Fort Worth Arbor Day was held at the Nature Center on Friday, November 3, 2017, near the amphitheater at the entrance to the Lotus Marsh Boardwalk. This was the first time the Arbor Day celebration has been held at the Nature Center. It was a cloudy, cool morning, a relief from the previous day’s 90-degree temperatures.
Fort Worth City Councilman Dennis Shingleton read the Arbor Day proclamation, City Forester Melinda Adams presided over the ceremony, and Rachel McGregor of the Texas A&M Forest Service presented the City of Fort Worth with the Tree City USA and Growth awards. Fort Worth has received the Tree City USA designation for 39 consecutive years, more than any other city in Texas! In addition, Fort Worth has received the Growth Award for 17 consecutive years and is one of only 11 communities in Texas to receive the award.

Qualifications for the Tree City Award requires a city to have a city forester, arbor day, and proclamation and spend about $2 per capita on tree programs. The Growth Award goes further, requiring education and training programs, brochure publications, and other tree awareness programs.

Rob Denkhaus, Fort Worth Nature Center manager, talked about the incredible diversity of tree species, soils, and tree habitats at the Nature Center. He also discussed the important balance between trees and prairie lands at the Nature Center. Rob also presented Melinda Adams with a wooden bowl turned from a fallen tree at the Nature Center. The bowl had an interesting chainsaw cut on the bowl made by one of Melinda’s tree workers. Melinda is retiring, and the presentation was to honor her many years helping Fort Worth become a great tree city. One of Melinda’s accomplishments is the creation of the Fort Worth Heritage Tree Program. Fort Worth leads Texas cities in the recognition of local historic trees. The program began in 2009 and now boasts a current list of more than 70 designations, which includes nearly 90 trees.

Five Heritage Tree designations were made this year, and the Lake Worth area and Nature Center led the way. The Nature Center received its third program designation. A group of native Chinquapin oaks—several quite large—located near the entrance of the Nature Center Manager Rob Denkhaus presents retiring City Forester Melinda Adams with a commemorative wooden bowl crafted from a Nature Center fallen tree. Wes Culwell Photo.

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Lotus Marsh Boardwalk became the newest designation, adding to previous ancient post oak forest and regional champion green ash recognitions.

The nomination of the Lotus Marsh Boardwalk Chinquapin oaks was based on their designation as a significant tree species and the only native trees of their species in Fort Worth. Also, the historic Meandering Road, which passes by the boardwalk entrance and leads to the Eagle Mountain Lake dam area, exposed these trees around 1910. The Conservation Civilian Corps made road improvements in the 1930s, and the boardwalk was constructed in 1974. Current improvements and plans for the boardwalk were also included.

Other Lake Worth trees recognized were the Mosque Point live oak, the Lake Worth Sailing Club post oak, and the Casino Beach Ballroom cottonwoods (two each). The Royal Flying Corps live oak at Greenwood Cemetery was also designated.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Wes Culwell, Master Arborist, historic tree researcher, and Friends board member, submitted most of the nominations. He received an ink pen made from the Chinquapin oak at the boardwalk parking lot. In October, he received the Mary Loile Michie Arboreal Excellence Award from the Fort Worth Garden Center and the City of Fort Worth’s Forestry Department.