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TCEC Interview with an Environmental Champion Amos White



TCEC – Amos, tell us briefly about yourself and environmental actions you are part of.

Amos - I'm founder and chief planning officer with 100k trees for humanity. We're an urban reforestation nonprofit. We help other cities and organizations plant trees for climate, for equity and for public health. We are heavily engaged in the Bay Area, particularly in the East Bay, from the cities up in Richmond to Pittsburgh, Martinez, Fremont, Alameda, Berkeley, even down in East San Jose and out to Livermore. We are planting trees to address climate change, and particularly supporting the climate effort through an environmental justice lens. So we're planting trees in communities that are under supplied or benefit from tree access and that's where our equity component comes in. I'm also on the Alameda County Agricultural Advisory Committee as commissioner. I tree and that's where our equity component comes in. I'm also the Alameda County.

TCEC – You are known for working actively in tree planting. How's it going?

Amos - it's both a struggle and exciting. I'll say this, for many it started off with, obviously, Greta Thunberg. I, like some people, started with Al Gore, and then, like you mentioned. It began too with Wangari Maathai. if you want to make it local, it even began with what's his name, John Muir, bringing attention, or Bret Hart or Joaquin Miller, bringing attention to nature, and how we're disrupting nature, and how that actually has consequences for nature first, the environment first, but also for how that impacts our food source as well as our need for shade in urban areas That impacts us from a societal standpoint, but more specifically in regards to forest clearing and consequences. Thank goodness for Greta Thunberg lightning call in 2019, in the Global Strike for climate. It got the world to wake up - over 5.5 million people and kids left school. The kids marched for climate and for us all to put a halt to what is now a crisis. In 2020 Governor Newsom put up

the first \$54 billion for climate investment and that really set the tone for the nation. Two years later, in 2022, President Biden came in office and got the IRA passed, (Investment Recovery Act), which put up over around \$1.6 trillion for climate change. It was initially set for over \$6 trillion but negotiations brought it down to 1.6 trillion.

It's only part of what we really needed, but it's historic, and started things off. Now we have an investment in urban forestry across the country, thanks to the IRA and the Biden administration of over 1.6 or \$1.9 billion in funding for trees and for environmental investments increasing tree canopy here in the East Bay. We've got our work cut out for us. Cities still haven't redirected their own budgets at scale to really fund this as a crisis, much like we did with covid. You know, with the virus it required getting people to isolate. It was a crisis and we needed to enforce the spacing every six feet, put out signs for that, and even stickers on the ground for people to use. In this climate crisis, we face an uphill battle. But you're seeing cities like Hayward starting to work, making stronger investments and getting trees planted, literally by the 1000s in the ground per year.

TCEC – Is it true you were given access to 1,000 trees? And where will they go?

We've received a very generous donation from a Bay Area Tech company, a Silicon Valley Tech company, of 1000 trees. And these are not our typical street trees. These are landscape sized trees, and they're much larger. The net value is about almost a million dollars in trees. It's \$900,000 in trees. 50% of those are going to East San Jose, historically areas for Latino or Native American of Ohlone tribes and people of the Bay Area, that were settled in that area and neglected in terms of city resources, particularly with tree canopy. So, we're working with a group down there in East San Jose, Luna Latinos United for a new America, to plant 500 of those trees. Another 500 are going up in the greater Hayward area, we're partnering with the city of Hayward area recreational parks district, (HARD) as led by 100k Trees Hayward group of community volunteers. Just like Urban Forest Friends, just like Canopy, or the Friends of the Urban Forest over in San Francisco. It's citizen driven action that is driving this work.

Lynn Miller has been more than a mentor. And more than a support. She has been more than a leader and a partner and has really helped to keep the dial high on cities partnering with the communities. Because the cities are only acting on the tax dollars that the citizens provide to have services that citizens want. And Urban Forest Friends has been consistent and dogmatic about making sure, whether it's city of Newark or Union City or Fremont, that we invest highly increasing our free canopy,

TCEC – In the Tri City area where is the most work being done

Again, for climate and for equity and public health, so that we have cooler communities and cleaner air in those communities next to where we have the I-80 freeway and the 680 freeway.

