

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

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- Connect with Dan Lambe on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dan-lambe-8ba7aa4/>
- Learn more about the Arbor Day Foundation - <https://www.arborday.org/about/trustees-and-executive-team.cfm>
- Purchase Now is the Time for Trees: <https://www.arborday.org/timefortreesbook/>
- Check out Good People Cool Things at <https://www.goodpeoplecoolthings.com/>

Dan Lambe:

We inspire people to plant, nurture and celebrate trees.

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:

Friends of our show have heard me talk about my lifelong goal to write a book and how I have so much admiration for those who have accomplished this feat.

Lyn Wineman:

Today, I get to talk with a new author whose book covers how we can all make a positive impact with simple actions to protect and strengthen what today's guest calls, the world's most valuable resource. Hello, everyone. This is Lyn Wineman, president and chief strategist of KidGlov. And welcome back to the Agency for Change podcast.

Lyn Wineman:

Of course, I'm referring to trees as the world's most valuable resource, which means I'm talking with Dan Lambe, president of the Arbor Day Foundation and author of the newly released book, Now Is the Time for Trees. Dan, welcome to the podcast.

Dan Lambe:

Lyn, it is great to be back with you. I loved the first time and I'm excited about visiting again.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. It's fun to have guests back a second time, because I feel like we know each other a little bit, we have some rapport. And you have had so much going on since the last time we talked, but I'd love just a refresher for our listeners who may not be familiar with your organization.

Lyn Wineman:

Can you talk about the significance of Arbor Day? The work of the Arbor Day Foundation? Because I know that work is not just on the day itself, it goes throughout the year.

Dan Lambe:

You bet. So the Arbor Day Foundation was founded on the 100 anniversary of the Arbor Day holiday. So Arbor Day was founded in 1872. The Arbor Day Foundation founded in 1972. And for anybody doing quick math, that means this year is our 50th anniversary. And-

Lyn Wineman:

Woohoo.

Dan Lambe:

Yeah. And 150th anniversary of the Arbor Day holiday. And I tell people, if you haven't turned 50 years old yet, it's a big deal. And so it's been a really fun year to celebrate, and we have been able to celebrate. And our mission at the Arbor Day Foundation is we inspire people to plant, nurture and celebrate trees.

Dan Lambe:

And we do that all kinds of different ways with our programs and our partners and our members. And it's just a great job because we get to help be a part of positive work, positive experiences for people and making a positive difference in cities and towns, in front yards and backyards and in forest all around the world.

Lyn Wineman:

Isn't it great to be in an organization where you get to come in and do positive, meaningful work every day?

Dan Lambe:

And it really is. I mean, it's hard work. At times, it's hard work.

Lyn Wineman:

Oh, sure.

Dan Lambe:

But it is when we are looking at solutions, we're looking at how to inspire people.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

It makes things just a bit easier and it makes the hard work more palatable. So yeah, we're very fortunate. And again, we couldn't do any of the work we do without our partners, our friends, our collaborators, and of course our team.

Lyn Wineman:

Absolutely. Absolutely. So Dan, when you joined us on the podcast last time I knew I would have to have you back because I have mentioned on this podcast to everyone around me, someday I would like to write a book. I don't know what it will be about, I don't know when that will happen. But could you tell us more about the book, "Now Is the Time for Trees"?

Dan Lambe:

You bet. Well, Lyn, when you do write that book, I will be one of the first ones in line to buy it. Okay?

Lyn Wineman:

Ah, fantastic.

Dan Lambe:

Because I know it will be great. So it's our 50th anniversary. And a couple of years ago, we thought to ourselves, "how else can we help to celebrate our anniversary, but also continue to inspire people to be a part of the tree planting movement today?"

Dan Lambe:

And so we wrote a book called, "Now Is the Time for Trees." And it was exciting, it was an exciting process. Timber Press is our publisher out of Portland, Oregon. They've been phenomenal to work with.

Dan Lambe:

But really, this is the moment for trees. In this time of climate crisis and challenges, of community inequities and urban heat and increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, forest fires, the list goes on and on and on. If ever there was a time to be planting trees, now is that time.

Dan Lambe:

And so this book is meant to be positive, uplifting, and inspiring way to tell the story about the importance of trees today. There is some fun stories in there about iconic trees, historic trees, some really cool contributions from celebrities.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

Some of our friends around the country. And also, a lot of "how-to." We want to make sure back to our mission, if you're going to take the time to plant and invest in trees, we want to make sure they have all the success for years to come so we all get the benefits. But that's what the book is about. That's what inspired us to write it. And it's been a lot of fun for sure.

