



Landmarks

2025 STEWARDSHIP EDITION

THIS ISSUE

Why are my trees dying? **P.1**

Licensed Tree Experts **P.2**

Stewardship Corner **P.3**

Board Meeting Information **P.4**



MET Easement in Garrett County

Why are my trees dying and what can I do about it?

It's a rough time for trees. While out monitoring and meeting with landowners, we've been getting questions as to why so many trees are either dead or dying across the state. As a unit of the Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Environmental Trust has access to some of the best information sources in the state with regard to forest health and management.

The decline of trees and vegetation in our region is due to a number of different factors. Extreme weather fluctuations, from drought to flooding over the years, have stressed and weakened many trees to the point where they are more susceptible to pests and disease which can finish them off¹. Trees that are dying are also not being replaced fast enough, which is partly due to an overabundance of hungry deer eating the small seedlings and saplings before they can mature². Invasive plants also compete with new trees for resources, aggressively crowding them out and preventing them from getting to re-establish. Some trees are simply at the end of their life span.

But don't give up hope! There are many resources you can take advantage of to help save our forests. A licensed Forester, who is different from a licensed tree expert, can help you determine what steps you can take to maintain or enhance your woodlands. Get in touch with your local Maryland Forest Service office here:
dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/contacts.aspx

You can also review some of the Forest Service's different forest management and tree planting programs on your own here: dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/default.aspx



1) dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/About_Forests.aspx

2) dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/programapps/white-oak.aspx

Hire a Licensed Tree Expert

As Maryland homeowners freshen up their properties and landscape for the summer season, they should know the proper steps to take when hiring tree removal companies to clear damaged and downed trees, limbs, and branches.

In addition to the damage that can be caused by storms, the aftermath of storms can also bring responses from unqualified contractors who attempt to undercut the competition by operating without proper insurance, training, skills, and licenses that keep themselves and their clients safe.

Fortunately, it's easy to follow the proper procedures. Only Maryland Licensed Tree Experts (LTEs) should be hired to trim branches and remove damaged and downed trees – they are the only tree care professionals who lawfully can perform this work in Maryland. Finding one is easy, the Maryland Forest Service LTE search tool (dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/licensed-tree-experts.aspx) will show all available options in your area. Also, LTEs are easy to spot as they are required to post their license number on the side of their vehicles.

Unlicensed tree care businesses may advertise misleading credentials, even going as far as displaying fraudulent license numbers on company vehicles or claiming they are “bonded and insured.” Homeowners should verify the company has a licensed tree expert on staff by asking to see their license, or checking the license number through the Department of Natural Resources website:

dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/programapps/newtreeexpert.aspx

Tree work is inherently dangerous, but with the right training, skills, and expertise it's done safely everyday. By hiring a LTE, a homeowner is ensured to get someone who knows what they're doing and is properly insured. The insurance aspect is particularly important. If you hire someone who is uninsured or underinsured and an injury or property damage occurs, you could be responsible for paying to fix it.

Other important recommendations include:

- Obtain more than one estimate for the proposed work.
- Get a written contract that states the work to be performed and the cost.
- Never pay the full amount before all the work is completed as per the written and signed contract.

The Maryland Tree Expert Law was adopted in 1945, providing a state-wide law addressing tree care work done for compensation on private or public property in Maryland. A criminal conviction for a first offence under the Tree Expert Law is a misdemeanor and is subject to a fine up to \$500.

When it comes to tree removal, cutting corners with an unlicensed contractor simply isn't worth the risk. Anyone who believes they've been approached by an unlicensed business advertising or practicing tree care services in Maryland can contact the Maryland Forest Service at 410-260-8531 or file a complaint online:

dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/programapps/newtreeexpert.aspx



Maryland Licensed Tree Experts are credentialed and insured, performing a wide variety of jobs related to tree care and maintenance. Maryland DNR photo

This article was written by Maryland Department of Natural Resources staff.

