



## Teaching Tree Management Programs to the Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA)—Downtown Enhancement Team (DET), a Successful Approach!

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The city of Miami has one of the highest poverty rates and one of the lowest median incomes among large U.S. cities, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>). This survey places Miami's poverty rate at 26.9%, well above the state average of 12.6%, Miami-Dade County's 18%, and the national average of 13.3%. During 2012, at a request from the Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA), the Commercial Urban Horticultural Agent put together 3-h training workshops to teach entry-level employees from the Downtown Enhancement Team (DET) some techniques to plant and maintain trees in downtown Miami. The Miami DDA, in partnership with Camillus House, assists formerly homeless persons to give back to the community and re-enter the workforce through employment with the DET. The tree management training programs are an important resource for the DET program. According to the DET supervisors, as a consequence of the workshops the participants are more confident in performing landscape maintenance, planting trees, and planting shrubs. They also take initiative and assist/correct others who have not been trained and show them how to do the planting or pruning. The workshops have also increased the survival rate of the trees and shrubs being planted in the downtown area. Due to the success of the program, these workshops will continue in 2013.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey, the city of Miami has one of the highest poverty rates and one of the lowest median incomes among large U.S. cities (<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>). This survey places Miami's poverty rate at 26.9%, well above the state average of 12.6%, Miami-Dade County's 18%, and the national average of 13.3%.

To overcome the disparities, the Miami Dade Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was created as an autonomous agency. The mission of the DDA is to promote growth and economy and to strengthen the health and vitality of downtown Miami. The goals of the agency are: to advocate and facilitate plans; execute business development; plan capital improvements, marketing and communication strategies.

The area that encompasses DDA is 1.7 square miles, and had a permanent population during 2011 of 71,600 residents (42,000 people/square mile). However, the winter population can reach almost 200,000 people. The projected population for 2016 is 85,000 people. Since 2003 the area has built 22,785 residential units, 18.6 million sq ft of office space, and 6,789 hotel rooms.

The main services that DDA provides are: program development and execution, beautification and greening, capital improvement, project coordination, marketing and public relations, sponsorship and partnership, and urban and transportation planning.

According to Escobedo et al., in a 2010 study (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fr347>), trees shade an average of only 11% of Miami whereas the average for American cities is 25% to 33% (American Foresters, <http://www.americanforests.org/>).

To improve the beautification and greening of the area, the DDA has established a partnership with Camillus House. Since 2007, formerly homeless persons are assisted to give back to the community and re-enter the workforce through employment with the Downtown Enhancement Team (DET). Activities through DET include litter pick-up, graffiti removal, landscape installation and maintenance, pruning, and sidewalk pressure cleaning (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. DET member cleaning the planter.

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With the purpose of improving and maintaining the urban tree canopy, the DDA coordinator of Quality of Life and Services contacted the UF/Miami–Dade County Commercial Urban Horticultural Agent to assist the agency with training. This training included teaching entry-level employees from the DET better techniques to plant and maintain trees in downtown Miami (Fig. 2). Since 2011 nearly 100 DET team members (of which 90% were formerly homeless) attended 3 h of hands-on training on pruning and planting, which was developed by the Miami–Dade Extension Service.

To increase the beautification and greening of the area, the Miami DDA (through a grant issued by the Omni Community Redevelopment Agency) purchased and installed 75 fiberglass planters. These planters were 200 gal each and were placed in key sectors of downtown Miami, such as NE 7th and 8th streets between 1st and 2nd avenues. This is a key area where the American Airlines Arena (home to the Miami Heat) is located. Miami–Dade Extension personnel helped with the selection of the soil mix for the planters, tree recommendation, nursery visits, and tree inspection. All the plants selected were Florida #1 in accordance to the Florida Grades and Standards. The planting section of the training included proper installation, root manipulation, staking, and appropriate irrigation.

In conclusion, this was a very successful partnership. This was the first time participants received training that highlighted the importance of one-on-one interactions due to the small size of the groups. The participants are more confident in performing landscape maintenance and planting trees and shrubs. They also take initiative and assist and correct others who have not been trained and show them how to do the planting or pruning. Because of the higher quality of the trees, the Miami DDA is spending less money in tree replanting and removal and is providing entry-level opportunities to economically disadvantaged individuals. Also, the program helps promote the visibility of Miami–Dade



Fig. 2. Pruning classes for the DET group.

Extension between county and city authorities. Due to the success of the program, these workshops will continue and potentially expand during 2013.

#### Literature Cited

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