Green Infrastructure

‘Tree Park’ making a comeback?

In the late 1990s, a vacant lot at Beech and Charlotte streets, formerly the site of a gas station, was donated to Trees Inc., a Pottstown non-profit. A benefactor donated $60,000 to create a European-style park on the site, consisting of four rows of red maple trees planted in two feet of new topsoil covered with gravel. Because the park was unusual, it was publicly ridiculed, and the benefactor decided to remain anonymous rather than name it after her late husband, as she originally planned.

However, the trees grew nicely over the years, evolving into a green, shady oasis in the midst of bleak urban hardscape. As the trees grew, they served as a prime example of “green infrastructure,” which uses vegetation to cool and cleanse the air and absorb storm water where it falls, rather than allow runoff to flow untreated into the river.

The “tree park,” as it has come to be called, is fully taxable and is maintained (including weekly trash cleanup) by Trees Inc.

Last year, inexplicably, the trees failed to leaf out. The Davey Tree Expert Co. was consulted and a variety of remedial measures were taken, including removing as much filter fabric as possible (which may have clogged and impeded root growth), aerating the soil, drilling holes for “vertical mulching,” pruning roots, and injecting fertilizer.

CMD Services, which waters the flowers in downtown Pottstown, filled irrigation bags around the trees during the summer. These measures may have saved most of the trees, which so far this spring have regained much of their original canopy. Now we need rain.

Commentary by Tom Hylton

The “tree park” at Beech and Charlotte streets, above, created in 1998 by Trees Inc., looked like a “goner” last year when the trees failed to leaf out. Remedial action last summer may have saved most of the trees.