

Tributes to Cass Turnbull and the Future of PlantAmnesty

Cass Turnbull, founder and president of PlantAmnesty passed away on January 26th, 2017 while on vacation in Hawaii. The Seattle Times published an article written by Lynda Mapes as well as her obituary. Other tributes include: The Ballard News-Tribune, The Evergrey, My Limited Time with Cass Turnbull by Heidi Fehr Hower and Ciscoe Morris' Radio Show broadcast on January 28th. Our Spring 2017 Newsletter includes even more memories and tributes to our founder.



On March 25th, 2017, over 500 people gathered to celebrate the life and times of Cass. Participants included past students, colleagues, friends, family and people touched by Cass in many ways. Speakers included:

- Keith Dekker (former VP, PlantAmnesty)
- George Ortiz (Pruning Workshops for Spanish Speakers)
- Anna Moore (current President, PlantAmnesty)
- Bess Bronstein (friend, arborist and educator)
- Dan Hinkley (friend and plantsman)
- Jane Rueberry (family member)
- Sarah Pedersen (family friend)
- Barbara Ballard (family friend)

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Cass Turnbull's Celebration of Life. March 25th, 2017

Thank you to Sky Nursery, the arborists, choir, volunteers and so many more who made this event a fitting tribute to an amazing woman. The program ended with a video clip provided by Jim McKenna.

June 12, 2017 was proclaimed **Cass Turnbull Day** by the Seattle City Council. You can view the presentation by Sally Bagshaw..... beginning at minute 11 and ending around minute 17.

In addition to the published articles, the PlantAmnesty office received letters and emails offering condolences and paying tribute to Cass, including this letter from the Mayor of Seattle:

Dear members of PlantAmnesty,

On behalf of the City of Seattle, I would like to offer my deepest condolences on the passing of Cass Turnbull.

Cass was an important part of Seattle's environmental community and was a tireless advocate for protecting our natural environment here in the Pacific Northwest. As a former Seattle Parks and Recreation employee, expert landscaper and gardener, and founder of PlantAmnesty, Cass brought her passion and spirit to all her work.

My thoughts and prayers are with you and Cass's family during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Edward B. Murray
Mayor of Seattle

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Terrible news. Such a loss! Cass was an incredible teacher. So funny, warmhearted, and wise. I was thinking of her just yesterday, as I do every day when pruning. We gained so much from her; we have lost a unique soul. "Prune with vigor," she would say, but then sometimes also it's time to, "Put down the pruners. Nice and easy now: step back from the plant."

No stories to share, just gratitude to Cass for being passionate, for sticking her neck out as an activist, and for maturing into a mentor of other activists. Cass donated her referral service when my business was struggling, and she supported my ideas to incentivize homeowner stewardship to help increase tree canopy. I am grateful. The least we could do is name a park or newly preserved greenspace after her - Cass Turnbull Park.

With so many years of "growing up" with Cass as a tree person, I could draw from so many projects we worked on together from launching the Plant-it-Right Program where slides were created from taking pictures of a page of text back before PowerPoint, launching the Tree Steward Program, Applying for and receiving grants, recognizing the very first Heritage Tree, watching PlantAmnesty grow from a local nucleus to having members worldwide.

Cass's courage and steadfast commitment to launch and keep PlantAmnesty alive through thick and thin with humor and art was inspiring. I recall many a board meeting looking over the budget and wondering where the funds would come from to pay bills and somehow the money kept up with program delivery and admin expenses. It was a lesson in believing in the cause and having faith that it was all meant to be and would continue.

As a writer, speaker, teacher, leader, and friend Cass was so often on the go. I had the joy-filled experience of joining Cass and John on Maui one winter. That trip Cass was stressing over a book deadline but in between writing and editing, we explored Maui and went to the beach, many beaches actually all around the island. Hawaii soothed and gentled and nourished Cass's body and soul. We watched fish, talked trees, ate well, and in the evening from the balcony of their condo we watched for whales and blew the conch in gratitude for another day well lived.

I will bring my conch and I would invite others to bring a conch as well - to blow a resounding blast out into the heavens in gratitude and in celebration of Cass Turnbull and as a soulful final good bye to a dear friend and colleague. Aloha Cass.

