

Agency for Change Podcast: Dan Lambe, President, Arbor Day Foundation

Lyn Wineman:

Hello everyone. Today we are celebrating Arbor Day, the American holiday that honors and encourages the planting of trees. And while most holidays observe something that happened in the past, this one represents a hope for the future, because the simple act of planting a tree represents a belief that that tree will grow to provide us with clean air and water, and cooling shade, and habitat for wildlife, and healthier communities, and endless natural beauty, all of those things for a better tomorrow. So, to commemorate Arbor Day, we are airing an encore episode of a podcast conversation with Dan Lambe, president of the Arbor Day Foundation. I'd also like to note that Dan has released a book entitled, *Now Is the Time for Trees*, and this book inspires and instructs us all to do our part in planting trees. All royalties from the book sales go to the Arbor Day Foundation's Time For Trees Campaign, meaning for every book sold, a tree is planted. So, happy Arbor Day. Check out the book and enjoy the podcast.

Order your copy of *Now Is the Time for Trees* here: <https://www.arborday.org/timefortreesbook/>

Announcer:

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

Lyn Wineman:

All right, everybody, we're going to start today with a pop quiz. When and where was Arbor Day first celebrated? If you guessed 1872 in Nebraska, you are correct, and you should probably apply to be on the show, Jeopardy! Hey everyone, this is Lyn Wineman, president of KidGlov, back with another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. And today's guest is Dan Lambe, president of Arbor Day Foundation. This foundation is the largest nonprofit membership organization dedicated to planting trees, and it's right here in Nebraska. Actually, it's just a block away from KidGlov's Lincoln, Nebraska headquarters. Dan, how are you today?

Dan Lambe:

I'm well, thanks for having me.

Lyn Wineman:

Great. I'm looking forward to this conversation. And as I was preparing, I came across your mission statement, which is, we inspire people to plant, nurture and celebrate trees. Would you take a minute to tell us more about that mission and the work that you do at the foundation?

Dan Lambe:

You bet. So, that is our mission, we inspire people to plant, nurture and celebrate trees, and it's a very simple mission. And we work on that every single day, hundreds of different ways as we help individual homeowners or landowners plant trees, figure out the right trees to plant based on where they live, or whether we're working with cities, or governments, or corporations who want to be a part of the tree

planting movement. That's what we do, is we help enable people, give them the information and the resources and access to planting trees. And it's a pretty great job, because everybody loves trees.

Lyn Wineman:

That's true.

Dan Lambe:

It's true, and that's one of our challenges is making sure that people understand that trees are more than just a nice to have, they're a must-have today. And at the Arbor Day Foundation, we try to bring a positive and inspiring approach to inspiring people, to be a part of planting trees.

Lyn Wineman:

That's great. I love the celebrate part, you would expect the planting and nurturing part, but the celebrate part adds a little bit of pizzazz to it. So, Dan, when people first hear about the organization, I'm sure they automatically think trees, you are all about trees, it's great to have that focus, but I also know your work goes beyond that. Can you share some of the details about other programs and services that folks might not know about?

Dan Lambe:

Sure. So it is all about trees. That's what we do. Whether it's planting trees, or educating and informing people on how to plant trees, where to plant trees. We have more than 10 million unique visitors a year who come to our website to learn about the right trees to plants, what kind of tree is it that they see at the end of their block? How do you plant trees? Is it green side up or green side down? People are always wanting to know the best way to plant trees. And so we help them figure that out. But we also hand them a number of unique programs that help to advance our mission in other ways, like our shade grown coffee program. We have a shade grown coffee program where we work with growers, coffee growers, mostly in rainforest regions around the globe. And we help to inspire them and incentivize them to keep their growing programs under the shade of a tree canopy in the rainforest to protect and preserve the rainforest.

Dan Lambe:

And then we help to sell that shade growing coffee at a premium to help inspire and keep those forests as forests. And it's a part of our rainforest rescue efforts, and it's a really important thing because deforestation has been a huge problem in our climate issues. So that's an example of how we engage in forest protection while creating jobs and creating economic opportunities. We also have more and more programs that are helping corporations, or communities engage in civic engagement, through volunteer tree planting opportunities. We work with the US forest service and other forest land managers to manage for watershed protection, and habitat protection through forest plantings and management. There is a whole bunch of work being done at the Arbor Day Foundation, we have programs, projects, and partnerships in more than 50 countries around the world. And it all started in Nebraska, and we're proud to be a part of really, again, positive and inspiring work that's happening in communities and in forest lands all around the world.

Lyn Wineman:

And that's a, I appreciate that overview because it's more than me just planting a tree in my yard, although me planting a tree in my yard is a very important part of it too. I have to tell you, I didn't connect the dots on this, but somebody gifted me a bag of that shade grown coffee. And I had it this morning, it's amazing. So I'm going to give you a plug for that coffee there.