Lyn Wineman:

I have my own copy. And it is really a great book. We'll talk in a little bit about how people can order the book. But since you mentioned iconic stories of trees, you open the book by sharing a story of a great pin oak tree that stood in front of your childhood home.

Lyn Wineman:

And when you were a child, I'm sure you had no idea that you would grow up to lead this great organization that deals all with trees. But you talked about how you might have taken that tree for granted. What are, Dan, some of the benefits of trees that most people take for granted?

Dan Lambe:

Trees do so much for us every single day. And it is easy to take it for granted. We know through loads of research that's out there that treelined boulevards and parks reduce daytime temperatures by up to 10 degrees Fahrenheit, creating cooler and safer communities. We know that neighborhoods with high tree density report 25% lower childhood asthma rates.

Lyn Wineman:

Oh.

Dan Lambe:

Than neighborhoods that don't have high tree density. We know trees increase property values for homes, shade our homes, and reduce the need to run air conditioning on hot summer days. And of course, just create beautiful space for songbirds and squirrels.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

And urban wildlife. And just trees do so much for us every day. And indeed, when I was growing up as a child with this amazing huge oak tree in my front yard, I took for granted how it shaded me.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

And literally, protected my house every single day. And when I would walk out the front door, it was there to greet us and it just became part of our life.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

Part of our family.

Lyn Wineman:

Hey, everyone. We are going to take a super quick timeout because I have something fun I want to share with you. Have you ever wondered about the inspiration behind board games like Outburst or Taboo? Maybe you have a fascination with the supernatural, like how come ghosts never have feet? Or hey, maybe you just enjoy hearing interesting stories.

Lyn Wineman:

Then you should totally check out Good People, Cool Things. It's hosted by Joey Held, author, podcaster and a guy with a real soothing voice. Good People, Cool Things interviews business owners, authors, musicians and other creatives. They talk about their careers, their worst moments, offer advice and so much more.

Lyn Wineman:

And as a super fun bonus, every episode ends with a corny joke. One that you should tell your dad, I think, because we could all make a few more people groan in life. So listen and follow at Goodpeoplecoolthings.com or wherever you're listening to this podcast.

Lyn Wineman:

All right. Let's get back to our conversation with Dan.

Lyn Wineman:

I love that. I have a tree in my front yard that I remember when it was planted. It was just like a stick coming out of the ground. And I live on a farm and the sheep would always come by and eat all the leaves off that tree.

Lyn Wineman:

And we finally put a fence around it and now it's just grown up into this huge, beautiful tree that shades my front porch. But it's funny to think back that at one point it was just a stick coming out of the ground.

Dan Lambe:

Yeah.

Lyn Wineman:

So you do in the book, you refer to trees as, and this is a bold statement, the world's most valuable resource. How did you come to that realization, Dan?

Dan Lambe:

Well, you know, I mentioned there's all kinds of research out there about just how important trees are in our communities and in our natural landscapes. And trees are for years, have been seen as a nice to have. And almost take it for granted.

Dan Lambe:

But the research today documents how trees and forests are the most scalable, affordable, and biggest opportunity for us to make a difference in our climate crisis. They're not the only solution. It's not a silver bullet. But trees are poised to be ready to help stand up on the front lines of our battle against storms and heat and these emerging challenges that are coming on the heels of our changing climate.

Dan Lambe:

And that's why there has never been a more important time to be looking at trees, not just as an aesthetic contribution to communities and to our landscapes, but as a critical tool to help create health, wellness, economic opportunities and defense against our changing climate.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. Well, that does sound like a pretty good resource. And I know that's, it's an issue that many of us are very, very worried about the more research that becomes available. So I want to do a little bit of name dropping.

Lyn Wineman:

Because when I was reading the book, I couldn't help but notice there were quotes from Soledad O'Brien, who's a famous journalist, Rosario Dawson, famous actress, NASCAR driver, Ryan Newman. I'm curious, what was it like collaborating with these individuals and how did you find out about their passion for trees?

Dan Lambe:

Well, it was a lot of fun. We thought it might be interesting to include some of our friends and celebrities to share their stories in this book about why trees are so important to them, as a way to validate for any reader that everybody loves trees. And it doesn't matter where you live, work, play, everyone's got a passion for trees in their own way.

Dan Lambe:

And so a lot of these friends were thrilled to have the chance to share their own personal stories of trees or their family connections to trees or why they just feel like trees right now are playing this important role like we've talked about. And so it was a lot of fun. You get people talking about trees and they can go on for hours. For, I mean, for real. Everyone's got a tree story to share.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

And that's one of the great parts of our job also. But it was fun to hear about Rosario talk about growing up in New York City and how meaningful it was for her and her family to have green space.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

In this concrete jungle. To just feel, to feel a natural connection to the natural space. To hear Ryan Newman talk about how important it is for him to have his kids being a part of that tree planting ethic.

