

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – January 14, 2026 - 5:30-7pm

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & at DPW - 147 Hampshire Street

Attendance (* indicates virtual attendance)

CPP Members: Carrie Burke, Cindy Carpenter*, Chantal Eide, Christina Mann, Cynthia Smith, Eva Tine, Paola Massari*, Rob Vandenabeele*, Robb Johnson*, Sara Cohen*, Sophia Emperador, Tracey Orr*. *Members not in attendance:* Maggie Booz, Gretchen Friesinger

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley*, Kevin Beuttell*, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Kristen Keller, Cortney Kirk* (CDD)

Guests & members of the public: no guests in attendance

Meeting notes submitted by: Cynthia Smith

Agenda Items:

- Review agenda
- Review previous meeting minutes
- Review and approve updated meeting notes from December 2025
- Review Comments made by Committee of Public Planting regarding Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP) Updates and Focus
- Updates from City Arborists—see attachment.
- Updates from CDD

1) Review prior meeting minutes

- a. Robb Johnson motioned to approve meeting minutes and Sophia Emperador seconded this motion. Meeting minutes were approved with minor edits (typo) to be incorporated.

2) Review Any Additional Comments from CPP to DPW/Reed Hildebrand Team as to where we should be focusing the RH scope of work being undertaken related to the UFMP Updates

- a. **CPP Additional Comments:** Clarification was requested by Cynthia Smith as to the DPW Engineering Standards being applied for Public R.O.W. Improvements/streetscape on some of the major boulevards (Mass. Avenue, etc.) where new private development pressures are occurring due to the recently approved upzoning. Andrew Putnam, DPW, responded that the city is currently using the DPW standard details for tree pits, street and sidewalk improvements in these areas and working with developers to determine the extent of developer required improvements within the public streetscape area depending on level of construction disturbance. According to Andrew, Clara K is the point person as the Supervising Engineer who interfaces with the Consultant team regarding R.O.W.

Impacts and improvements. He said that The UFMP Consultant Team (Reed Hildebrand, etc.) is not involved in reviewing Upzoning Parcel design proposals. House doctor Engineer/Landscape architect teams are also not currently involved but could theoretically be involved to review existing and proposed planting, street trees, streetscape improvements and details related to these projects.

- b. **Items for further/future discussion and Action:** Cynthia Smith and CPPlanting reps agreed it would be a good idea per questions raised above to invite a representative (Clara K or ?) from the Engineering department to one of our next meetings to articulate what the current process is for the city review of these streetscape designs in Public R.O.W. And (CDD?) on how private development at Upzoned parcels is also reviewed.
- c. **Re: UFMP Update comments previously recorded by CPP(Additional Comments previously written up.)** Christina Mann made a motion to send the comments as amended and Chantal Eide seconded this motion. Sophia will update the UFMP updates suggestions document and circulate to CPP and DPW staff/design team.

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3) Update from City Arborists (Abby Bentley)

- a. Abby provided final planting numbers for 2025. (See attached summary)
- b. Spring and Fall 1213 trees total were planted by Contractor and city staff. The goal was 1250 trees. When you add in Miyawaki Forest plantings, the city is way over their goal.
- c. B & B (Balled and Burlapped) Trees are approximately 7-10 years old and are mostly planted by the Contractor under contract with the city, Lahey Construction.
- d. By species: 65 different species of trees were planted in sidewalk as street trees or in parks.
- e. Bare root trees that were planted were generally smaller, younger and less expensive and planted by in-house staff.
- f. In house crew focused mostly on replacement of trees that have died or empty tree pits. This totaled less than 100 trees planted by in house crew.
- g. Most of the new B&B trees come from Tuckahoe Nursery in Woodbine, NJ. Forestry staff from the city of Cambridge select (tag) all the trees that are planted.
- h. Other facts: 66 new tree wells were created for street tree planting.
- i. Approximately 19,000 street trees exist.
- j. Approximately 20 tree wells were expanded in size in 2025.

