, then.

Amy Simmons:

Well, Jordan, how long have we been a Tree City USA?

Jordan Herring:

This year is year number 40, actually.

Dan Hoffman:

Forty?

Jordan Herring:

Yeah, a big year.

Dan Hoffman:

Wow.

Amy Simmons:

And what does that mean?

Jordan Herring:

Being a Tree City USA city or municipality basically means that you have an arborist on staff or you contract out an arborist that takes care of trees throughout the city. You have an Arbor Day every single year and you spend a certain amount of money per capita on tree pruning, tree planting, removal, everything like that. There's three designations that you have to have to be a Tree City USA.

Dan Hoffman:

Awesome, and Amy, do we have something on our website about trees and our arborist?

Amy Simmons:

Of course we do.

Dan Hoffman:

Wonderful. Where can they find that?

Amy Simmons:

It's under the public works section. Just click on trees once you go there.

Dan Hoffman:

Fantastic.

Amy Simmons:

It'll have all information about what he does for the city, and also we have a list of what do you call it, the native plants, the native trees that are okay to plant?

Jordan Herring:

Recommended species, yeah, and we're currently editing that as well, too, so I'm about to send Amy an updated list because some of the species we have on there are now invasive.

Dan Hoffman:

They're now invasive?

Jordan Herring:

Yeah.

Amy Simmons:

What does that mean? Wait a minute. Back up.

Dan Hoffman:

When did they become invasive?

Jordan Herring:

In a lot of urban environments you want to plant something that's going to last because trees don't want to grow in a city. They don't have not a lot of root space, soil's compacted, so you need something hardy. A lot of times we're planting species that are not native to this area that are going to do well. Well, it turns out some of those turn into invasive species, like Bradford pear. We have those quite throughout the city. We didn't know they were invasive at the time, but they turned into it. We've got a couple. There's Amur maple, there's a cork tree. They have just recently been put on the invasive species list. That's why it's important to stay up to date on everything.

Dan Hoffman:

I wonder if I've got one of those pear trees.

Amy Simmons:



Should we add Tree of Heaven to that?

Jordan Herring:

Oh gosh.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh yeah.

Jordan Herring:

Hopefully everybody knows at this point please do not plant that.

Amy Simmons:

Spotted lanternflies.

Dan Hoffman:

Spotted lanternflies. Yeah, we're going to talk about that coming up soon, right?

Amy Simmons:

In October, yes.

Dan Hoffman:

Wonderful. All right, Jordan. Thank you very much for joining us. Thanks for talking trees with us, and if you want to learn more, check out the city's website, [winchesterva.gov](http://winchesterva.gov). Thanks, Jordan.

Jordan Herring:

Thanks for having me.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay, Jordan, new employee.

Amy Simmons:

Yeah, relatively new, but he got thrown into the fire as soon as he got here.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah.

Amy Simmons:

Because he had no learning curve whatsoever.

Dan Hoffman:

Arborists in any city, first off, it's hard to keep and maintain them, so I hope he's here for awhile because you can, just like many other private sector jobs, you can go do arborist stuff in the private sector and maybe make a little bit more, but Jordan is a public servant.

Amy Simmons:

It makes a big difference, yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

It makes a big, huge difference to have talented folks, so I hope he sticks around for a long time.

Amy Simmons:

We have enough work that we could use three arborists.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, that's true, and we have a bunch of trees, which is great for our city, but it also means we get a ton of questions from residents about trees. If you do have an issue with a tree or if you're interested, please check out the city website so you know what to do with it. If you're in a completely different city, your city probably has a city arborist, so check out your own city's website.

Amy Simmons:

You know one thing we didn't talk about?

Dan Hoffman:

What's that?

Amy Simmons:

We have an Adopt a Tree program.

Dan Hoffman:

Yes, for all the orphan trees out there. You, for the low, low cost of a cup of coffee can adopt a tree.

Amy Simmons:

No. It's definitely more.

Dan Hoffman:

It's more than a cup of coffee.

Amy Simmons:

Yeah. You actually donate money to the planting of a tree somewhere in the city and you can even dedicate it to someone.

Dan Hoffman:

That's very nice.

Amy Simmons:

If you go to our website, go to the Adopt a Tree. Go to public works, then trees, then on there is the information about Adopt a Tree. It's a great program. It gets a lot of interest.

Dan Hoffman:

How much does it cost?

Amy Simmons:

It depends I think on the tree.

Dan Hoffman:

Maybe the podcast should adopt a tree.

Amy Simmons:

A hundred and something dollars.

Dan Hoffman:

Or maybe not. Maybe the podcast won't adopt a tree.

Amy Simmons:

You can't do a seedling. It has to be a real tree.

Dan Hoffman:

Can't do a seedling? Oh, it's got to be a real tree?

Amy Simmons:

Yeah, and this is a good time to do it because then we can plant it this fall.

Dan Hoffman:

Well, if you want to adopt a tree and dedicate it after me, that'd be awesome, or the podcast. If you want to sponsor the podcast by adopting a tree, that would be great.

Amy Simmons:

That'd be amazing.

Dan Hoffman:

We'll thank you on the podcast, so yeah, check out the City website if you want to adopt a tree or learn more about the City Arborist and what he does. Thanks again for listening to the Rouss Review and we'll see you around City Hall.