

A green rectangular graphic with a repeating pattern of stylized leaves. In the center is a white rectangle containing the text "FOREST RELEAF OF MISSOURI" in bold green capital letters, and "IMPACT STORIES" in green capital letters below it.

FOREST RELEAF OF MISSOURI IMPACT STORIES

Trees with History

Driving past a cemetery may evoke a myriad of emotions. Among those emotions there is likely deep admiration for loved ones that have passed, the architecture that commemorates them, and the environment that surrounds them. Copious love and care is poured in these spaces of mourning. Elmwood Cemetery and its growing arboretum is an extraordinary example of the unexpected beauty that can be found in a cemetery. Once located on the edge of Kansas City, it now finds itself nestled within the Historic Northeast neighborhood as the city grew up around it.

Elmwood Cemetery has a rich history as the oldest non-sectarian cemetery in KC. It opened in 1872. During its development, the cemetery was able to hire landscape architect and city planner, George Kessler, who is famous for his work designing the St. Louis World's Fair and the Kansas City park system. Kessler is also known for his heavy focus on trees, creating architecture that considers nature in its design.

Now, 150 years later, the cemetery has strayed from that original inspiration. Molly Gosnell, an arborist who works with Elmwood Cemetery & Arboretum, wanted to restore that initial vision, so she reached out to MDC to help restore the 43 acres. When MDC helped remove a dead oak near an adjacent street, they noticed lots of splendid old tree specimens. Taylor Neff, a local MDC officer, suggested planting new trees to begin renewing the canopy. Gosnell eagerly took this advice and began planting Forest ReLeaf trees to help increase tree diversity. It has been two years since the first planting and now trees from Forest ReLeaf's Creve Coeur nursery are growing and sharing a home with this amazing history and architecture.

Focusing on replanting trees has given the cemetery a new purpose as an arboretum and an urban oasis for both people and wildlife. A local school's cross country team regularly meets for practices beneath the welcomed shade from the trees. In addition to trees, Elmwood Cemetery will be expanding the scope of the arboretum to further "re-wild" the grounds beginning in spring 2025.



Forest
ReLeaf
OF MISSOURI

