



2024 IAA Conference Speaker Bio and Info

Hal Acree has spent his 40-year career in commercial equipment industry, most recently in the vegetation management segment focused on Utility Right of Way maintenance. He lives in Lafayette IN with wife of 38 years and has 4 grown children and one grandchild.

Stephen Beard has been a biologist for Duke Energy for 13 years covering Endangered Species compliance and conservation and stewardship projects. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist and works on Bat Conservation Plans, the Monarch CCAA, and other wildlife-related permits.

Janna Beckerman is a professor and extension plant pathologist specializing in diseases of horticultural crops at Purdue University. She obtained her Ph.D. in plant pathology from Texas A&M University, and her M.S. and B.S. in Biology from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. In addition to her extension plant pathology programs on landscape plants, she teaches a graduate level course on “Plant Disease Diagnosis”. She has developed five apps on plant pest diagnosis with Dr. Cliff Sadof, that are available in the iTunes store and Google Play or online as a mobile friendly website at www.purdueplantdoctor.com.

John Bonkowski is originally from Delaware where he attended the University of Delaware for his bachelor’s degree in Plant Science. He spent a summer as an intern at the university’s plant clinic learning about basic lab techniques and general operations. John moved to Gainesville, Florida where he was enrolled in the Doctor of Plant Medicine program at the University of Florida, which is a program that takes a holistic approach to plant protection, with an emphasis on coursework, internships, and lab practical-type courses. During his doctorate, he worked at the UF Plant Diagnostic Center for 4 years. In 2017, John accepted a position with the State of Missouri Department of Agriculture as a Plant Protection Specialist, who focused primarily as a lab diagnostician for plant issues other inspectors were seeing in nurseries and in farmer fields. In May of 2019, John accepted the position of Plant Disease Diagnostician at the Purdue University’s Plant and Pest Diagnostic Laboratory where he works with growers, consultants, researchers, and homeowners to diagnose plant problems and provide appropriate management recommendations for the issues they are facing. In his position he also provides training and outreach for plant disease diagnosis and management to interested groups.

Mason Brandenberger is an ISA Certified arborist, TCIA CTSP, and holds a bachelor’s degree in business management & marketing. Mason has over 17 years experience in the tree care industry, 12 years of which are owning and operating a tree care business, Brandenberger TCP



Beth Brantley is a research scientist with Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories. She is based in New Hampshire and provides scientific and technical support to Bartlett Tree Experts arborists in the northeastern US. Her key areas include diagnostics, public education and research in beech leaf disease, tree risk assessment, soil and root health, and wood decay. She holds a PhD in plant pathology and taught for 22 years at Penn State Mont Alto before joining Bartlett in 2019. Beth is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist and an ISA Tree Risk Assessment qualification instructor.

Bob Bruner obtained their Bachelor of Science from the Purdue University Dept. of Entomology in 2008. After that, they attended Iowa State University as a graduate researcher, studying invasive soybean aphid, until their graduation in 2012. Bob joined Purdue Extension in 2016, becoming the Extension educator for Clay and Owen Counties until 2022, at which point their returned to the Dept. of Entomology in their current role.

Jim Bryant joined the ArboRisk team with over 25 years of insurance experience in building strong long-lasting relationships with employers by executing risk management strategies, conducting critical field underwriting and assessing exposures for appropriate protection. He has fallen in love with the tree care industry and is dedicated to assisting tree care employers to "Thrive" by working together reach new heights in their business.

Jeff Carroll is a strategist, leader, and gifted storyteller committed to social and environmental innovation as a tool for the public good. Jeff leverages a background in construction and business to design market solutions that address environmental issues and employment barriers to decent jobs. He challenges audiences and change-makers with stats and stories to find sustainable approaches in *enterprise-driven solutions*.

After establishing a deconstruction and material reuse enterprise in Baltimore and growing it to a \$5,000,000 operation with 200 hires, he is now working with other cities to establish circular "urban wood economies" by finding wealth in the wood waste stream (both from building deconstruction and downed urban trees). As the CEO of Urban Wood Economy Inc., he is building scalable pilots across the United States to create employment on-ramps to a circular urban wood job market that reinvests wealth back into marginalized communities -- all while reducing carbon emissions and avoiding landfilling valuable urban wood.

Jeff has an MBA from Johns Hopkins Carey Business School and lives in Baltimore with his wife Heather and a collection of guitars.

Kyle Daniel is the Nursery and Landscape Specialist in the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture at Purdue University. In addition to his Extension appointment, Kyle teaches Landscape Construction and Management and co-teaches Horticultural Production Systems and has several research trials which include native ornamental plant selections and



herbicide trials in landscapes and nursery production. Kyle works with Green Industry professionals across the state to troubleshoot problems and provide consultations. He is currently the Education Director for the Indiana Nursery and Landscape Association, co-director for education at the Indiana Green Expo, Nursery representative on the Indiana Arborist Association, an ISA Certified Arborist, member of the Indiana Plant Advisory Committee, and Chair of the North Central Nursery IPM Working Group.