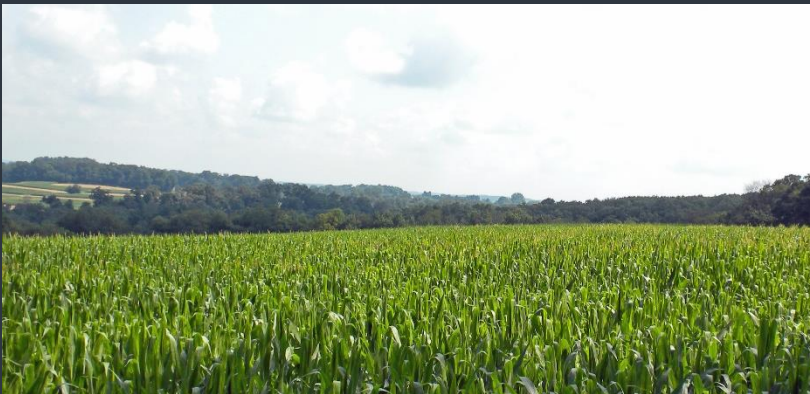
Stewardship Corner: You Asked, We Answered

Q: Can I conduct a timber harvest or cut trees down on my conservation easement?

A: The ability to cut or prune trees, conduct a timber harvest, or do any type of forest or vegetation management may vary depending on the specific terms of each conservation easement. Some easements allow timber harvests as long as they adhere to the Maryland Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines for Forest Harvest Operations, and some easements prohibit timber harvesting entirely. Some easements require that any forest activity follow a forest stewardship plan, which is prepared for the property with specific goals like management of habitat for fish and wildlife game species, or soil conservation and water protection. Other easements only allow for very limited cutting of trees when necessary for forest health or improving wildlife habitat.

Therefore, all property owners, land managers, and contractors should review the specific terms of the conservation easement before undertaking any forest management related activities. In addition to the conservation easement requirements, local governments may have different forest management regulations, so be sure to contact your county to determine if you need any additional permits for forest related work.

If you are interested in conducting a timber harvest on your property, review your conservation easement to determine if it is allowed and what the restrictions may be or check with the MET stewardship team to verify what types of forest management activities are allowed.



MET's Stewardship Team

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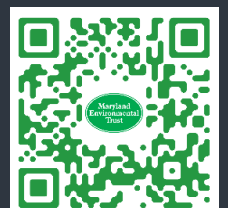
Easement Stewardship Specialist

Please Contact Us!

Questions about your conservation easement? Want to build or expand a house, install solar panels to meet your energy needs, plant pollinator habitat, etc.? If you are not sure if the activity you want to conduct on your property is allowed by the terms of your conservation easement, please contact us before taking any action.

Have we met before? If you have recently purchased your property or have never met with MET staff in person since purchasing your property, please contact us so we can introduce ourselves. We would like to meet with you and go over any questions or review any plans you may have regarding your easement.

We're here to help. Submit your questions online at mddnr.info/ContactMET or use our QR code. We look forward to hearing from you!





Maryland Environmental Trust
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You are receiving this newsletter because your property is protected by a conservation easement with Maryland Environmental Trust.



2026 Board Meeting Dates:

- February 2
- May 4
- June 1
- September 14
- November 2

Board Meeting Information

All matters requiring Board approval are reviewed during Board Meetings. These are public meetings. Please contact MET if you plan to attend at 410- 697-9515 or met.info@maryland.gov.

MET is governed by a Board of Trustees responsible for reviewing and voting on matters such as landowner requests that result in a significant change or impact to conservation attributes of an easement property. Activities that might require approval or notification include: constructing any new buildings or structures; renovating or enlarging existing structures; conveying property; subdividing property; recording any other encumbrances on property; entering wetlands mitigation or restoration programs; changing use of property; making a boundary line adjustment; harvesting timber or construction of a new house.

If you plan to make changes to your property and are unsure whether notification or approval is required, contact MET's stewardship staff to help make that determination. All requests should be made in writing at least three weeks prior to the scheduled board meeting. It may take a minimum of 30 days for MET to review and approve the proposed activities. Please contact MET, in advance, to discuss your plans. Submit your questions online at mddnr.info/ContactMET