



Department of
Agriculture

Forestry



Community Tree Planting Program

Grant Information Guide

Tennessee Department of Agriculture | Division of Forestry | August 2024



TAEP: Community Tree Planting Program

CLOSING DATE FOR PROPOSALS:

September 27, 2024

Overview

- All grant contracts will start on December 1, 2024 or after and end on April 30, 2025.
- This is a matching grant.
- FY 2025 eligible expenses for reimbursement include the cost and shipping of trees; contracted planting; mulch; irrigation devices; tree labels; and signage.
- Riparian planting projects on public or private land are allowed.
- Private non-profit land with public access can be planted using TAEP funds.
- Certain species of trees are ineligible.
- This year's tree size requirements have changed.
- All sites will be inspected by a TN Division of Forestry employee or an approved inspector to affirm tree numbers, species, location, and proper planting before reimbursement is processed.
- Tree inspections will be completed March-May 2025.
- Projects will be monitored for 3 years to ensure proper maintenance.

2024 – 2025 Timetable

August 15, 2024	Grant announcement
September 27, 2024	Application closes at 5:00 pm central time.
September 27 – October 7, 2024	Applications will be reviewed and ranked.
October 7 -11, 2024	Applicants will be contacted by Tennessee Division of Forestry Urban Forestry Staff.
October 14 -25, 2024	Grant contracts will be written and electronically sent to Grantee.
October 31, 2024	Urban TAEP Grant Contracts, signed by grantee must be received by the Tennessee Division of Forestry no later than 5:00 pm CST for a December start date
March – May, 2025	Project Inspections
March 30, 2025	Planting of bare root seedlings must be completed.
April 15, 2025	Planting of ball & burlap trees must be completed.
April 30, 2025	End of TAEP Grant Contract.
June 30, 2025	Last day to accept TAEP grant contract invoices for reimbursement. A final report on the planting project is due when Grantee submits request for reimbursement.

General Information

Introduction

Funding for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) was provided to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture by the 2008 State Legislature. The Community Tree Planting TAEP program is administered by the Division of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Program.

The goal of TAEP community tree planting grant is to increase the tree resource base in communities throughout Tennessee. Trees provide a multitude of benefits to communities including energy savings, heat reduction, storm water mitigation, air quality improvement, provision of food and habitat for wildlife, and positive impacts to human health and well-being. Therefore, the primary purpose of this funding is not beautification.

Eligible Applicants

- Communities/local units of government
- Non-profit organizations
- Elementary, secondary and higher education institutions

Technical Assistance

Applicants are encouraged to seek assistance in developing their proposals. Sources of assistance include TDF U&CF personnel, arborists, horticulturists, consulting urban foresters, landscape architects, and other related specialist. If the project involves technical assistance from an entity other than TDF, please include a letter of support to demonstrate their participation.

Planting Locations

The intent of TAEP grant funds is to increase tree canopy on public lands. However, TAEP funds can be used to plant on private non-profit lands that provide public access and to establish riparian buffers* on private property. A map must be provided for all planting sites demonstrating where the proposed trees will be planted.¹

¹ A riparian buffer is the transitional area between land and water that contains a mix of trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers. This vegetated strip of land "buffers" a waterway from human impacts. The function of a riparian buffer is to stabilize the banks of a waterway, create habitat, filter stormwater pollutants, and provide flood storage.

The Tennessee Urban Riparian Buffer Program began with a federal grant from the USDA Forest Service to reclaim and protect eight defined watersheds within Davidson County. Over a three-year span almost 28,000 trees were planted with nearly 2,800 volunteers within 30,451 feet of buffer along waterways. At the conclusion of the project the Tennessee Urban Riparian Buffer Handbook was produced. An online copy is available at: <http://bit.ly/TURBhandbook>.

Funding Amounts

TAEP Community Tree Planting proposals should at minimum request \$500 and should not exceed \$20,000. Please consider the match requirement when building the project budget.

Eligible Expenses:*

TAEP Community Tree Planting Grants should prioritize trees that grow over 40 ft in height at maturity. Trees that do not reach 40ft at maturity are allowed but should not exceed 50% of the total number planted. Additionally, native shrubs are allowed as an expense, but their inclusion should not exceed 20% of the total number planted.

*Items must be purchased or invoiced within the contract period to be reimbursable.

Eligible expenses for grant and match:

- Cost of trees/shrubs**
- Mulch
- Shipping
- Contracted labor to plant trees
- Irrigation devices***
- Acknowledgement and/or educational sign(s)***
- Tree labels

**Grantees are required to use Tennessee grown trees and shrubs. Evidence of being grown in-state can be provided by submitting an invoice of an in-state nursery at the time of grant reimbursement. Trees must also meet the minimum ANSI Z-60.1- 2014 American Standard for Nursery Stock.