CPP Comments/Questions

- a. Is the city keeping track of the species they plant? The city has generally been keeping track of this over the last few years. The documentation from over a decade ago is spotty in some cases.
- b. How many native species are being planted in order to increase the ecological value? The city is planting natives when they can. Fresh Pond Reservations calls for “No Cultivars” in their plantings.
- c. A comment was made that Somerville has a preferred list of native trees that could be used by the city of Cambridge as a reference.

- d. A suggestion was made to expand the current chart that the city has in the Urban Forestry Master Plan for use by residents, etc. on what trees to plant in what conditions. This could serve as a reference.
- e. The survivability of trees planted has been tracked for the last 5 years:
 - f. 2020- 30% did not survive;
 - g. 2021- 29% did not survive;
 - h. 2022- 18% did not survive;
 - i. 2023- 12% did not survive;
 - j. 2024- 15% did not survive (this was the year of the drought);
 - k. 2025- 2% did not survive (but this does not include the fall planting).
- l. Overall, according to Abby, Street Trees survivability is 11% rate while Park trees survivability is 10% rate.
- m. Generally, the city is getting better and better at keeping their new tree planting alive due to extended care and watering during the first few years of establishment and through improvements to soil and tree pit design.
- n. One of the members asked about survivability related to species. According to the Arborist team, species that have challenges related to survivability and early establishment include Black Tupelo, Hackberry, Swamp White Oak.
- o. One tree in particular with low survivability is the Carolina Silverbell with only a 50% survival rate.
- p. On other fronts, the city has had very high quality interns these past few years who are often tech savvy and have helped the city make advancements on a variety of fronts.
- q. Challenges continue to things like Construction and their impacts to trees. Increasingly though, Contractors are understanding how trees are important and are doing a better job at protecting trees during construction.
- r. Anecdotally, Dave Lefcourt said that when he first got here there were many more trees that were impacted by construction or poor tree root development and fell over during storms. Now, trees are planted more carefully and more attention has been placed on tree protection and construction protection resulting in many fewer trees being uprooted or coming down during storm events. Also the city and its contractors use measures such as Tree Spading to protect and save roots. They use a Vac Truck and water to loosen roots in an around utilities, etc. instead of just severing the roots when there is a conflict. Contractors increasingly are understanding the city's ultimate goals resulting in at least 2% increased savings of trees. There have also been savings in prep time.
- s. Related to Pests & Diseases such as the Emerald Ash Borer, measures to treat trees with the disease are now considered part of the base contract that Lahey has.

4) Updates from Kristen Kelleher —Public Outreach and Forest Friends, etc.

- a. 1057 trees have been adopted or friended by residents or store owners, etc.
- b. 758 unique Forest Friends
- c. In 2025, 89 Forest Friends are new.

- d. Some people move out of the city so there is a steady flow of departures and new members.
- e. There are now a total of 1385 subscribers to the Forest Friends Newsletter. (The goal was initially 1,000 so we have surpassed the goal.) There were 385 new subscribers to the newsletter in 2025.
- f. A comment was made that a new goal should be to have a link on the PWD/ city website where you can subscribe to the Forest Friends newsletter.

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5) Updates from CDD - (Courtney Kirk and Kevin Beuttell)

- a. Construction Renovations and expansion of Public Housing Project on Strawberry Hill
- b. Gold Star Mother's Park- ongoing remediation design work is being done by Weston & Sampson.
- c. Ahern Field/Kennedy Longfellow Playground- this work is being coupled with building renovations and improvements.
- d. Danehy Capital Investment Plan- the city has developed a Draft Working Plan. From this they will be identifying projects and priorities.
- e. Mid-Cambridge Parks Framework Plan- scope of this includes all of the open spaces within mid-Cambridge. It's been 25 or more since many of these spaces have been renovated.
- f. Fast tracked projects include 359 Broadway (the old Longfellow School site) and Wilder Park Area at 46 Lee Street, Cambridge.
- g. Planning Board Agenda for next Planning Board Meeting : Alewife Quadrangle (new project); Corcoran Park Project (CHA) is under construction and ongoing. For this project, 48 trees were preserved and 50 Trees were removed (DBH tally was requested by CPP). There was a question re: Tree species selection related to flood tolerance on this project...Also, there are two large underground water tanks under parking lots proposed.

