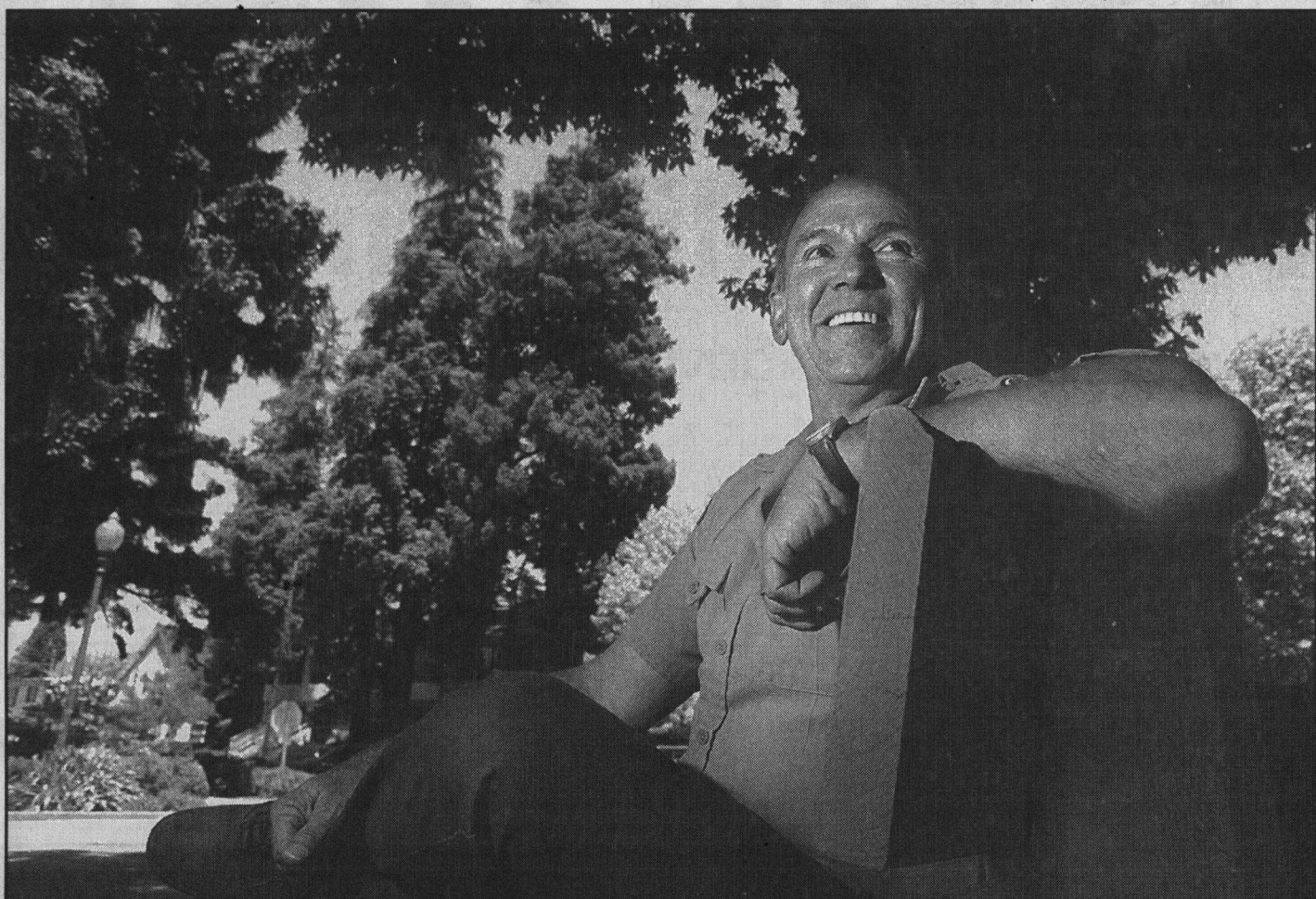


LOCAL

Arborist wants SC to regain status as a 'Tree City USA'



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Ray Sherrod is leading the attempt to restore Santa Cruz's status as a Tree City.

City lost designation with decreased tree spending

By APRIL JOHNSON
Sentinel correspondent

Trees

SANTA CRUZ — Until 1994, Santa Cruz was one of the more than 100 California cities to hold the "Tree City USA" title.

For the past five years, however, Santa Cruz has been unable to regain the designation, largely because of a change in bureaucratic requirements and because it doesn't spend enough on new trees.

"Due to the new specifications, the current city Parks and Recreation Department budget is \$61,708 less than the qualifications require," said city arborist Ray Sherrod, who is doing everything he can to get the city back on the list.

Among the requirements outlined by the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, a Tree City must have a designated group or person that cares for its public trees and must spend \$2 per capita on tree planting and care programs. That means Santa Cruz would have to spend at least \$110,000 annually, said Sherrod.

"Judging a city by its spending pattern is one-sided," said Jim Lang, parks and recreation director. "There is strong community interest in trees here and that says something."

Despite not meeting the budgetary

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guidelines, the city will submit a report to the Tree City committee by December. It will be up to the committee to decide whether Santa Cruz is spending enough on its existing trees to regain its tree-loving status, Lang said.

Ironically, 1994 was the year Sherrod received a prestigious award from an international group of arboriculturists for his "1000 trees" project.

Earlier this year, Sherrod received a second "Gold Leaf" award for his innovative approaches to Arbor Day. Selling T-shirts and posters to raise money to buy more trees, honoring heritage trees, offer-

ing tree tours and lectures by arborists and giving away thousands of free seedlings are just a few of the ways he has worked to make Santa Cruz greener.

Santa Cruz now has an estimated 15,000 trees on city property and another 30,000 to 35,000 on private property, Sherrod said. That works out to roughly one tree per city resident.

But there's room for more, he said. On city streets alone, he said he knows of places where another 4,000 additional trees could be planted.

But whether the rest of the world recognizes Santa Cruz as a Tree City does not really matter, Lang said.

"We'd like the acknowledgment but we'll continue to push trees regardless," he said.

The City Council has long had a practice of saving trees in the city and encouraging additions to the "urban forest."

Most recently, Mayor Katherine Beiers urged Mission Street property owners to nurture their 273 trees. As part of the Mission Street widening project, an additional 400 trees will be planted along the roadway, she said.

Sentinel staff writer Kathy Kreiger contributed to this report.