Dan Lambe:

That's great.

Lyn Wineman:

So a huge part of what you do involves sustainability, and we're all talking about, I think sustainability right now with some of the new research that's coming out and reports and warnings. Can you share the foundation's work with those groups and how you connect with the community to work towards a more sustainable future?

Dan Lambe:

You bet. So trees again are no longer just a nice to have. It isn't just about flowering trees in the spring, beautiful fall color, it's about trees as a real nature-based solution to sustainability issues. And there are cities all around the country and around the world who are facing big challenges, challenges like urban heat and equity and justice, and storm water management. And the list goes on and on. And trees are a part of the solution for many of those big issues as cities and communities are striving to create healthy, sustainable and resilient communities. We also work with hundreds of corporate partners around the world. Some of the biggest brands in the world, we have more than 200 different corporate partners. And they are not knocking on our door because they just want to give us a gift, it's great if they do, but they're looking for a solution.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

And they want to know how trees and forests can be a part of their sustainability and corporate social responsibility solutions. And so we're excited to be able to help them with everything from forestry carbon offsets, to employee engagement, to their watershed goals, both cleaning and replenishing water supplies, and the list goes on and on. It's exciting to see trees and forests being recognized by research and by sustainability leaders as one of the most positive ways that has all these cool benefits associated. And it's been great. And what's really interesting about it, Lyn, is, again, they're not doing it for marketing necessarily, they're doing it because their investors are demanding it, their customers are demanding it, their employees are demanding it, and companies want to be able to offer really positive nature-based opportunities to advance sustainability. So, it's cool, it's exciting, and it's a growing opportunity for all of us.

Lyn Wineman:

Dan, I'm going to second that. We work with a number of organizations who are really looking at, not from a marketing standpoint, although sometimes it does slip into marketing, and that doesn't hurt, but looking at how can we become conscious capitalists, or a more socially oriented organization, and that focus on sustainability and the environment does impact our work because consumers are using their

dollars to favor companies that are doing that. And employees are using that as a guide for where they want to work.

Dan Lambe:

Well, you're right, Lyn, and companies are crazy not to take advantage of the marketing benefit because it's real.

Lyn Wineman:

It's real.

Dan Lambe:

... And in this divisive and contentious time, trees are about the one thing we can all agree on. And so people should talk about it. If you're planting trees, you should talk about it.

Lyn Wineman:

I love that. It's so friendly and nice, and hard to fight about planting trees. That's fantastic. So we've talked about trees from an environmental standpoint, from maybe a marketing standpoint, from maybe a feel good standpoint. I know also they're habitats for animals, reduced greenhouse gases. How can people learn more about planting trees on their own yards or land and so forth?

Dan Lambe:

Great question. And there are lots of opportunities. The most simple way I would encourage people to learn more for themselves is to visit ArborDay.org, our website, there's loads of information on how to select the right tree based on what you're interested in. Do you want those flowering trees in the spring, or brilliant fall color? Are you looking for shade for your home in the summer? Are you looking for blocking the wind in the wintertime? What are you looking for? And you can figure out how to plant, what to plant? And there's a lot of information ArborDay.org. And we curate a lot of information from our great partners, like state forestry agencies, United States Forest Service and others. But I would also encourage people, they can learn a lot by reaching out to their own state forestry agency, their extension offices. And you can also just go to local nurseries and knock on their door, sit down with them, ask questions about what's the right tree, how's the right way to plant it?

Dan Lambe:

And one of the best things you can do is just walk around your neighborhood and see what kind of trees are thriving. What trees do well in your neighborhood, which ones don't look so great. Even if you're not an arborist, anyone can see what kind of trees look good and don't look good, and know that those trees might be the right trees for your environment, for your climate zone, for your neighborhood. And so there's a lot of information out there, but I would invite people if they're looking to plant the right tree in the right place at the right time, we have a lot of information at ArborDay.org, that's just free for anybody to get.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah, that's great. I'm going to give a shout out to your marketing team too. It's a nice website with a lot of information there, ArborDay.org, we'll have that web address in the show notes too. So Dan, I'd love to switch gears and talk a little bit more about you. It's not every day that we have an author on the

podcast. Can you tell us more about your upcoming book, what it's all about and when it will be available?

Dan Lambe:

You bet. So 2022 is the 50th anniversary of the Arbor Day Foundation, and the 150th anniversary of the Arbor Day holiday. So we've got all kinds of celebrations planned for next year, but one of the things we intend to do is to introduce a new book called *Now Is The Time For Trees*. And really our message at the Arbor Day Foundation is if ever there was a time to be planting trees, now is that time. As we look at the historic fires burning, not just in the US, but around the world. If we look at the increasing water challenges and excessive temperatures we're seeing in cities and towns, historic record temperatures, if we're looking at the increasing frequency of hurricanes and tornadoes and storms that are damaging tree canopy around the world, if ever there was a time, if ever there was a moment for trees, now really is that moment.

