# **Addressing Regional Tree Supply Challenges**

## **Creating a Sustainable Supply of Quality, Diverse Trees for Urban Areas in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed**

As tree planting initiatives expand, so does the strain on existing supply chains, as buyers seek high-quality and diverse planting palettes. To address limitations in urban tree supply, the Chesapeake Bay Trust and USDA Forest Service—along with research partners at the University of Florida, the USDA Forest Service Baltimore Field Station, and Bartlett Tree Experts—conducted focus groups across the Chesapeake Bay area and hosted a virtual summit. These efforts brought together experts in nursery production, landscape design, and urban forestry to discuss challenges and solutions.

Below are key takeaways, including five case studies that highlight successful collaborations where institutions worked together to meet local tree planting needs.

## **Key Challenges to the Tree Supply Chain**

### **Market Demand**

* Consumer trends and developer preferences limit tree diversity and quality
* Price competition from external markets creates unsustainable pressures
* Large commercial developers primarily focus on cost over species diversity and quality

### **Supply Chain Issues**

* Limited availability of seedlings and liners for diverse, locally adapted species
* Mismatch between multi-year tree growth cycles and short-term funding sources
* Shortage of qualified technical staff with competitive pay in municipalities and non-profits

## **Key Opportunities for Improving Quality and Species Selection**

### **Contract Growing**

* Aligns grower production with end-user needs
* Reduces risks for nurseries producing new or uncommon species
* Creates partnerships between growers and municipalities

### **Innovative Partnerships**

* Collaborations between growers, end-users, and institutions improve tree availability
* State nurseries can produce underutilized species as nursery liners
* Non-profit nurseries can grow species not commercially viable but desirable for urban areas

### **Communication & Education**

* Industry events facilitate networking between growers and buyers
* Educational efforts promote tree diversity, high-quality nursery stock, and proper care
* More resources for locating nurseries and specific stock types

## **Success Story Case Studies**

* **NYC Parks**: Nine-year growing contracts with local nurseries ensure custom-grown trees
* **Casey Trees/DC DOT**: Partnership producing 2,000+ high-quality trees annually
* **Chesapeake Bay Trust**: Nursery Project cultivating 20,000+ underused native trees
* **Florida Grades and Standards**: Common language for tree quality ensuring consistent benchmarks
* **Chicago Regional Trees Initiative**: Connecting communities and stakeholders across green industry sectors

For the full report of this project and recorded presentations from the virtual summit, visit {INSERT LINK}