TCEC: What are the impacts of the communities that live right there? E

Amos: Environmentally, it's dramatic. So, in the Tri Cities area, UFF is leading the way. The City of Newark, I think, is, is planting has made the first major commitment where they're actually getting the trees in the ground and, and do you know who's getting those trees in the ground? Urban Forest Friends is the group that's implementing that! Fremont, the partnership is there. So hopefully Urban Forest Friends is helping to lead there as well. And also with Newark, most recently, 100k trees. Human Hayward worked in the Newark schools, two of them are actually in the city of Hayward, and volunteers with 100k trees, Hayward got 66 trees planted with 2 of them in the city of Newark. But we need to do more!

TCEC_ What areas of improvement are needed?

Amos - Well, I would ask you guys. I'm a community organizer. I'm a facilitator. We bring people together. The experts are people where they live, so I would ask you, where are the experts on urban forestry? Today people can go to a big box store or anywhere they can purchase. We need to ask, how are we going to solve climate change and the emergency we face?

TCEC – What are the greatest hurdles for 120,000 to be planted in Fremont over the next 60 years?

Amos - The biggest challenge is the crisis of imagination and vision. You don't have 60 years. How is Fremont going to do this? The way things are heating up - that's a question for five years ago. We're past that curve now – we need 25,000 trees per year! A council member came out of a meeting at Hayward recently and said "it's not good enough!" He said were not doing enough! We need to plant 300,000 trees to get to 30% canopy. We are already over 1.5 degrees Celsius as of a year ago. A year ago! He said it's not acceptable. Now Hayward is out planting every city in the bay area. In 2022 they planted 2,100 trees! They surpassed their goal. But 100,000 trees? 20,000 a year for the next five years is what we should be doing! How do we partner with community groups like Newark and Fremont and Union City? UFF can supercharge these cities and schools.

Of all the available land to plant trees city controls only about 20%. There is four times more opportunity. 80% more land to plant in private property and businesses. We need to be citizen driven – working with your neighbors. Offering a free tree in their front yard or back yard.

100,000 trees by 2030? That's 20,000 trees a year. Over 12 months that's 1666 trees per month. 416 per week. Just 59 trees per day! Want Covid crisis comparison? In just 10 months our federal government paid big pharma to produce a vaccine that normally might take 5 year's time. They did it in 20% of the time. That's a crisis response!

Franklin Delano Roosevelt pulled us out of the Dust Bowl of the 1920's. And how? He appointed a "tree army" in 1934 to plant millions of trees. 22 million men and boys planted 222 million trees from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains in hedge rows. They planted hedge rows to stop the soil erosion from the wind. And it worked! This was the CCC – Civilian Conservation Corps. Our "first" climate crisis was the Dust Bowl and

America launched an effort to save the top soil that was dearly needed to sustain our farmlands and national food production. This was a national security crisis and we meet it head on.

So, its mathematical – its not a question of “Can plant 100,000 trees in 5 -8 years. Yes we can! With just 59 trees per day per urban community. Again, we have been here before. Though only together, we need to follow Lynn’s model and that of UFF and municipalities, to plant trees and to distribute seedlings and tree ---
This is how we go to scale!

TCEC: Thank you, Amos, you really are a champion! We know you are doing a TED talk for MIT in November, and we are looking forward to it!

Past notes from the February 2023 Newsletter.

The City’s Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) anticipates that to meet the City’s long-term canopy cover goal of 24 percent by 2062, there will be a need for 121,000 new trees! (The city now has 77, 387 public trees – 17,273 city-maintained and 55,000 private-maintained). Half of the trees will go to the city land and half to residential land. I asked Chris if the goal of 800 trees in the year ahead was going to be achieved, he felt that the goal was “ambitious” but “doable.” He indicated that it would require strategic operational support, public engagement, as well as a lot of volunteer help. He also expressed that non-profits will be complementary in the tree planting process, using a left hand – right hand analogy where grants, resources, and administration may come from the city, while community outreach, motivation, education, and advocacy can be boosted by non-profits. Neither entity can do it alone, and when the longer-term strategy will require up to 7,050 trees per year, it becomes obvious that there will be an enormous challenge to both the city and the nonprofits.