Dan Lambe:

And so this book is a way to help encourage people to pay attention to the urgency and the need for trees, a celebration of the beauty and the wonder of trees. And then also how to...How can people make sure they're picking the right tree in the right place, giving them the best chance for success. So, that's what the book's about. And we're really excited about it. It'll be coming out early 2022, so we can use it as a part of our celebration for our 50th anniversary. And it's exciting. It's the first book I've ever written. I get to talk about trees a lot, but actually put it on paper and hopefully people read it. It's a pretty exciting exercise.

Lyn Wineman:

I bet people will read it. I'll read it. And here's what we'll do, Dan, when that book comes out, you and I will stay in touch and we'll make sure to let people know about it as well.

Dan Lambe:

Love it. That's great.

Lyn Wineman:

So, that's great. I know writing a book is a lot of work. I have to say, I've heard writing a book is a lot of work. I haven't done it yet myself, but you inspire me to want to.

Dan Lambe:

Well, I can validate, it is a lot of work, but it is really fun too. So thanks for encouraging us.

Lyn Wineman:

Absolutely. So, Dan, as if you weren't already busy enough writing a book, leading a great organization, I hear you're also a frequent triathlete and road race participant. Tell me more about how you get into the mindset of that activity, that's mentally, physically, and I've got to believe, emotionally challenging?

Dan Lambe:

Well, first of all, I love being outdoors, and I love just being outside and being active. And I also love eating. And so I have to find balance in my life. And so I do sign up for road races, and I sign up for triathlons. I try to do at least one triathlon a year because it keeps me honest.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

And I really enjoy the mixing up of the training disciplines from swimming and running and biking, but honestly, I have kept doing it year after year, after year, because it gives me a goal.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

It gives me something to shoot for. And I will say at the Arbor Day Foundation, we set clear goals because it gives us something to push for, it gives you a scorecard to keep. And that's just, I think really important in work and also in personal life. And so I've set goals for myself. I don't win any of these races.

Lyn Wineman:

I think finishing, finishing is a win, personal bests are a win.

Dan Lambe:

I do finish, but I don't go close to winning, but it's cool. And the thing I probably love most about it when I go to the road race, I try and to do half marathons or 5Ks, or the triathlons, I just love being with the other people that are there, because I know for each of them, it's just a personal accomplishment. Only one person wins. A lot of people are there are just trying to reach their own goal. And I just like being around that kind of energy, that culture of people, of all types. So, it's fun. And I enjoy it. Yeah.

Lyn Wineman:

That's amazing. That is amazing. So, Dan, have you always been this passionate about the outdoors and sustainability and the environment? I always love to hear how people's paths led them to where they are today.

Dan Lambe:

So I grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska, and my parents were tree planters. They love to plant trees. We actually started a Christmas tree farm when I was young. So I planted hundreds and hundreds of trees.

Lyn Wineman:

Oh my.

Dan Lambe:

And I complained about it. Believe me, I promise, but they really did instill the tree planter ethic in me and my siblings, and appreciation for trees. But I will admit, like many people, I did not fully appreciate

all the trees do growing up, but I do now. And it's exciting to be able to help inspire and inform others to be aware of the value of those trees. But my parents helped to encourage us in that way. And I will tell you, as I've worked at the Arbor Day Foundation for the past 17 years, it isn't just about the trees. The trees are beautiful, but for a lot of people who work at the Arbor Day Foundation, it's not about the trees, it's about what those trees do. It's about how those trees create healthier communities. It's about how they create safe relief for people, especially during the pandemic to just walk in a safe green space, to recover emotionally.

Dan Lambe:

It's about cleaning our water, creating habitat, cooling our cities. It's about what those trees do. It just so happens those trees are also beautiful, and a lot of fun to look at. So I really credit my parents for getting me involved in the outdoors and appreciating the outdoors, and getting me started on tree planting. And I feel very fortunate to be a part of a mission that is doing really cool things with a powerful tool like trees.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. I love hearing stories of people who, there is something in their past that they had no idea would launch them into a career choice in the future. And also, you are right, there's nothing like a walk in the woods, a walk in the park to calm you down, alleviate stress and put a smile on your face. So, Dan, I'm curious, as a leader that does a lot of environmental work, what advice do you have for young leaders who want to make a difference in the world as it relates to our climate?

Dan Lambe:

So my advice for really any leaders, but especially leaders who want to be involved in helping to make a difference on our climate crisis, that we are in the middle of, is, first of all, just lead in your own way. You have to be yourself. You have to be authentic. That's one of the things I learned for sure is I can't try and copy other leaders, I can't try and, I have strengths and I have plenty of weaknesses believe me, but I do have strengths and I need to lean on those strengths because that's what our organization needs. And I need to find other leaders who can complement with other strengths. And so that's what I really always encourage young leaders, or even mature leaders to think about, is we all have different strengths, and it takes all different kinds of leaders to do that.

