

Project Title: STEP Up! Enhancing the Biodiversity and Resilience of Colorado's Community Forests

Mentor Team:

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Project Location: Fort Collins, CO

Project Summary: Organized by the Colorado Tree Coalition (CTC), the Select Tree Evaluation Program (STEP) tests the performance of new and underutilized tree species and varieties in Colorado. Through careful selection and monitoring we are able to document strong performers, evaluate growth characteristics and environmental needs, and make recommendations for future planting that increases the biodiversity and resilience of Colorado's urban and community forests. Since 2001, 18 new tree species/varieties have been planted and evaluated in 26 Colorado communities along the Front Range and in Grand Junction.

Through this internship, the student will collect, organize, quality check, and analyze tree survival and condition data. Based on these data, the intern will work with project partners to craft recommendations for continued tree species trials throughout Colorado, primarily along the Front Range, and inform updates to the Front Range Recommended Tree List. There may be opportunities to visit STEP planting locations to collect new data in the field on current tree performance, including those planted in May 2022. The intern will have opportunities to share their findings through in-person and/or virtual presentations, writing for web and print publications, and other outlets.

The intern will be working directly with the City of Fort Collins, Colorado State Forest Service, and Colorado Tree Coalition. Additional partners invested in the project, STEP, and Front Range Recommended Tree List include the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association (CNGA), International Society of Arboriculture Rocky Mountain Chapter (ISA-RMC), PlantSelect, Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC), The Park People, and Denver Urban Field Station, a collaborative research and practice unit of the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station exploring the connections between people and nature and the role of vegetation in semi-arid cities, towns, and developing regions of the Intermountain West and Great Plains.

Why work with us? The STEP is a critical source of data and recommendations for future planting that increases the biodiversity and resilience of Colorado's urban and community forests. This internship is designed to bring the program into alignment with its own goals and potential as a well-organized and accessible database of tree species/variety performance in Colorado communities and thoughtfully maintained process for continuing to test new tree species/varieties for success in Colorado's tough and continually changing environment.

Compensation: In order to raise the university-provided stipend to a more livable wage and cover student expenses, the project mentors are providing an additional \$600 for a total stipend of \$4,600 for the 10-week internship.