Dan Lambe:

And it was also fun to talk to people like Mr. Beast, one of the largest social media influencers in the world talk about how inspiring it was for him to be a part of the biggest tree planting movement ever to come out of YouTube. And it was just fun. It was exciting. We could have probably had 50 other

celebrities share their story, but we had to draw the line somewhere. So maybe we'll do another book sometime.

Lyn Wineman:

I like that. The sequel, the movie version of this, Dan. So since you mentioned it, I want to dive into that a little bit more. Because as part of this 50-year celebration, I understand you were part of setting a world record. And I think that's what you were referring to with Mr. Beast as well, which is really cool. Can you tell us more about the world record?

Dan Lambe:

Sure. So we, around Arbor Day, it's Arbor Day season year round for us anymore.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

We're helping to plant trees, not just around the US, but around the world in more than 50 countries. And so there's, we're always looking to plant the right tree at the right time. And we got invited by The Today Show to be a part of setting a new world record of watering the most tree, most people watering the most trees at the exact same time.

Dan Lambe:

And so we, along with thousands and thousands of other people from around the country, were part of setting this world record on The Today Show on Earth Day. And we did it from Nebraska City, the home of Arbor Day at Arbor Day farm, where of course we grow a lot of trees in our nursery. But it was a fun, playful way to draw attention to trees. And it was a lot. Our staff loved it.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

And The Today Show producers loved it. And it was just another great reminder of trees are about the one thing in this contentious and divisive time that everybody can rally around.

Lyn Wineman:

I love that.

Dan Lambe:

Everybody can agree on the benefits and value of trees and celebrating trees.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. I have so many friends whose kids wanted to be involved in that world record. And lots of social media posts about the kids watering the trees and being part of the world record. Such a cool idea. And shout out to your PR department, which is full of some amazing people for getting you in on that as well.

Dan Lambe:

Agreed.

Lyn Wineman:

So I think I'd be missing out if I didn't ask you this next question, because in the book there's a whole chapter on a tree planter's guide to trees. What advice can you share with those of us looking to add some trees to our landscaping this year?

Dan Lambe:

Well, again, if you're going to take the time to plant a tree, if you're going to invest the money in planting a tree, in this book, what we are encouraging everybody to do is think about what kind of benefit do they want? Are they looking for shade?

Dan Lambe:

Are they looking for a wind block? Do they want beautiful flowering trees in the spring, wonderful fall color in the autumn? What are they looking for in their trees? And then in our book, in the book we described based on where you live, what you're looking for, we give some ideas on how to plant, what to plant, where to plant.

Dan Lambe:

That's a big thing for us at the Arbor Day Foundation, is we want to make sure that you're planting the right tree in the right place at the right time, so that you have years and years of success and enjoyment of the, and benefits of those trees.

Dan Lambe:

And so we spend a lot of time in the book helping people. And undoubtedly this book will be used as a resource for people. They'll either keep it on their bookshelf or they'll keep it in their garage with all their...

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

...gardening tools, as they're thinking through what to plant, how to prune, how to take care of their trees as well. So really, we ask, we encourage people to think about what kind of benefits do they want from the trees. And then, then they can make a decision on which tree's going to help maximize that benefit.

Lyn Wineman:

Dan, I have a question that might stump you then. I mentioned earlier, I live on a farm. On this farm, I'm raising a small flock of peacocks. The peacocks sleep in a tree in my front yard every night. Any advice on the best trees for perching peacocks?

Dan Lambe:

Wow. That is a great question. That is not in the book.

Lyn Wineman:

Okay.

Dan Lambe:

You're not going to find that in the book.

Lyn Wineman:

In the sequel, in the sequel.

Dan Lambe:

That's really interesting. No, I do not have advice for that, but I kind of want to come see your peacock tree now.

Lyn Wineman:

That can be arranged. That can be arranged.

Dan Lambe:

That's fantastic.

Lyn Wineman:

All right. So Dan, in the book, you call on us to become champions for trees. What actions can just one person take to do this?

Dan Lambe:

Another one of the reasons we wrote this book, *Now Is the Time for Trees* is because we live in a scary time.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

There's a lot of things going on in the world that sometimes can paralyze people and they scratch their head wondering, "What can I do? How can I be a part of something good?" And in this book, we encourage people that say, "Hey, planting trees is something anybody can do."