CPP Comments:

Ray Fahrner, outgoing CPP Member, announced that it would be his last meeting as a member of the Committee on Public Planting due to a serious illness. He said he had greatly enjoyed being part of the Committee and learned a lot. Moving forward he encouraged the group to make sure to listen to all of the Voices on the Committee not just the outspoken members—this is important!

Items for further/future discussion: (topics tabled for this month or proposed for next month)

A further discussion of a meeting Maggie Booz and Cynthia Smith had with Councillor Cathie Zusy and CDD and DPW representatives (Melissa Peters, CDD staff and Andrew Putnam, etc.) was tabled until next week's meeting.

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Public comments:

There were no comments from the Public

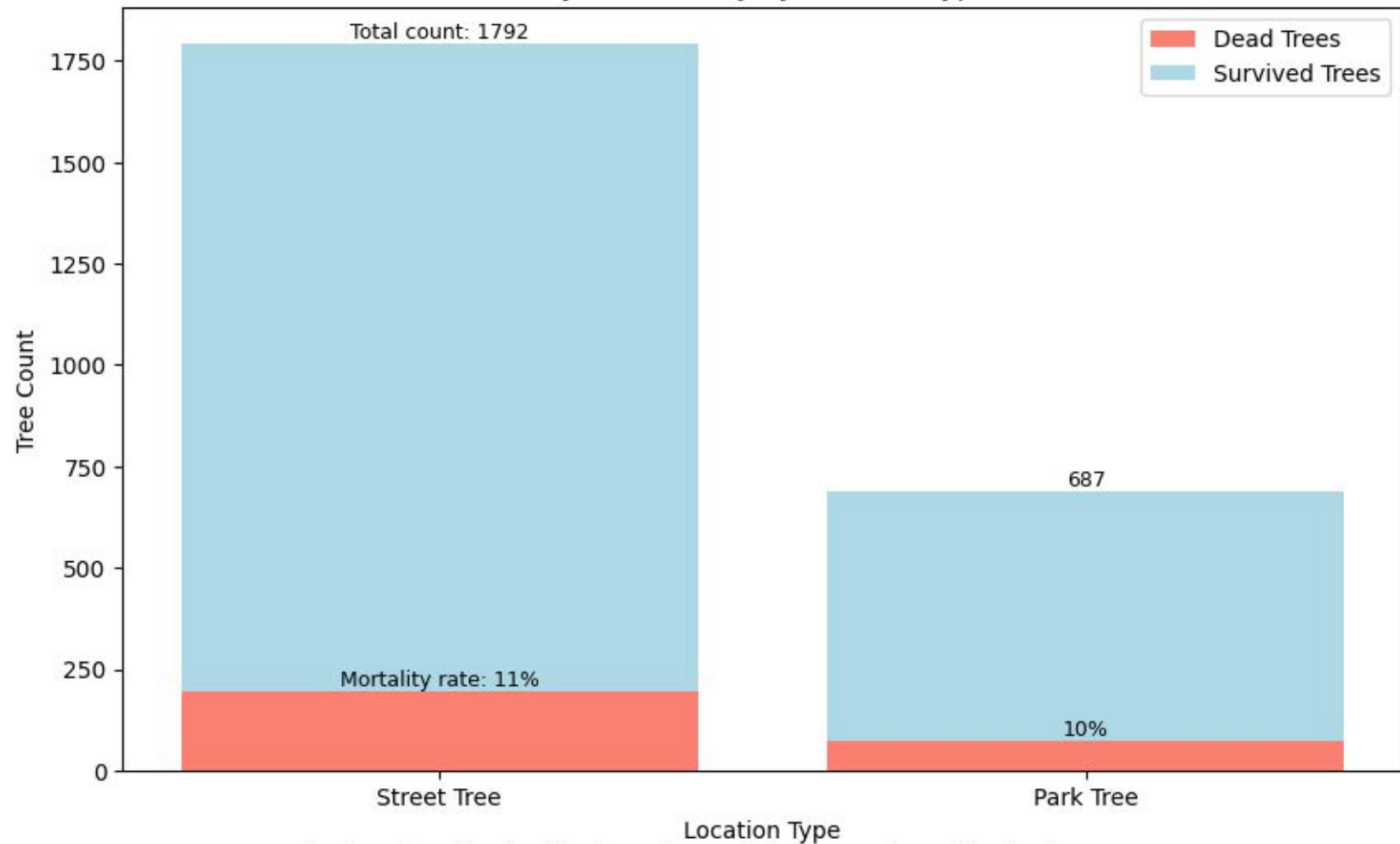
Next meeting: Our next meeting will be held on FEBRUARY 11, 2026 at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.

