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**FIRST-EVER TREES & UTILITIES CONFERENCE TO BE HELD
AT LEWIS GINTER ON WEDNESDAY**
Focus is resolution of tree-utility conflict

Virginia's first-ever conference addressing the conflicts between trees and electric utilities will be held Wednesday, October 26, 2005 at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond. Titled **Look Up, Virginia**, the Conference will focus on the problems caused by trees that grow in close proximity to electric utility lines, and it will present some practical solutions for tree-utility resolution. Tree-utility conflicts have been gaining increasing attention due to the tree-caused Northeast blackout in 2003 as well as power outages occurring in the recent hurricanes and ice storms that have struck Virginia in the past few years.

The conference is sponsored by the Virginia Municipal Tree Restoration Program, an umbrella organization consisting of representatives from Virginia utility companies, state agencies, higher education, and non-profit organizations. Current members include the Virginia Department of Forestry, Scenic Virginia, Virginia Tech, Dominion Virginia Power, Appalachian Power, Allegheny Energy, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative the Virginia Cooperative Extension, the International Society of Arboriculture, and several Virginia localities. The organization's mission is "to reduce tree/utility conflicts by educating, influencing and encouraging people to recognize tree/utility problems, remove problematic tree/utility situations, and plant appropriately."

The target audience for the conference includes planners, arborists, elected officials, and concerned citizens who want to learn more about resolving tree-utility conflicts. The morning session will focus on the nature of the tree/utility conflict from the utility company perspective. The afternoon session will highlight some solutions to the tree/utility problem and will also feature a tour of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden with a focus on utility-compatible trees. Featured speakers will be Dr. Bonnie Appleton of Virginia Tech and Steve Cieslewicz of CN Utility Consulting. For more information, please call Leighton Powell at Scenic Virginia at 804.363.9453.