I have a fledgling tree care and advocacy program in Indianapolis. I contacted Cass last year to ask for advice about doing neighborhood outreach. She was very kind and forthright and supportive and encourage me to ruffle some feathers if I have to. I had hoped to have her input and advice in the future. I will cherish the videos and books that are available and keep an eye on Plant Amnesty. Such an

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inspiration! Cass' influence has reached across the Mississippi and the White River in Indiana!

Thank you so much for sharing all this. I have her book. When I had to move and give up my garden to go into a condo, I gave away at least two hundred garden books. Cass' book was the only one I kept. The whole gardening community in the Northwest and beyond is so much poorer for her loss. I hope Plant Amnesty will be able to continue without her. It is so valuable! Tears and hugs to all her close compadres.

Good-bye to a friend of nature...

At the beginning of this year, Cass Turnbull, founder of the widely-recognized plant advocacy organization, PlantAmnesty, and Seattle's prominent authority and author on trees, pruning and landscape, died suddenly after a swim in Hawaii. Her notoriety extends throughout the Pacific Northwest.

How we stumbled across Cass Turnbull is a story. My husband and I considered ourselves lucky after looking at over 2000 properties before we finally bought our Inverness home in 2012. At first, we loved the manicured landscape as it looked neat, tidy and reminded us of the structured gardens of Versailles designed by Le Nôtre for King Louis XIV. But with time and several gardeners and landscape crews later, we realized that the constant repetitive shearing and pruning of plants, shrubs and trees in our yard, the Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Camellias, Aucubas, Cedars, Maples, Pines, etc...was not a good practice as all began to show symptoms of plant stress. Many of the mal-pruned shrubs became unhealthy and then stricken with insect infestation and pathogenic disease which ultimately led to their demise. These plants were removed. Also, by this time we grew weary of the formal look of our landscape. We wanted the garden to regain its natural aesthetic. It was a matter of personal taste and preference. We both have an avid interest in gardening but did not possess extensive experience in landscaping, and did not know how to appropriately transform our garden. It was a humbling moment that led us to reach out for help.

Help, perhaps more appropriately rescue, came in the form of Cass Turnbull and her organization PlantAmnesty. Our introduction to Cass came from our Inverness neighbor and garden aficionado, Beth Cook, who kindly loaned us Cass Turnbull's book, "A Guide to Pruning". Virginia thought to herself, gee another pruning guide book to read... Yet she gave it a chance and found the book easy to read and loaded with the author's witty insights. Plus, the instructions were clear and straight forward. We became anxious to put some of the pointers into practice and started working on our garden. Some of you may have noticed the huge piles of plant clippings that totally littered our drive way on a regular basis. We are probably the only homeowners in the neighborhood with 2 enormous yard waste bins filled to the brim every week, even in winter!! Often, we resort to borrowing yard waste space from our generous neighbors, right and left. With so many corrective pruning measures to take on we felt overwhelmed. We took our chances and wrote a solicitous letter to PlantAmnesty about our landscape woes and the wish for transformation.

Months later Cass Turnbull herself came to check out our property to assess whether it would be suitable for her spring workshop on landscape renovation. Our yard was deemed a worthy candidate and we hosted the workshop in June of 2016. From the get go we realized that Cass was a special and unique individual. Cass Turnbull was intelligent, articulate, and befriended us by her wittiness and refreshing authenticity. She

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was an inspiring leader, mentor and instructor to those in the plant universe. She was best known for her relentless advocacy and stewardship on issues impacting the landscape. We were so very impressed by her dedication to serve the public and her city. Thanks to Cass's teachings we have the opportunity and basis to make our garden a little less fussy and give it a more natural style over time. In part, due to Cass's inspiration, Virginia recently completed the Master Gardner Program.

We deeply regret Cass Turnbull's death as she had infinitely more to give to the community and greater Seattle. Her passing is a great loss to the horticulture world and she will be sorely missed by us and our environment.

You can find out much more about Cass on YouTube or at the PlantAmnesty Website.

PlantAmnesty's Future

Many have asked if PlantAmnesty will continue without Cass. Yes! We are going forward to honor Cass' memory and vision. We will continue fulfilling PA's mission "to end the senseless torture and mutilation of trees and shrubs through mal-pruning." Our programs and services (1) raise awareness of the problem of mal-pruning, (2) provide accessible solutions to the problem, and (3) engender respect for plants. In all of this, we remain animated by Cass' indomitable spirit.