NOTE: The foregoing represents our understanding of the discussions and decisions made during this meeting. The CPP requests permission to quote or reference these notes.

Attachments: Arborist Tree Planting Counts for 20

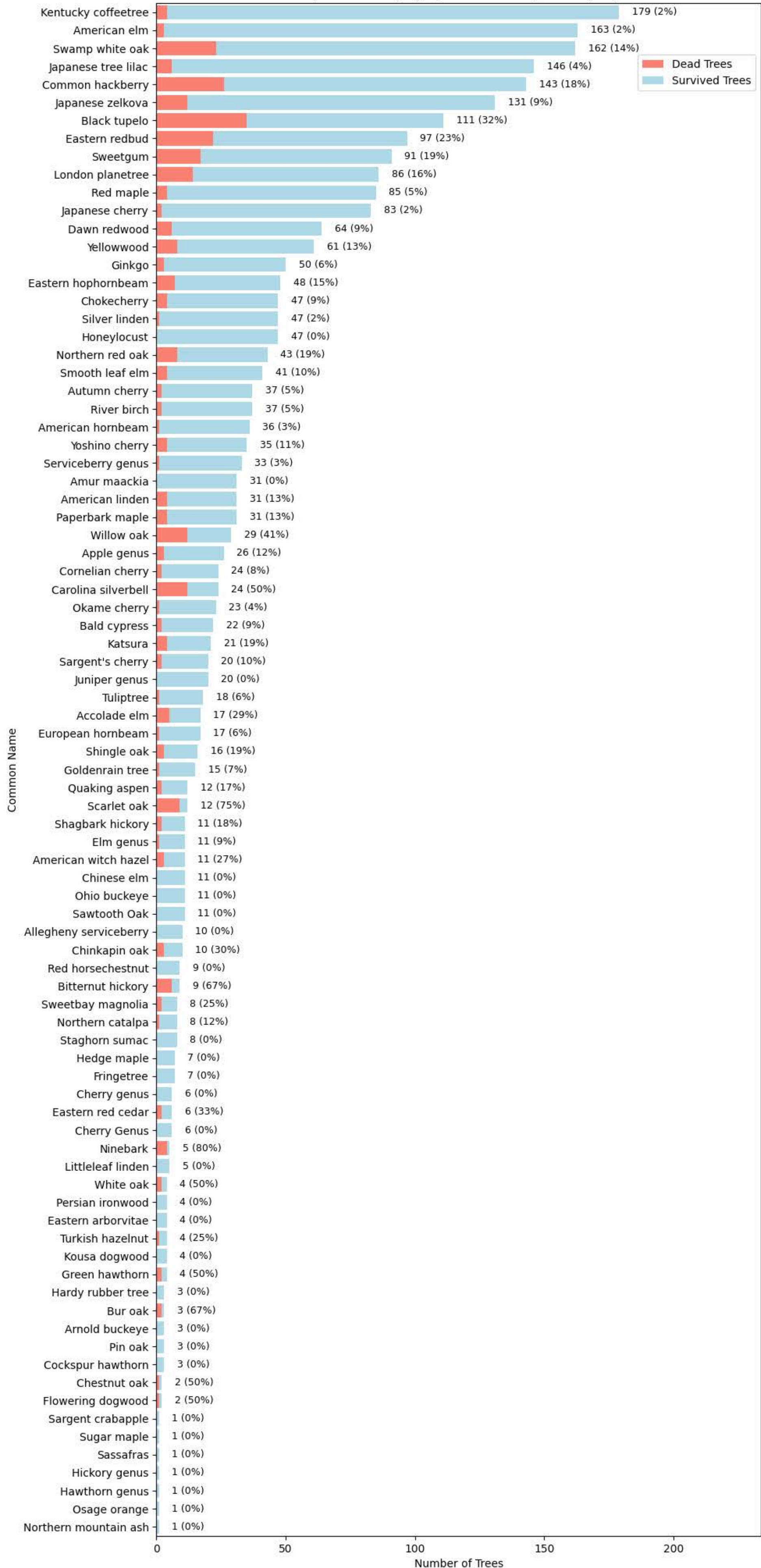
(outline updated 10/02/25)

