

# Meet Monica, Officially



**By: Ashley Reichard**

*Department of Forest Resources  
University of Minnesota*

If you read our last newsletter, you probably recognize this individual's name. Monica Randazzo is a recent graduate from the University of Minnesota and has been involved with many aspects of the Urban Forestry Outreach, Research & Extension Nursery and Lab (UFore). Aside from her research and past work as the nursery manager, Monica has also been involved with a number of volunteer trainings so it is likely you have already seen her around.

We're here to really introduce (or re-introduce) you to Monica as she has recently rejoined the UFore lab as Researcher 1. She will be having a much more active hand in the Minnesota Tree Care Advocate Program and also has resources for communities and volunteers regarding other programs and opportunities. **Monica, could you break down what exactly that means and the breadth of what you will be working on?**

Thank you for the introduction, Ashley! The main research project that I will be focusing my energy on is a Cost Benefit Study of Planting Stock that I began working on in 2016 as an undergrad. It is a three-year project that compares the growth rates and survival between planting stock types in nine different communities in Southeastern Minnesota. This project potentially offers some data collection opportunities to interested volunteers based out of Southeastern Minnesota. As Ashley said, in addition to this work I will be spending a lot more time involved with the Minnesota Tree Care Advocate Program, as well as helping develop and share educational materials. I will also be managing the Tree Trek program, which is a statewide outreach program which aims to engage the public through informational signs along a path or through a park. Each sign is created for an individual tree, and lists interesting and important details that may be of interest. Tree Treks are coordinated between interested communities and/or organizations and The UFore Lab, more information can be found on the website: <https://treetrek.weebly.com/>

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When you first started dipping your toes into volunteer engagement and learning about the UFore programs that exist, **what was your first impression of the Minnesota Tree Care Advocate Program?**

I had the pleasure of meeting a few Minnesota Tree Care Advocates at my first ever Minnesota Shade Tree Short Course in 2016. I attended the MNTCA Luncheon, and was lucky enough to learn about the program from some of the volunteers themselves! My first impression was that everyone was so dedicated and helpful. As a student, I was still getting started out in Urban and Community Forestry, and meeting so many well informed volunteers exposed me to many aspects of the field that I had not yet learned about or considered. Ever since then I've been so excited for any opportunity work with the program that I can.

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Earlier this year, Monica was able to take part in a Leadership Training Series held by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration alongside Valerie MaClannahan and Ashley Reichard. This has been a great opportunity to learn about strategies for improving non-profit or volunteer-based programs, as well as how other programs throughout the state function. Based on this training, **if you could change one thing about the Minnesota Tree Care Advocate Program, what would it be?**

If there were one thing that I could change about the Minnesota Tree Care Advocate Program, it would be to help increase the reach of the program so that more people could be involved and work in conjunction with the existing volunteer base. I think that communities and individuals could benefit from learning a great deal from long-time volunteers who have known and represented the program so well.

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Since you will be actively working with volunteers, **what is one thing about yourself that you would like our volunteers to know about you?**

I love to talk birds, books, baking, and fruit! And of course, trees.

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**Aside from your official work description, what else interests you about urban forestry? In other words, what aspects of urban forestry really gets your gears turning and you wanting learn more?**

My favorite thing about Urban Forestry is how it is inextricably tied to communities and people. I am extremely interested in the intersection of the natural sciences and social justice, because the natural sciences (Urban Forestry included) are deeply rooted in how our societies interact with nature.

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Now, it doesn't always have to be about work. Let's have a little fun in this conversation. **What would you say you are known for outside of work?**

I'm known for loudly riding my skateboard around town with my obscenely cute black lab-mix, Harvey. I am also an avid painter, bookworm, and hiker.

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To close, **what are some of your favorite things to do in your spare time?**

If I haven't already overstated this, I love to read. I also will do just about anything that gets my dog and I outside, so that later I will have a good excuse to binge watch Greys Anatomy on Netflix.

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Thank you, Monica, for agreeing to be featured in the Minnesota Tree Care Advocate newsletter. We hope all of you reading this learned a bit more about Monica, what she will be working on, and how she can support your experience as volunteer. **What is the best way to reach you if folks want to get involved with other opportunities like the cost-benefit research or Tree Treks Program?**

My e-mail ([randa318@umn.edu](mailto:randa318@umn.edu)) is usually the best shot at getting in contact with me, but if folks are interested in the Tree Treks program, there is a Contact Us submission form on the website as well.

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## **More Information**

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Planting Stock (progress report) by Monica Randazzo:

[http://mntca.umn.edu/sites/g/files/pua2161/f/media/cost\\_benefit\\_analysis\\_of\\_planting\\_stock\\_2.13.18\\_2.pdf](http://mntca.umn.edu/sites/g/files/pua2161/f/media/cost_benefit_analysis_of_planting_stock_2.13.18_2.pdf)

Tree Treks Program:

<https://treetrek.weebly.com/>