

The Royal Ring and a Lowly Tree Seed

When the world's news media riveted attention on Kate Middleton's beautiful engagement ring, the key descriptive words were – 18 carats! They referred to the large, striking oval sapphire that is surrounded by 14 diamonds. But what is a carat? This gemstone measurement unit can be traced to seeds of the carob tree, *Ceratonia siliqua*. The little tree is a native of the Mediterranean Region and has pods that contain hard, brown 'beans.' The beans weigh less than 1/100 of an ounce but are so uniform in size and consistent in weight that ancient merchants in the Middle East used them – presumably on a balance scale – for buying and selling gems. The unit has been standardized today, but the name remains. As for the carob tree, it is highly drought resistant and has been planted in Florida and the Southwest. Its pods offer a nutritious alternative to chocolate and some scholars believe they were the 'locusts' that sustained John the Baptist. The processed beans have uses today ranging from a toothpaste ingredient to an additive that strengthens well walls.



New Jersey Tree Foundation



The seeds of the carob tree have made a lasting contribution in the field of gemology.



Shannon Shaaf (right) project coordinator of Newark Renaissance Trees Program, shown here with colleague Lisa Simms, accepted the New Jersey Tree Foundation's award on Arbor Day Weekend in Nebraska City. The Grove of Remembrance is one of the Foundation's many projects and programs that help keep trees and gardens in the environment of one of the most populated regions of our nation.

New Jersey's Grove of Remembrance

During the awful hours of 9/11, New Jersey's Liberty State Park became one of the main triage centers for victims brought across the Hudson River from the scene of destruction. Today, a 10-acre tract of the park has become a living memorial with 750 trees planted in remembrance of the New Jersey residents that died in the attack. The first trees were planted on the state's Arbor Day, culminating a period of careful site planning that helped in the healing process for families of the deceased. The site is symbolic in another way. It is the renaissance of a polluted 'brownfield,' now a place of beauty and quiet reflection with the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and the Manhattan skyline as backdrop.

The Grove of Remembrance is just one of numerous projects under the leadership of the New Jersey Tree Foundation. Others include planting street trees in previously treeless residential areas of places like Camden and Newark, public gardens, planting and tree care projects in partnership with parolees or physically-challenged children, and others. For their exemplary work, this nonprofit organization received the Arbor Day Foundation's 2011 Excellence in Urban Forest Leadership Award.



New Jersey Tree Foundation

Conservation Pays

The Trust for Public Land reports that in North Carolina, \$1 invested in conservation by the state's four conservation trust funds returns \$4 of economic value in clean water, flood protection, and other natural goods and services. Each year, North Carolina's Mecklenburg County park system saves the county \$18.9 million in stormwater management costs and \$3.9 million by reducing air pollution.