Getting What We Want Through Growing Contracts - New York City Parks

New York City Parks has transformed its approach to urban forestry by establishing growing contracts with local nurseries, specifically designed to supply both smaller native trees for restoration efforts and larger trees for urban development projects. Previously, NYC Parks sourced planting materials indirectly through landscape contractors, which created a barrier between NYC Parks and local growers. This arrangement limited direct communication, making it difficult to source specific species, tree sizes, and quality standards that aligned with the city's urban forestry goals. Last-minute changes to planting plans were common, and tree quality varied significantly from one project to the next.

To address these challenges, NYC Parks implemented nine-year growing contracts with local nurseries, allowing for custom-grown trees specifically tailored to the city's future projects and long-term planting goals. These contracts ensure that NYC Parks can source native-grown trees from local seed sources while providing clear specifications on cultivation practices, fostering more predictable quality and improved suitability for the urban environment. This proactive approach also empowers NYC Parks to request species that contribute to greater biodiversity and climate resilience in their landscapes.

When contracted trees reach maturity and are ready for planting, NYC Parks collaborates closely with planting contractors to schedule installation and set up long-term maintenance plans. By establishing direct partnerships with local growers and committing to work with them from germination through to delivery, NYC Parks has not only improved tree quality and diversity but also strengthened local nursery businesses. These long-term contracts have become a model for enhancing both urban forest health and local economies, showcasing the value of sustained investment and collaboration in public green space initiatives.

Interested in learning more? See a full presentation on this project using this QR Code!