Dan Lambe:

Whether it's in your front yard or your backyard, or volunteering with a local nonprofit tree planting organization or calling your city and just encouraging them to be a part of caring for trees or engaging with an organization like the Arbor Day Foundation or any other tree planted organization around the country or around the world.

Dan Lambe:

Anyone who just takes the time to be a part of the tree planting movement is doing something great, doing something that is going to be advancing benefits for decades to come.

Dan Lambe:

And so for those who'd like to be a part of tree planting or learning more about how they can be a part of the tree planting movement, whether it's in their front yard or planting, helping us plant trees in Madagascar, you can go to our website at arborday.org to learn more.

Dan Lambe:

Of course, you can pick up "Now Is the Time for Trees," the book. But we'd love to just help you figure out how you can pick the right tree, where you can pick the right tree.

Dan Lambe:

You can also go to local, your local nursery and get great advice for them, from them on one of the right trees for what you're looking to do. But again, we wanted to create more positive and inspiring.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

In this time of distress and nervousness. And we believe tree planting is one of those tools, one of those ways that people can do their part in making a positive difference.

Lyn Wineman:

That's great. Because you can be involved any age, different abilities, different locations, all kinds of people can be involved. So you mentioned the website, and we'll make sure to get the website link in the show notes on the KidGlov website, but also you can buy the book on the Arbor Day Foundation website. But where else, where can we get a copy of the book if we'd like it?

Dan Lambe:

Well, you should be able to pick up a copy of the book anywhere books are sold. Of course, independent bookstores, some of the major chains. Of course, you can buy it on Amazon and some of the other online retailers as well. And yeah, you should be able to pick it up anywhere.

Dan Lambe:

But you can visit arborday.org to get a copy of the book or any of those online retailers. But yeah. The books have been selling. People are really excited about it. Our publisher, Timber Press has been really excited about it.

Lyn Wineman:

Great.

Dan Lambe:

And so we're really hopeful that it is indeed giving that uplifting spirit to folks.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

And that affirmation to tree planters out there just about how important it is what they're doing.

Lyn Wineman:

That's fantastic. So you mentioned earlier, turning 50 is a big deal. I turned 50 a few years ago and I have to admit, I threw a giant party. It was a lot of fun. And you, as part of the 50th anniversary, you did the world record, but you have some other exciting things happen. Can you share a few of the other ways that you're celebrating, or you celebrated?

Dan Lambe:

You bet. It has been an exciting year and we're grateful for those who are helping us celebrate reaching the 50th anniversary of the Arbor Day Foundation. We were invited by the New York Stock Exchange to come help ring the opening bell the week of Arbor Day.

Lyn Wineman:

Wow.

Dan Lambe:

And it was exciting and appreciated of this iconic institution to recognize another, what we think is an iconic institution, the Arbor Day Foundation, and celebrate the importance of trees in economic benefits and how trees and forests are an important economic driver in our community. So that was a lot of fun, a really historic moment. Weather Channel asked us to come down. We got to spend time with Jim Cantore and others at the Weather Channel.

Lyn Wineman:

That's so cool.

Dan Lambe:

To celebrate Arbor Day, talk about the benefits of trees. And we've just been doing conversations, having conversations with all kinds of other media influencers, reporters, and others, just to talk about trees.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

Because it is the time for trees.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Dan Lambe:

And the 50th anniversary of the Arbor Day Foundation is a really exciting time to celebrate.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah. Well, congratulations. Congratulations again on all the good work that you're doing, on all of the good publicity you're getting for this important cause as part of the 50th anniversary as well. Dan, as we wrap up this time today, is there anything else you'd like to share with us about the book or your work at Arbor Day Foundation?

Dan Lambe:

At the Arbor Day Foundation, we are quick to recognize that nothing gets done without our members, without our supporters, without our partners and our collaborators who help us actually get the trees in the ground. And so, and the same thing goes with the book.

Dan Lambe:

The book hopefully is a celebration of those partners and members and tree planters around the world. And we're just remarkably grateful. We're grateful to have been successful over the last 50 years.

Dan Lambe:

We are incredibly optimistic about the next 50 years. And Lyn, I couldn't be more grateful to you for helping to shine a spotlight, not just on this book, but on the value of trees. So thanks for your positive and inspiring podcast. I love it. And it's always a joy to get to visit with you.

Lyn Wineman:

Ah, Dan, thanks for that. I feel the same way. And I just need to say congratulations on the book. I fully believe the world needs more people like you, the world needs more trees. And just thank you for taking time to share with us today.

Dan Lambe:

My pleasure.

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 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.