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Shade Tree Commission Tallies Storm Damage, Reports Achievements

Bernards Shade Tree Commission's annual report to be presented on Tuesday to Township Committee.

By [Linda Sadlouskos](#) | [Email the author](#) | January 23, 2012

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Last October's destructive snowstorm caused tremendous tree damage to Bernards Township, destroying more than three percent of trees in the township right-of-way, the Township Shade Commission says in a report scheduled to be accepted on Tuesday night by the [Bernards Township Committee](#).

The Shade Tree Commission — already informed by the Township Committee in December that [the high cost of the storm cleanup](#) would prohibit the commission's recommendation for about \$180,000 worth of new tree plantings — says in the report that the loss of trees "will place a significant strain on already stressed resources."

The commission's 2011 Budget already had decreased to \$6,450 from \$6,750 in 2010, the report says. The commission's use of the "Reserves for Developers Tree Replacement Fund" also was impacted, and the storm damage and budget issues may trickle down to the commission's budgeted funds and availability for donated services in the future, the report said.

Despite those obstacles, the commission's chairman, Randy Santoro, last month urged the governing body to think of what downtown Basking Ridge would look like without its trees.

Nevertheless, the Shade Tree Commission's annual report also includes achievements and goals reached during 2011.

The Shade Tree Commission celebrated Arbor Day at the [William Annin Middle School](#) with a resolution from our Township Committee and a dedicated

planting at the school following the reading of the resolution, the report says. "The middle school will be responsible for nurturing these trees under our watchful eyes," the report said.

The report also says Bernards Township achieved the goal of 40-percent tree canopy coverage in the past year. That accomplishment contributed to the township earning a silver certification from the Sustainable Jersey program in 2011, according to the Shade Tree Commission.

Other goals met in the past year include having a Shade Tree Commission representative on the Township Planning Board and the Township Tree Protection Committee. The Tree Protection Committee examines [and] approves any requests for tree removals when permits are required, the commission says.

Following survey by commission volunteers and the staff of the township Department of Public Works, tree hazards and potential new tree planting locations were identified, the report says.

The tree inventory project moved into the next phase this year with the help of the township's Global Positioning System expert, according to the report. The GPS location data, address, photo and tree details were surveyed for over 130 trees allowed the GPS expert to create shade tree map, with inventory to continue through this year, the report says.

Despite the year's disastrous effect on trees, communications between the commission, DPW and Somerset County tree crews continued to be strong during 2011, the report said. "Improved methods of tree hazard notification via email and joint meetings assisted in this area," according to the commission. "The STC webpage on the Township website continues to be enhanced for better communication with residents," the report said.

Approximately 31 replacement trees were planted by municipal DPW personnel or the township's contracted tree service, the report says.

And for the sixth year in a row, Bernards Township was approved for Tree City USA certification, the report says. Tree City USA is run by the Arbor Day Foundation.

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