



Case Study

Erickson Retirement Communities

At a Glance

Client:

Ann's Choice

Location:

Warminster, Pennsylvania

Tree Care Needs:

Ann's Choice hoped to preserve a large stand of Chinese chestnuts to enhance the retirement community's beauty and residents' quality of life.

The Care of Trees Advantage:

The Care of Trees provided critical expertise in protecting the chestnuts from initial planning through construction. Their experience and knowledge allowed them to locate and protect vital root systems, ensuring the trees would continue to thrive.

Retirement community preserves chestnuts as focal point with help from The Care of Trees

The Client

Ann's Choice, a retirement community in the suburbs of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is home to approximately 525 residents. The campus offers an active, worry-free lifestyle complete with on-site health care and dining, and a host of recreational activities such as fitness classes and facilities, crafts, college classes, nature trails, clubs and games. Ann's Choice, one of 11 properties built by Erickson Retirement Communities, promises to be residents' home and year-round vacation lifestyle all rolled into one – giving seniors a truly fulfilling retirement experience.

Unique Tree Care Needs

When Erickson officials were scouting sites for its tenth retirement community, a historic location in the Philadelphia suburbs caught their attention. Most recently a naval air center, the site had once been home to a pastoral farm. Though most vegetation had been cleared for the naval center, an impressive cluster of more than two dozen Chinese chestnut trees remained.

With a track record for environmental preservation at its sites, Erickson knew that preserving the 75-year-old trees would provide more attractive, mature landscaping and be more cost-effective than investing in new landscaping. In fact, the stand of chestnuts was so magnificent that the company decided to design its new community with the trees as the centerpiece of a large courtyard. But while maintaining the trees was a top priority, protecting them during heavy construction would be a key challenge.

The Care of Trees Difference

Erickson previously worked with The Care of Trees, a national tree care company known for its expertise in preservation and transplant, at its Riderwood community just outside of Washington, D.C. There, their tree conservation efforts earned Erickson a Grand Award from the Tree Care Industry Association along with the Building with Trees Award from the National Arbor Day Foundation in 2002.

The company once again called on the preservation experts at The Care of Trees to assist in protecting the Chinese chestnuts, as well as some additional outlying trees, at the new community, to be called Ann's Choice.

“The Care of Trees’ evaluation, expertise and ongoing maintenance were instrumental in allowing us to realize our vision of preserving the trees as the focal point of a gorgeous courtyard. The trees are doing fantastically.”

Ted Sirko
Dir. of Civil Engineering at Erickson



(top to bottom) Temporary fencing is installed to protect the Chinese chestnut trees; using a supersonic air tool to locate critical root zones; the preserved chestnut trees are the focus of the courtyard.

A Comprehensive Approach to Protecting the Trees

With construction taking place all around the trees, they and their roots would have to be protected to minimize any impact. A team of tree preservation experts from The Care of Trees began by reviewing construction procedures to ensure that crews performed their work in a way that would have the least impact on the trees. They then flagged chestnut trees that were to be protected and installed temporary fencing. They also educated construction crews and managers about the importance of protecting the trees before any work began.

To strengthen the trees and fortify them against the impact of heavy construction, The Care of Trees pruned tree crowns, removed dead limbs, conditioned the soil and mulched the tree bases. During construction, tree care experts monitored the site daily for any signs of tree distress.

Locating and Protecting Root Systems

Because the roots were the top concern, the team examined the plans for utility lines and walking paths to ensure minimal impact on critical root zones and ensure long-term survival. To determine the exact location of underground roots so that utilities could be routed accordingly, arborists used a pneumatic air tool to deliver a stream of air about twice the speed of sound to the roots around the tree.

Throughout the construction process, the tree care team collaborated closely with Erickson, providing knowledge essential to protecting the trees. When heavy construction concluded, they offered ongoing support to the chestnuts and other key trees, delivering an integrated plant health care inspection service. This included monthly monitoring for insects and disease, along with assessments of water and soil needs.

Lasting Impression

Erickson considers The Care of Trees an invaluable part of the success of the project. “The Care of Trees’ evaluation, expertise and ongoing maintenance were instrumental in allowing us to realize our vision of preserving the trees as the focal point of a gorgeous courtyard,” explained Ted Sirko, director of civil engineering at Erickson. “The trees are doing fantastically.”

Today, the team continues to evaluate the trees for any signs of distress from root loss related to construction and to ensure that they keep thriving. The majestic stand sits in a central courtyard filled with walking paths and nearby patios for outdoor dining or socializing. A greenhouse-style indoor lap pool overlooks the courtyard, giving swimmers a year-round feeling that they are outdoors. Many residents’ homes also overlook the trees, enhancing their quality of life.

Deborah Olcese, marketing director at Ann’s Choice, feels that the courtyard and trees have provided a critical aesthetic appeal that makes an immediate impression on prospective residents. “We have incorporated photos and the story of the trees as a key element in our marketing efforts,” Olcese explained. “The courtyard is a highlight of all our tours. From an income-generating perspective, the aesthetic value and Erickson’s commitment to keeping the trees distinguishes us from other communities.”

Winner of the 2004 Excellence in Arboriculture Award

The Care of Trees was proud to receive an Award of Distinction from the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) for this project. The TCIA Excellence in Arboriculture program recognizes and celebrates commercial arborist firms that have demonstrated excellence in their work. TCIA is made up of over 1800 tree care company members. The Care of Trees is proud to receive this recognition from its peers in the industry.

The Care of Trees is one of the foremost, full service tree care companies in the industry. We have over 15 offices and more than 350 dedicated arborists and support staff serving more than 60,000 residential and commercial clients. We have offices serving Greater Metropolitan areas of Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. We are able to provide a full range of high quality, state-of-the-art, environmentally responsible tree care services. Our strength is that we offer our clients the extensive resources of a large firm combined with the responsiveness and commitment from our local offices.