KENT FRANSDEN has practiced with the firm since 1977, concentrating in civil litigation, electric utility, zoning and land use, and education law. Following graduation from law school from Indiana University in 1975, Mr. Frandsen served as a law clerk to The Honorable James E. Noland, Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana. Mr. Frandsen has tried nearly 100 civil jury trials in state and federal courts, representing both plaintiffs and defendants. He has represented parties on appeal in over fifty cases in state and federal appellate courts. On four occasions he has presented oral argument before the Indiana Supreme Court, and in each of those cases he has persuaded the Supreme Court to reverse published decisions of the Court of Appeals.

Jeremy Gilbert comes from a background in culinary arts and marketing with a degree in Fine Arts. Since beginning his career in vegetation management in 2012, he has focused on bringing enhancements and innovation to Edko in the areas of Safety, Operations, Branding, App development and most recently, utility UAV application. Today he serves Edko in the capacity of Vice President with a focus on nurturing a culture of innovation and ideas as well as servant leadership. He is the father of 5 and spends his free time cooking fancy food for his family.

Drew Hart is the Urban and Community Forestry specialist serving the Chicago/Northwest Indiana region for the US Forest Service. Drew's work has focused on connecting people with the natural world. Developing partnerships to strengthen communities, from directing a Community Center and Nature Center in Chicago, a not for profit program called NeighborWoods in Indianapolis, and an urban farm for a K-8 school, his work is grounded in the communities in which he serves. Drew's love of nature brings him to his current work with the USFS in the Chicago Region, focusing on urban forestry as a tool for building stronger and healthier communities. He works with partners in Northwest Indiana who have created the CommuniTree program, planting and caring for over 10,000 trees. Drew graduated from the University of Michigan and Antioch New England University and has been with the US Forest Service for over 8 years.

Andrew Kreider is an investigator with the Indiana Office for the State Chemist and have been with OISC for almost 6 years.



Christopher J. Luley, Ph.D. has BS and MS from SUNY ESF in Syracuse in Forest Pathology. His Ph.D. is from Iowa State University in plant pathology where he also managed the Plant Diagnostic Clinic. He was Forest Pathologist for the State of Missouri and has been a consultant since 1991. In 2017 he started Urban Forest Diagnostic. Dr. Luley has over 70 scientific, technical, and popular press articles and received the R. W. Harris Authors Award from the International Society of Arboriculture. He developed TreeRot.com and recently received the Brian Skinner Lifetime Achievement Award from the NYS Arborist, ISA Chapter, and author award from the Midwest Chapter of ISA.

Mark Mann has been the owner of of Plant Growth Management Systems for over 30 years and the American BioChar Company. He has been researching and developing programs and products to improve soils, root conditions and plant growth in both urban and rural landscapes. Since graduating from Purdue University with expertise in Forestry and Agronomy; Mark has been involved in establishing urban tree protocols, arborist equipment, paclobutrazol use and affects and in particular, urban soil improvements

Andrew Mertz is the Distribution System Forester for Duke Energy and proprietor of Indigo Tree Consulting LLC. He is a BCMA, RCA, TRAQ, and TPAQ qualified. He is now officially a past President of the IAA, serves on the Tree Appraisal Committee for ASCA, and is the ASCA representative for the ANSI A300 review committee.

Sarah Mincey is a social-ecological systems scientist who studies natural resource management with particular emphasis on urban forest management. At Indiana University, she serves as faculty in the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, as the managing director for the Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI), and as the director for the Integrated Program in the Environment and the IU Research and Teaching Preserve. She maintains much of her research activity through the Ostrom Workshop, ERI's Urban Green Infrastructure Research Group, and the Bloomington Urban Forestry Research Group. Mincey is a co-founder and member of the executive committee of the Indiana Community Forestry Council advising the State's Community and Urban Forestry Program within the DNR. She is also co-founder and board vice president for CanopyBloomington, a nonprofit focused on equitably growing the urban forest in Bloomington, Indiana.

Lindsey Purcell, urban forestry specialist and principal of Lp Consulting Group LLC, has been involved in the community landscape and urban forestry industry for over 40 years. As an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, he has served communities around the U.S. as a landscape and tree professional at the state and municipal government level as well as private enterprise. In his role as a presenter, freelance writer and author, Lindsey continues to provide many educational opportunities and products for professional arborists and urban foresters on a national level. His educational background includes an Associate of Science degree from Vincennes University, a Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University and a master's



degree from Indiana State University. Lindsey serves as Executive Director of the Indiana Arborist Association and former extension administrator and instructor for Purdue University Forestry and Natural Resources. Lindsey is an ASCA Registered Consulting Arborist and holds the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification as a certified instructor by the International Society of Arboriculture.

