

**For Immediate Release**

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## Tennessee Urban Forestry Council Announces MBG as first Center of Excellence

The city of Memphis offers an immense collection of beautiful trees and within the heart of the city sits the Memphis Botanic Garden. The Garden has approximately 170 different species of trees with numerous examples of some species, according to Adult Education Manager Laurie Williams. "More species are being constantly added," says Williams. Classified as a Level IV Arboretum by the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council, the Memphis Botanic Garden has recently been designated the first Center of Excellence for Urban Forestry in Tennessee. The goal of this program is to actively promote and enhance urban forestry within the regional area. The plan calls for there to be three Centers of Excellence programs in the state with the Memphis Botanic Garden representing the West Tennessee region. The Centers of Excellence for the other two regions will be announced in the future.

"The Center of Excellence program developed by the Tennessee Urban Forestry Commission is a giant step forward in promoting urban forestry and overall tree health in Tennessee on a more local level. The Memphis Botanic Garden was very honored to be selected as the as the West Tennessee Region's COE, and the fact that we were the first one to be recognized is an outstanding endorsement for our tree program at the Memphis Botanic Garden," says Executive Director Jim Duncan.

To maintain this high recognition, the Memphis Botanic Garden will rely on their tree team which is composed of seven volunteers who "meet weekly to ID, tag, map, assess tree health, and maintain the trees on the grounds," explains Williams. Chris O'Bryan, a Certified Arborist on the Memphis Botanic Garden Staff assists the tree team "to maintain the health of the arboretum as well as satisfy the requirements put forth by the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council. O'Bryan commented, "I devote my working hours mitigating the risk involved in the complex relationship between trees and humans: maintaining the health of our trees, assessing pruning, watering, and fertilization needs. I also climb every chance I get,"

As a Center of Excellence, the Memphis Botanic Garden will host educational programs, help with certification of arboretums in the region, and serve as a resource to the community for tree information and education.

**Memphis Botanic Garden**  
Home of the Goldsmith Civic Garden Center  
750 Cherry Road, Memphis, TN 38117