



*A Mid-Shore Treasure  
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## **OCC Announces Landscape Revitalization Project**

**Oxford, MD** – It has been over ten years since the renovations were successfully accomplished for the Oxford Community Center, and this year, the interior of the auditorium received some much-needed paint and refreshing. Thanks, in part, to the Fryling Family’s grant support, and Mid-Shore Community Foundation, Inc. the interior of OCC shines again.

This “face-lift”, begged the question about OCC’s exterior grounds. How was the rain garden holding up? Were the trees thriving and safe? Was this a good time to address those issues as well? The answer was yes. A small committee including a Master Gardener, a tree expert and a landscape designer was formed to assess the health of the OCC landscape. It was agreed that taking a proactive approach would be the best stewardship decision at this time – and a plan was commissioned.

Jennifer Connoley Landscape Design was selected to design and implement the project. “The intent of the Oxford Community Center landscape and buffer management plan is to remove existing trees that are diseased and declining and replace them with thriving native trees and shrubs. In addition, the new landscape plantings will be both native and ornamental. They will enhance the building and provide sustenance to the native birds, bees and butterflies. The Oxford community will benefit greatly.” says Jennifer Connoley, Landscape Architect

Also included in the project is Bartlett Tree Experts. Arborist Representative, Mark Eppard was instrumental in the assessment of the health of the trees. His company has treated and protected OCC’s trees for over 12 years and he knows the decline that they are now showing. “Several insect and disease pressures are fast taking the identified trees out of commission and the safest way to handle it is to remove them and replant new trees.” says Eppard. “I’m privileged to be able to help with the LEED Revitalization of the Oxford Community Center and to be able to give a gift of gratitude to everyone in the Oxford area.”

According to the University of Maryland Extension, “The 'Bradford' pear or Callery pear is no longer a recommended tree for planting, it is highly invasive. Its rapid growth, dense foliage, and a profusion of flowers made it a highly desirable tree for landscapes and it was planted widely. But, it forms dense, thorny thickets in wild areas; out-competes and prevents the growth of native plants.”

Change.org states, “The Callery pear is detrimental to our environment, ecosystem, and pollinator population. Over 400 species of bees can be found in Maryland as well as over 150 butterfly species. Because the Callery pear is not native to the United States, it fails to provide adequate resources to Maryland's pollinators and wildlife. The negative effects invasive species such as the Callery pear have on pollinators are becoming more

evident as we witness declines in crop productivity, reductions in pollinators critical to maintaining stable ecosystems, and widespread displacement of native habitats.

Phyllis Rambo, Vice-President, OCC Board of Trustees agrees. "Ten years ago, our renovation was LEED certified. As part of that certification, native plant replacements in the landscape were stressed. With the removal of weak and invasive non-native Callery Pear trees and replacement with native trees, shrubs and groundcovers we are not only beautifying our campus, but we are providing better habitat for our birds, and other wildlife."

The problem is nationwide. In March of this year, NBC4, New York, wrote about the issue stating, "The Callery pear tree's pretty, upward-facing branch structure meant limbs would rip and fly off during storms, threatening to injure people and damage cars and homes. Today, the Callery pear is listed as an invasive species in several states. In January, Ohio became the first to enact a ban on the tree, with Pennsylvania and South Carolina following suit."

The landscape revitalization project has been underwritten by two private sources, Lee Phillips and the Nancy and Michael Klein Foundation. Bartlett Tree Experts are donating their services.

"For the past 10 years or so, the interior of the Community Center has undergone a dramatic facelift. So, the time has come for the landscaping and grounds maintenance to come up to the same level. This project should go a long way to accomplishing that goal." says Lee Phillips, Oxford Community Center's Board of Trustee.

Michael Klein, a Master Gardener himself commented, "Having, in the past, worked with the landscape designer, Jen Connoley, I'm confident that OCC's restoration will turn out to be just wonderful." The design plans are on display at the Oxford Community Center and soon to be viewable online.

The Oxford Community Center Building (OCC) has served as a community resource for over 80 years, first as a grammar school and then a high school and, for the last quarter century, as a cultural center and meeting place. OCC provides to residents and visitors alike a year-round schedule of educational, social, cultural, and recreational programs and events. It is indeed a mid-shore treasure enriching lives since 1928. For more information, please visit [www.oxfordcc.org](http://www.oxfordcc.org), or call 410-226-5904.