Fremont has a relatively low percent of tree canopy coverage (14.4%) compared with other Bay Area cities, and the lowest “tree equity score” of all the cities (8th out of 8 cities). Tree equity refers to distribution of trees in lower income areas and indicates where more trees should be planted when adequate spaces allow. Much of this space will need to be residential. What are the benefits of an urban canopy? According to the Urban plan report trees –

- 1) Reduce stress and improve the quality of life,
- 2) Clean the air and breathe easier
- 3) Save Energy and lower costs for Buildings,
- 4) Positively influence climate to ensure sustainability,
- 5) Reduce the need for street maintenance
- 6) Raise property values
- 7) Conserve water and soil

- 8) Cool pavement and diminish urban heat islands
- 9) Protect wildlife and restore ecosystems
- 10) Build safe communities and decrease crime
- 11) Calm traffic and make neighborhoods safer and quieter

Seems like a “win-win” scenario! The U.S.Forest I-Tree analysis of Fremont’s canopy benefits, including air quality, Stormwater and Water Quality, and Carbon Storage and Sequestration has an annual value of \$44 million. The cost benefit of each dollar spent on trees gives a \$7.44 return of investment! Many communities across the country partner with local non-profit organizations (NPOs) that conduct tree planting.

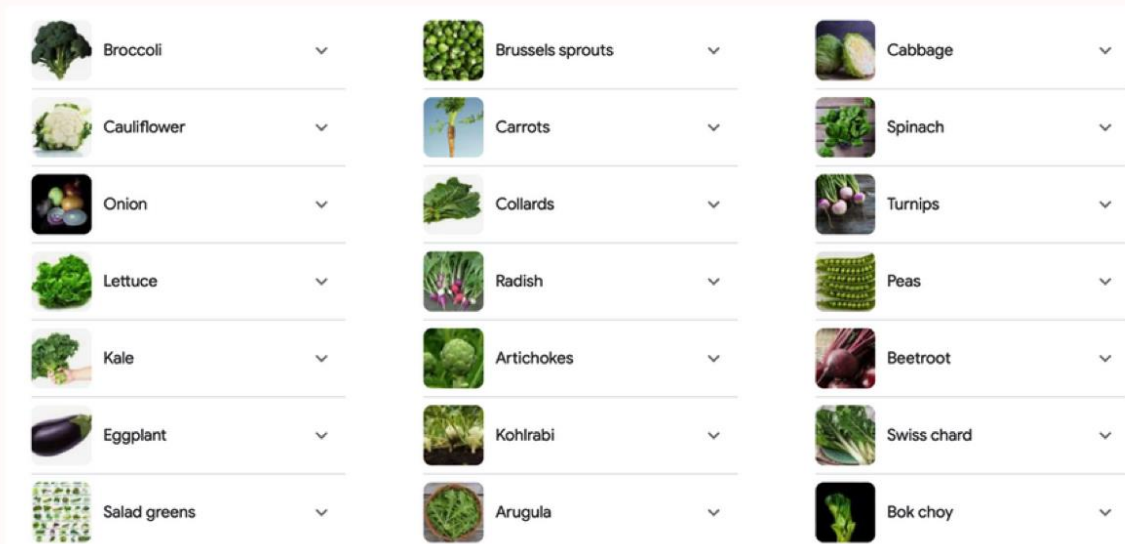
UFF Tree Planting on Saturday, Oct 12 & Oct 26th at Newark Community Park

12 more trees



**What else can be planted in the Fall? Ask Master Gardener
Guy Duran**





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Special for TCEC Members - Compostables

7" plate - was \$3.70 - now \$3.20
10" plate - now \$5.16
11.5 oz bowl - was \$2.70 - now \$2.95
8oz no tree hot cup - now \$3.45
9" cold cup - now \$3.84
10 oz cold cup - \$6.25
16 oz cold cup - now \$5.98
Teaspoon, fork or knife - now \$1.60
3 gal kitchen pail bag - now \$2.85
and 13 gal kitchen pail bag - \$3.15

Orders May be picked up at 3375 Country Drive, Fremont, on Thursdays between 11 AM – 2 PM, or by special arrangement. When purchasing please fill out an order form and pay by cash or check. Sorry, we don't have change. This benefit is for TCEC members only. Questions? Please text Bill Palleschi at 510 396 6694 or email her at Billpalleschi@gmail.com, and please cc: Caroline Harris at caroline.harris@earthlink.net