2 year Mortality by Location Type

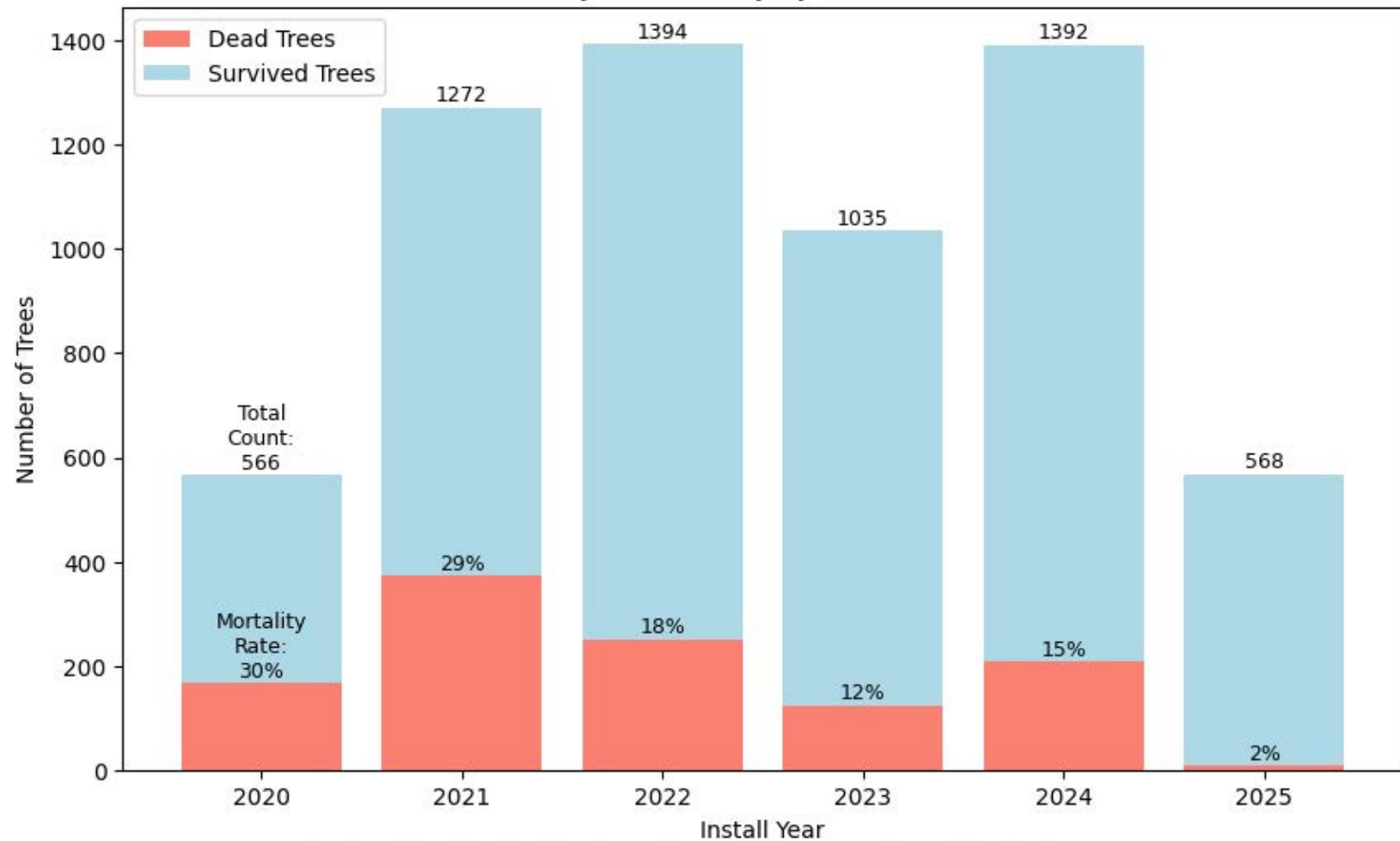


The data for this visualization only considers trees planted in the last 2 years.

2 year Mortality by Species-- Count (Mortality %)



5 year Mortality by Install Year



The data for this visualization only considers trees planted in the last 5 years.

Tree Wells Opened and Expanded Spring and Fall 2025				
Neighborhood	# Tree Wells Open	# Tree Wells Expanded		
The Port	5	2		
Neighborhood Nine	9	6		
Area 2/MIT	0	0		
Cambridgeport	3	0		
Riverside	4	0		
Mid-Cambridge	7	3		
Wellington-Harrington	6	1		
East Cambridge	6	4		
Baldwin	4	0		
Cambridge Highlands	0	1		
Strawberry Hill	3	0		
West Cambridge	12	2		
North Cambridge	7	0		
	66	19		
Total	85			

Species Type

Count of ID	Planting Season		
Nursery Stock Type	Spring 2025	Fall 2025	Grand Total
Ball and Burlap	366	642	1008
Bare Root	195	5	200
Grow Bag/Container	1	4	5
Grand Total	562	651	1213
Count of ID	Planting Season		
Scientific Name	Spring 2025	Fall 2025	Grand Total
Acer griseum	6	1	7
Acer rubrum	29	40	69
Aesculus glabra	7		7
Amelanchier canadensis	2		2
Amelanchier laevis	10	2	12
Amelanchier sp	19	44	63
Betula nigra		16	16
Betula populifolia		13	13
Carpinus betulus	10	2	12
Carpinus caroliniana	1	27	28
Celtis occidentalis	10	14	24
Cercidiphyllum japonicum	1		1
