

## McLean Patch:

### Dolling Up Dolley Madison: McLean Trees Foundation, Partners Prune Bradford Pears,

With dead and dying trees gone, 40 Bradfords remain.

Posted by Jason Spencer (Editor), October 31, 2013 at 10:21 AM



Dolley Madison Boulevard median in McLean after removal of dead and dying Bradford Pear trees. *Photo courtesy Joyce Harris*

Despite the chill in the air, the Dolley Madison Boulevard median recently got a bit of spring cleaning thanks to the McLean Tree Foundation.

Working with the Springfield-based Bartlett Tree Experts, Area Wide Protective out of Fredericksburg and the Virginia Department of Transportation, the groups removed dead or dying Bradford Pear trees between Elm Street and Beverly Road.

Joyce Harris, chairwoman of the McLean Trees Foundation, called it "an excellent example of a public-private partnership that benefits the entire community."

"Sometimes tree care involves significant safety concerns, and in those cases, it is important to rely on professional services," she said in a statement.

Fewer than half of the 113 Bradford Pear trees originally planted along the median in 1972 are still there, and many are in poor health, according to the foundation, causing the median to become littered with downed limbs.

A Bartlett Tree Experts crew spent five hours removing 10 trees that were dead or dying in mid-October, plus dead branches to reduce the risk of falling limbs. Since the pruning, only 40 Bradford Pears remain along the median.

The trees were mulched to create paths for the Chesterbrook Living Classroom on Kirby Road. The McLean classroom provides an outdoor lab to elementary school students.

The Bradford Pear — *Pyrus calleryana* — is a thornless, ornamental tree native to China and Korea that was commercially released in the early 1960s.

"It was initially very popular because of its fast growth, white flowers in the spring, and conical shape. As suburban development exploded in the 1960s, many communities, including McLean, used it as a favorite street tree," according to the foundation.

The trees, however, don't live very long or age well. As they get older, trunks and branches begin to break.

"Bradford Pear trees look pretty in the springtime when they are flowering, however, they have a tendency to split apart due to their brittle wood, poor branching structure, and weak crotches," said Stewart Bunn, a certified arborist for Bartlett Tree Experts. "In this case, as the trees aged, branches littered the roadway and became a potential safety hazard to the cars passing through this section of McLean."

The McLean Trees Foundation was founded more than 43 years ago as a semi-autonomous committee of the McLean Citizens Association before incorporating as a nonprofit in 2004.

Its mission is to preserve, plant, and maintain trees in McLean; to educate the public about benefits of trees; and to assist residents in taking an active role in caring for trees in McLean, according to a news release.