Paul Ries has worked as a practitioner and educator in natural resources, urban forestry, arboriculture, and wildland fire management at the state, local, International, non-profit, and academic levels for over 35 years. He currently teaches urban forestry, green infrastructure, and arboriculture at Oregon State University and provides consulting, teaching, and facilitation services through Insightful Nature LLC, a natural resources consulting, communications, and training company. He holds BS and MS degrees in Natural Resources and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Paul is a Past-President of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and has been an ISA Certified Arborist since 1988.

Chad Rigsby During his academic career Chad studied the interactions between invasive forest pests and their novel host plants. Chad then joined the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories team in 2018 and is based out of The Morton Arboretum. Chad's research focuses on a variety of topics centered on trees and their management including pruning, soil, root, and pest management, tree stress, growth-defense tradeoffs, and tree planting practices. Chad also works with Bartlett Tree Experts arborists and other groups to educate on and implement best management practices and science-driven tree care.

Jacob Roos is the Community & Urban Forestry Director with the Indiana DNR. He has been in this role since December of 2022. Prior to working for the state he had spent the previous 8 years working in a combination of roles in the utility forestry industry as well as commercial & residential tree care. Even though he is a native Illinois resident he is now proud to be an advocate, representative and voice for all Indiana communities in their quest to improve their urban forestry programs.

Cliff Sadof has been providing pest management advice to arborists since 1990 as an Entomology Extension Specialist and Professor at Purdue. He has worked to help keep the industry apprised of the latest pest management tactics for everyday pests as well as megabugs like emerald ash borer.

Leo Sawyers is Hoosier native. Raised in Hammond, IN. Leo studied at Purdue University Northwest when he was introduced to the Student Conservation Association. Since then, Leo has successfully led several corps teams across the county in National Parks, State Parks and other federal lands. His background is as liberal as his studies. He currently the NW Indiana community program manager for the SCA, where he manages an urban forestry program that



serves some of Indiana's urban communities such as Hammond, Whiting, East Chicago and Gary.

Hans Schmitz received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Agricultural Meteorology from Purdue University. He previously had roles in various counties over 15 years with Extension, before transitioning to serve as Conservation Cropping Systems Agronomist for the state. His expertise lies at the nexus of soil health and climate smart agriculture. Hans lives in Cynthiana, Indiana, with his wife, Cindy, and two children. In his spare time, Hans manages the family farm, a sixth-generation grain and cattle operation.

Zack Shier was born and raised in Marysville, OH. After highschool, Zack spent 4 years in the U.S. Army stationed in Savannah, GA with 1st Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. After the Army, Zack attended The Ohio State University majoring in forestry. During his tenure at OSU, Zack began working at Joseph Tree as a groundsman, climber, and equipment operator. Zack eventually started building the PHC section for the company and taking over its management. He currently resides in Marysville, OH with his wife, Rachel, and their son, Oliver.

Greg Schweitzer recently joined the Vegetation Management team as an Area Sales Manager with Envu Environmental Sciences group in March 2023. Greg previously held the position as the Director of Operations for a land maintenance company based out of St. Louis Missouri that specialized in industrial vegetation management with a large emphasis on Total Vegetation Control for refineries, utility substations and military bases. Additionally, Greg has experience working with DOTs and managing roadsides. Greg has an Agricultural Degree from Southern Illinois University and is currently responsible for the Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, and Wisconsin territory for Envu IVM.

Hans Tielmann, founder of NJ Crane Expert and Noble Oak Safety & Training, has been working in tree care since he could walk. A second-generation arborist, who has a passion for safety & arboriculture. Hans is a NJ Licensed Tree Expert and NCCER Mobile Crane instructor, leading his team of trainers all over the country.

Mike Tilford is the Director of Tree Care for SavATree. He is an ISA Certified Arborist, Municipal Specialist and Tree Worker Climber Specialist, as well as a TCIA Certified Treecare Safety Professional. He serves as Head Technician at ITCC, presents and trains at regional conferences and is a voting member of the Z133 committee.

Jim Tough is an ISA certified arborist and CTSP who has been working in arboriculture for over 16 years. He joined SavATree in 2019 and works as the general tree care trainer for the central-west region. He is a dedicated arborist with a strong focus on safety.



Travis Vickerson has 22 yrs of experience in the tree care industry as a ground worker to company owner. He is the current President of Vertical Supply Group and performs training including the 2023 Aerial Rescue Training provided at the Indiana Tre Climbing Competition in October of this year. Travis also spent 15 yrs as a professional firefighter for the City of Durham NC.

Fred Whitford, Clinical Engagement Professor and Director of Purdue Pesticide Programs. He has served as the Director of the Purdue Pesticide Program since 1991. He has authored more than 300 publications including 8 books and 120 extension bulletins, and delivered 6,500 presentations. In recognition of his significant contributions to Extension outreach efforts, he has received numerous awards, including the Frederick L. Hovde Award of Excellence in Educational Service to Rural People of Indiana, and Honorary Master Farmer by Indiana Prairie Farmer and the Purdue University College of Agriculture.