Cercis canadensis	2	18	20
Chionanthus virginicus	15		15
Cladrastis kentukea	1	8	9
Cornus florida	1		1
Cornus kousa		1	1
Cornus mas	10		10
Corylus colurna	1		1
Crataegus crus-galli	4		4
Ginkgo biloba	11	4	15
Gleditsia triacanthos	34	21	55
Gymnocladus dioicus	16	10	26
Halesia carolina	1		1
Hamamelis sp		1	1
Hamamelis virginiana		17	17
Juniperus chinensis		33	33
Juniperus virginiana		123	123
Koeleruteria paniculata	1		1
Liquidambar styraciflua	31	11	42

Liriodendron tulipifera	7	2	9
Maackia amurensis	1	2	3
Magnolia grandiflora		1	1
Magnolia sp		1	1
Magnolia virginiana		11	11
Malus genus		1	1
Malus sp	5	14	19
Metasequoia glyptostroboides	9		9
Nyssa sylvatica	3	10	13
Ostrya virginiana	2		2
Parrotia persica	2		2
Picea abies	25		25
Platanus occidentalis	24		24
Platanus x acerifolia	5	17	22
Populus tremuloides	2	6	8
Prunus serrulata	5	5	10
Prunus subhirtella	3	7	10
Prunus virginiana	19	16	35
Prunus x incam		9	9
Prunus x yedoensis	1		1
Pyrus calleryana	2		2
Quercus acutissima	19		19
Quercus bicolor	39	20	59
Quercus imbricaria	11		11
Quercus palustris	1	8	9
Quercus rubra	1	14	15
Syringa reticulata	22	20	42
Taxodium distichum	15		15
Thuja genus		6	6
Thuja occidentalis		29	29
Tilia americana	7	13	20
Tilia cordata	10		10
Tilia tomentosa	27		27
Ulmus americana	39	20	59
Zelkova serrata	33	13	46
Grand Total	562	651	1213