

Working at a Sacred Site

Project Evergreen volunteers restore storm-damaged Statue of Liberty landscape

by Ron Hall

The Statue of Liberty towers 305 feet 6 inches tall from base of its massive pedestal to tip of the flame on its gold-leaf-coated copper torch. It dominates tiny 7-acre Liberty Island in Upper New York Bay. Facing southeast, it welcomes ships passing into New York Harbor as it has done since its dedication Oct. 28, 1886, when it began serving as the first sight of America to millions of immigrants almost to first half of the 20th century. They passed almost in its shadow on their way to nearby Ellis Island, where they were processed (the great majority of them anyway) and welcomed into the United States.

These days the Statue of Liberty welcomes millions—about 3 million tourists and school kids, annually. When the weather is agreeable they stream onto tiny Liberty Island arriving on one of two ferries, one from Ellis Island and one from New York's Battery Park.



Brian Tachler, right, brought an Artisan Gardens team, including wife Linda, and sons, Bradley and Taylor. Employees, from left: Peter Cela, Edgar Tenezaca and Jose Malan.



Andy Sinque, Lebanon Products area sales manager, spent the morning hauling and spreading mulch around the base of trees at the site.

My small group of 40 Project Evergreen volunteers took the ferry from Ellis Island, a leisurely 15-minute trip on a very hazy morning in early June. Our mission (one conceived and planned by Cleveland, Ohio-based Project Evergreen over a period of months) entailed:

- replanting 12 London plane trees in the 9/11 Memorial Grove on Liberty Island;
- mulching the 9/11 Memorial Grove and several nearby tree beds; and
- donating sodic soil treatments at the 9/11 Memorial Grove and Ellis Island.



Left, Mike Sisti, Weed Man, Brad Seipel, M/A/R/C Research, and Laura Gross, BASF, working at the base of the Statue of Liberty.

This was essentially a rescue mission. When Hurricane Sandy lumbered over the region in late October 2012, it sent a huge storm surge over the island, burying most of it under several feet of frothing, salty sea water. The surge killed and damaged dozens of mature London Plane, American Sycamore and Pin Oak trees and also did a number on the grass.

To correct the situation Project EverGreen partnered with Paul Cowie & Associates Arborist Consultants, who donated tree care survey and soil remediation management plans. Husqvarna provided professional climbing, ground and felling saws for the projects, and Bartlett Tree Experts donated crews, trucks and equipment to conduct the work needed on both islands. New Jersey-based Lawn Doctor provided aeration and application equipment.

To make the extensive sodic soil remediation treatments possible, Solu-Cal USA donated 16,000 pounds of enhanced gypsum, and New Jersey-based Lidochem, Inc. provided KaPre ExAlt surfactant product in in-kind donation for the project.

While the products were certainly appreciated, the more valuable donation it turned out (as the images accompanying this article vividly show)



Project EverGreen's Cindy Code with a new plaque for the 9/11 Memorial Grove with Ken Almstead (l.) and Chris Busak, Almstead Tree & Shrub Care.

was the expertise and sweat provided by the volunteers, many of them digging holes and planting the 3-inch-caliper London Plane Trees.

Project EverGreen, a 503c non-profit based in Cleveland, Ohio, estimates the in-kind products and services to restore and renew the landscapes on both Ellis and Liberty Islands approached a retail value of \$35,000.

Ron Hall is editor-in-chief of *Turf* magazine. This is his 30th year reporting on the green industry. Comment on this article or contact Ron at rhall@mrpllc.com.



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