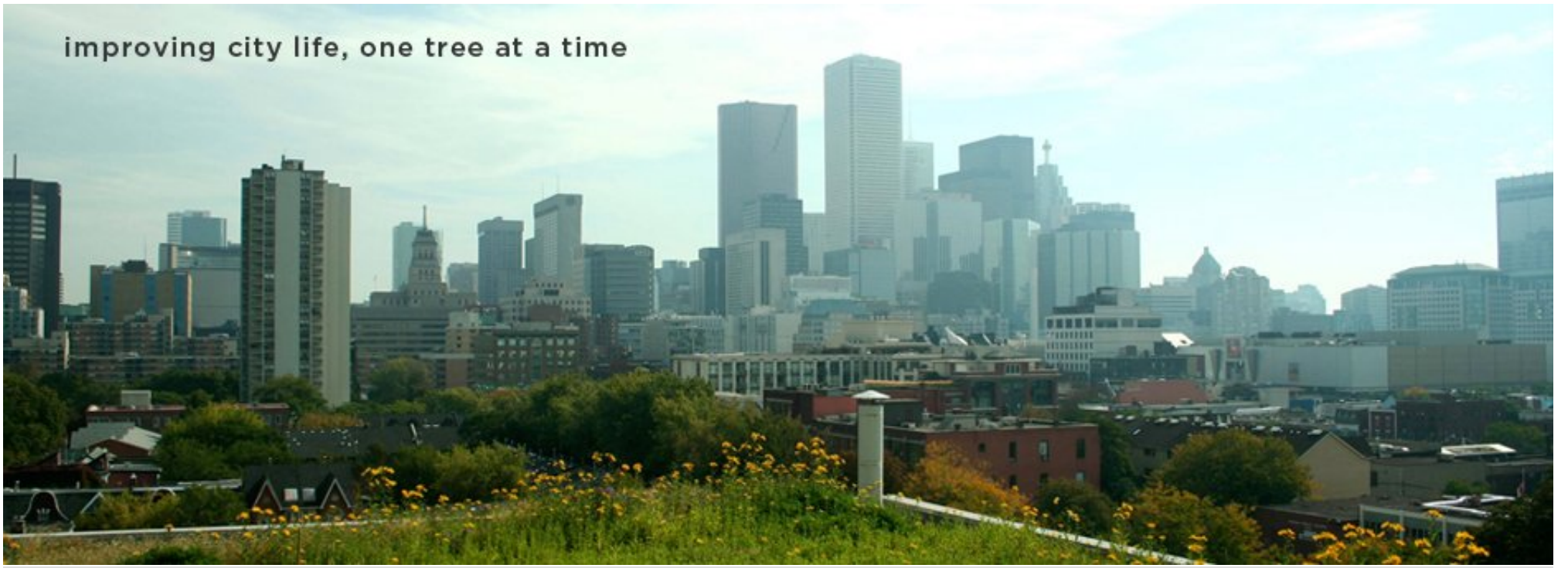




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improving city life, one tree at a time

attending to trees

Posted by [Guest Blogger](#) / JULY 28, 2014



How do trees and urban cycling infrastructure contribute to better cities? Hear from volunteer Jonathan Silver as he recounts his experience on this Bike Tour around Toronto.

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I went on my first tree tour with LEAF last week. I've never enjoyed Toronto as much as I do now.



The tree tour got me to focus my attention on one feature of the city — its trees. As I concentrated on the urban forest, I began to notice details (with the help of ourtour leader, Amanda Gomm) I had never noticed before. For example: a row of seemingly

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ordinary trees I've walked by countless times was in fact a row of startlingly different species; I saw a surprising variety of little berries and nuts growing on different trees throughout the city; what seemed like just a group of three maple trees was really a group of three different species of maple; and what appeared as nothing more than a giant willow (a tree that prefers very wet soil) was, upon closer examination, an indicator that a subterranean river was gushing below us, and thus also a reminder of Toronto's history (Garrison Creek was infilled with soil in the 1880s).



These tiny details matter. Whether it's simply the enjoyment we get from admiring the subtle beauty of the tree in front of us; discovering that the house we want to move into with the willow nearby could indicate that a stream once flowed in the area but

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was filled in as the city developed; learning that a tree in our favourite park is also a source of free and nutritious food; getting in touch with our city's history and feeling a sense of place; or that our neighborhood's sidewalk design is stunting the growth of nearby trees and our property values could go up with a few simple changes.

We live in Toronto, the arboreal city — the city among the trees. But without slowing down and taking time to look at our trees, their subtle yet important details escape our awareness. Giving only half our attention to the trees, we reap only half the benefits of this feature that defines our city and makes it a unique and highly desirable place to live. The tree tour was a lesson in how to stop and look, and what to look for.

Since I began to slow down and look, I can't seem to stop. My newfound ways of seeing and understanding the city have afforded me a deeper appreciation of this place. Commutes around Toronto (even to work) and stays in its parks have never been more interesting; I never noticed how much there is to look at.

Come to LEAF's next tree tour and *see for yourself*.



Jonathan Silver is a guest blogger and volunteer photographer for LEAF.

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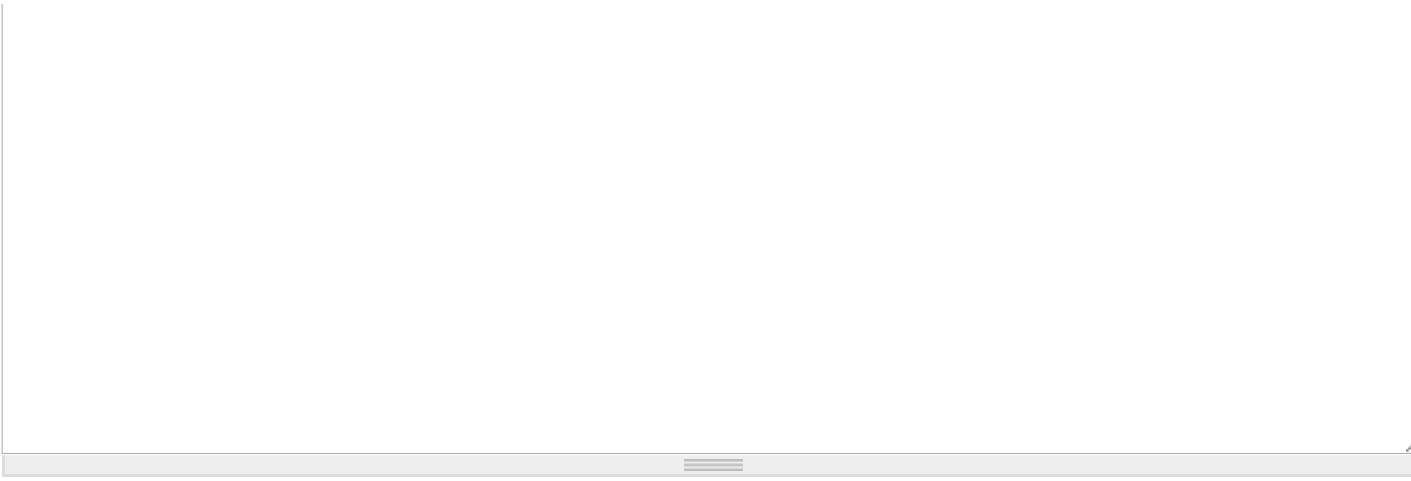
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