

Massachusetts
New Tree Warden Qualifications
1999
History and Recommendations

Massachusetts was the first state to mandate a tree warden for every municipality in 1899 (Chapter 330, 1899). In 1905 the Legislature mandated a local superintendent of insect pest control. In 1985 Chapter 765 changed the title of the local superintendent of pest control to the local superintendent of shade tree management and pest control. This changed the scope of the duties for this position and set up a potential conflict with the position of tree warden because of their overlapping responsibilities.

However in 1985 only 51 of the Commonwealth's 351 municipalities had two separate individuals filling these two positions. In all the other communities both the tree warden and the position of shade tree management and pest control were held by one person. (Report of the SHADE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 1987) This committee continues to encourage municipalities to combine these two positions.

Massachusetts tree warden legislation served as a model for the rest of the country. In the earlier years these individuals were highly trained and knowledgeable professionals. Unfortunately, a combination of shrinking municipal budgets and a series of enabling acts that have combined the position with several others has seriously decreased the number of qualified individuals holding the position of tree warden. Unqualified tree wardens threaten not only the health and safety of the general public but also the future of the communities trees. (Report of the SHADE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 1987)

On September 28, 1996, Governor Weld signed amendment (S-1082) to MGL Chapter 41 changing Section 106 relating to the appointment of tree wardens. This law now requires that **appointed** tree wardens in towns and cities with populations greater than **10,000** "be qualified by training and experience in the field of arboriculture and licensed by the Department of Food and Agriculture...". The term of the appointment was newly set at three (3) years. (THE CITIZEN FORESTER, #17, Oct. 1996)

The structure of the above stated language has led to some confusion as to the definition of "licensed by the Department of Food and Agriculture". The license which is referred to in MGL 41 Section 106 is a pesticide license. This license in no way certifies a person as to whether or not they are "qualified by training and experience in the field of Arboriculture" as required in MGL 41 section 106.

In order to show what is considered to be "qualified", the Massachusetts Tree Wardens & Foresters Association, the Department Environmental Management, the USDA Center for Urban & Community Forestry and the University of Massachusetts Urban Forestry program have worked together to put forth a recommended set of requirements for Tree Wardens. The attached information is intended to serve as an advisory for cities and towns that are looking for clarification of the definition of "qualified" as stated in MGL Chapter 41 section 106.

While the law did not establish a standard qualification, it is the intention of this report to provide municipalities with the information that they need to insure that their municipality has a qualified tree warden. It is not the intention of this report to replace all of the tree wardens in Massachusetts that do not meet the new recommended qualifications at this time. The committee believes that existing tree wardens that are doing a commendable job should be **grandfathered**. But when a new tree warden is appointed the following guidelines should be followed, based on the population of the municipality:

+500,000 Population

- A. Bachelor of Science Degree in Arboriculture / Urban Forestry or a related degree
- B. Certified Arborist
- C. Five (5) years supervisory experience in commercial or municipal tree care
- D. Massachusetts Pesticide License within 90 days of employment

+100,000 > Population

- A. Associate of Science Degree in Arboriculture / Urban Forestry or a related degree
- B. Certified Arborist
- C. Five (5) years supervisory experience in commercial or municipal tree care
- D. Massachusetts Pesticide License within 90 days of employment

+75,000 > Population

- A. Associate of Science Degree in Arboriculture / Urban Forestry or a related degree
- B. Certified Arborist
- C. Three (3) years supervisory experience in commercial or municipal tree care
- D. Massachusetts Pesticide License within 90 days of employment

+10,000 > Population

- A. Associate of Science Degree in Arboriculture / Urban Forestry or a related degree
Preferred but not required
- B. Certified Arborist
- C. Three (3) years supervisory experience in commercial or municipal tree care
- D. Massachusetts Pesticide License within 90 days of employment

While the new law does not apply to municipalities under 10,000 the committee recommends the following:

-10,000 < Population

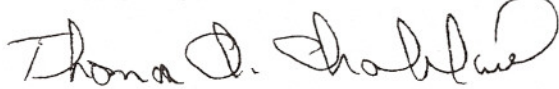
- A. Certified Arborist
- B. Three (3) years supervisory experience in commercial or municipal tree care

In addition, the committee also suggests that in some instances, particularly in the case of smaller towns, that a consulting tree warden might be in order. The idea of a joint appointment might also be considered. That is, a single qualified individual might be able to serve several small adjoining communities. (Report of the SHADE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 1987)

The committee further recommends that even the smallest communities should be inspected by a qualified person annually for hazards that could affect the public way or the health of our community forests.

These recommended Tree Wardens Qualifications have been approved by the following community forestry organizations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on March 10, 1999.

Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association



Mr. Thomas A. Chamberland, President

Northeast Center for Urban & Community Forestry



Dr. David V. Bloniarz, Urban Forester - USDA Forest Service

Arboriculture / Urban Forestry Program University of Massachusetts



Dr. H. Dennis P. Ryan, Arborist

Department of Environmental Management



Ms. Edith Makra, Urban Forester