



RESEARCH GRANT FUND REPORT 2025

Utility Arborist Research Fund Grant Program

TREE Fund and Utility Arborist Association (UAA) established the Utility Arborist Research Fund (UARF) in 2010 to finance work with real importance and benefit to utility tree care professionals. TREE Fund manages the UARF endowment and administers all research grants awarded, while UAA's Research Committee advises TREE Fund with respect to research priorities.



TOTAL DONATIONS

January 1 – December 31, 2025: \$6,000
Donors over \$500
- PacifiCorp



AWARDED IN 2025

2025 Utility Arborist Research Fund Grant was awarded to Melody Mount of University of Tennessee for the project, "Impacts of Assessor Perceptions, Species, and Defects When Performing Tree Risk Assessments." for **\$50,000**.



COMPLETED IN 2025

No research projects were completed in 2025. The next scheduled project completion date is in 2026.



APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

Two applications were received during the Spring 2025 Grant Application Cycle.

PROJECT DETAILS

The "Species-Specific Likelihood of Failure: Impacts of Defects, and Assessor Variability on Risk Assessment" is a research initiative designed to better understand assessor bias in tree risk evaluations. By identifying the factors that influence these biases, we can improve the accuracy, consistency, and reliability of tree risk evaluations within the tree care industry. This research examines how tree species, defect types, certification levels, and industry experiences influence the likelihood of failure ratings assigned by assessors.

Data collection is currently underway through surveys and physical tree risk assessments focusing on pines (*Pinus spp.*), oaks (*Quercus spp.*), and maples (*Acer spp.*). To date, 11 participants have contributed across two workshops in Tennessee, one of which was promoted at the Trees & Utilities Conference in Knoxville, Tennessee, in partnership with the Utility Arborist Association.

The initial focus of the research was focused primarily on the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ) Arborists. However, due to low participation numbers, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval has been adjusted to include all ISA Certified Arborists, expanding the pool of eligible participants. Following IRB approval, the research team focused its efforts in September on securing opportunities to present and collect data at industry conferences.

Outreach to ISA Chapters to organize workshops during chapter events is ongoing. Currently, the ISA Southern Chapter Conference, scheduled for late February, is confirmed, and the Indiana Arborist Association has expressed interest in hosting a pre-conference workshop, with a final decision expected in November.

This grant program is fully endowed.



In 2025, the UARF Grant Program celebrated 15 years and at the Trees & Utilities Conference, TREE Fund and UAA signed an extension to the agreement, to continue partnering on the fund in perpetuity.