Dan Lambe:

And you can't lead unless you build trust. So being authentic, you're not going to have followers if you don't have trust. And so just be authentic, play to your strengths and engage. So, that's the first thing I would say. The second thing I would say, as it relates to the climate crisis, is whatever you're going to do, do it, get going, because.

Lyn Wineman:

It's time.

Dan Lambe:

... it's time. It's the time for trees, it is the time to get going. We do not have time to waste. So whether you're leading in your neighborhood by getting your homeowner association, or even your family to

plant more trees, or you're leading in a corporation, or you're leading in a small nonprofit, whatever you want to do, just do it, get going because it's all important and we need it.

Lyn Wineman:

Great advice. Great advice, Dan. And this leads perfectly into the next question as well. Everybody who listens to the podcast knows that I am a big fan of motivational quotes, and we all have our favorite authors who, and you are an author, but we all have our favorite quotes that we go to. And I get to talk to so many interesting people. I want to get your Dan Lambe words of wisdom for our listeners.

Dan Lambe:

Well, Lyn, I share your appreciation of quotes. I can get lost in quotes. I just love them.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

So this is intimidating for me to actually try and come up with some kind of quote, but I do, I find motivation and inspiration from quotes as well. I just love them. And so I don't know that these are great words for you, but here are a couple thoughts. Courage has always been one of my favorite words. And it is, in a lot of different ways, I even played the Cowardly Lion when I was in eighth grade, in our middle school musical. But one of the things I would say is courage is critical.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

You make things happen to, whether it's to your career or to your organization, courage is critical, and you have to bring to your work. And it's not always easy, but it's just really important. And the other thought that I had for you is, we spend a lot of time thinking about culture at the Arbor Day Foundation. We have core values. We believe in those core values, we manage around those core values. We believe in them. We really do. It's not just something we put up on the wall, we manage around them, we hire around our core values, but it really, the other thought I will share with you is it's all about the people.

Dan Lambe:

It's our people that make our organization successful. It's our people that make our culture a positive, inspiring place to be. It is all about the people. And that's how we believe at the Arbor Day Foundation. We lean on our people. We love them. And it doesn't mean everybody's always the right fit. It isn't just utopia, believe me, we're not perfect, but we want to find the right people, give them clear direction, and get out of the way, just let them thrive. And it's hard. It's really hard, but it really is, it is our people and really in any thriving organization, it's all about the people.

Lyn Wineman:

A 100%.

Dan Lambe:

Yeah. Those are my thoughts for you.

Lyn Wineman:

They're great. Dan, if anybody asks you that in the future, you should not be intimidated. That was a great answer. And I have to tell you, at KidGlov courage is our number one core value.

Dan Lambe:

Is that right?

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. Believing in our ability to change the world and help others who are doing so. So I love that you leaned in into that word and that quote. Yeah. So we talked about this a little bit earlier, but let's just say it again, for our listeners who want to learn more about your work and how to support the foundation, how can they find out more about Arbor Day Foundation?

Dan Lambe:

The best way to find out more about the Arbor Day Foundation is to visit our website at ArborDay.org.

Lyn Wineman:

Great.

Dan Lambe:

Yep. And we welcome anyone to go there, to learn about how to plant trees, how to engage in your community and just how to be a part of the tree plant new movement.

Lyn Wineman:

Fantastic. So Dan, as we wrap up our time together today, what is the most important thing you would like our listeners to remember about the work that you're doing?

Dan Lambe:

The most important thing I want people to remember from this conversation is that it is the time for trees.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

It really is. Whether it is planting in your backyard or your front yard, engaging in a volunteer opportunity to go plant in a community park, or making a contribution to anybody. It doesn't have to be the Arbor Day Foundation, anybody who's going to help get trees planted. It is the time for trees in our communities, in our neighborhoods and for the globe. And the other thing is that you can make a difference. You really can. This is something everybody can participate in. And that's one of the cool things. It's not so big, it's not such a big challenge that you can't play your part, you can. And so that's

what I would encourage people to take away from this, is the positivity of the moment and their ability to play a part.

Lyn Wineman:

Sounds great. I want to go out and celebrate trees right now, Dan. Dan, I really appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule. I fully believe the world needs more people like you, more organizations like the Arbor Day Foundation. Thank you for taking the time to share with us today.

Dan Lambe:

My pleasure. Thanks for the invitation.

Announcer:

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities, or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from, visit KidGlov.com at K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com to get a in touch. As always, if you like what you've heard today, be sure to rate, review, subscribe, and share. Thanks for listening. And we'll see you next time.