Grantees are required to follow the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Division of Forestry's tree planting guidelines and practices. All plantings must be watered when needed for three years to help them get established. Please identify who will be responsible for watering in the proposal.

Definitions

Tree - a woody plant with a single trunk, or multiple trunks capable of growing to a height of 15 feet or more.

Shrub - a woody plant with a multiple stem growing to a height of up to 15 feet.

***As an effort to fund more projects, if proposals exceed available funds, then maximum reimbursement on irrigation devices will be \$15/device and \$150 for signage.

Ineligible Species

Green & white ash- Emerald Ash Borer

Leyland cypress- Seiridium canker

Hemlock- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

American elm- Threat of Dutch Elm Disease (resistant varieties can be used)

"Princeton" elm- susceptible to "Elm Yellows" disease

Silver maple- undesirable urban species

Bradford pear- highly invasive and an undesirable urban species

Pin oak- susceptible to Bacterial leaf scorch

Additionally, please see list of invasive species here: <https://www.tnipc.org/invasive-plants/>

Reimbursement

Funds are reimbursed after inspection of the project and submission of invoice. To receive reimbursement, a grantee must submit the following:

- Request for reimbursement for entire project (template will be provided)
- Detailed invoice(s) of all costs requested for reimbursement. All invoices must be shown as “PAID” and dated within the contract period.

Match Requirements

TAEP Community Tree Planting Grants require a 50/50 cash match. However, if this match requirement is prohibitive, requests for a lower cash match percentage (75/25, 80/20, etc.) or waiver can be requested. When making this request, please include the reasons why the 50/50 match is prohibitive.

Match can be met through cost of trees, shipping, purchased mulch, contracted planting services, acknowledgement/educational signs, and irrigation devices. Grantees can use volunteer labor or city crews to plant, but the value or cost cannot be included as match.

Examples of the 50/50 cash matching on projects:

*Unallowable Expense

Example #1		Example #2		Example #3	
Cost of Trees	\$5000	Cost of Trees	\$5000	Cost of Trees	\$5000
		Cost to contract plant	\$3000	*Cost for city crew to plant	\$3000
Reimbursement	\$2500	Reimbursement	\$4000	Reimbursement	\$2500

Example #4		Example #5	
Cost of Trees	\$5000	Cost of Trees	\$5000
Mulch	\$500	*Value of donated mulch	\$200
Shipping	\$500	Shipping	\$400
Cost to contract plant	\$3000	* Value of Volunteer Planting time	\$2000
Reimbursement	\$4500	Reimbursement	\$2700

Application Requirements

- Completion of online application to include:
 - Why this project is needed?
 - Where will it occur?
 - Who will be involved?
 - What will be done?
How will it be done?
 - What is the expected result?
 - Proof of community engagement and support
 - Description of site and soil at planting location(s)
- Submission of a complete W-9 Form
- Completion of the Supplier Direct Deposit Form **to be mailed to the address on the form.**
- Completion of a Title VI Pre-Award Survey found in the Title VI Packet must be completed and submitted with your application. Title VI training is required for all awarded projects. [Click here](#)

Review

Proposals will be reviewed and ranked by the Division of Forestry's Forest Health and Sustainability Unit. Selected projects for funding will be recommended to the State Forester for final approval.

Proposals will be rated on:

- Completeness of the application
- Project merit
- Budget accuracy and reasonability
- Technical aspects of project including the planting map; appropriate species; soil considerations; maintenance and watering plan; and planting specifications.
- Frequency of previous grant awards

Reporting

A final report on the planting project is due when Grantee submits their request for reimbursement.

Grant recipients are subject to periodic and post completion inspections, reviews, and audits by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry and the Tennessee Comptroller's Office.

Program Contact Information

U&CF Program Coordinator: Ashley Kite-Rowland

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Tree Planting Guidelines

Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Division of Forestry

To have a healthy tree in the future; the tree must be planted properly. The following are guidelines to assist you in planting your tree properly.

- **Tree Size:** Trees 2-inch caliper or less are recommended unless a larger size is justified. Smaller trees recover from transplant shock and commence with normal growth more quickly.
- **Prior to planting** remember to move the tree by the root ball or the container. Never grab it by the trunk.
- **Timing for Planting:** The best time of year to plant your tree is November through March.
- **Digging the Hole:** The planting hole should be at least twice the width of the rootball or container to encourage the roots to grow into the surrounding soil. The sides of the planting hole should be sloped. The depth of the hole should be the same as the distance from the root flare of the tree to the bottom of the container or ball. Most trees have the root ball below the top of the ball or soil in the container, so digging a hole the same depth of the ball or soil in the container often results in planting the tree too deep. One can check the root flare depth by digging down next to the trunk to find the flare.
- **Tree Preparation:** For container trees, remove the container. Place the root “ball” in the hole. Cut the circling roots in the outer part of the ball with 4 to 6 cuts, or gently pull the roots out of the ball and plant them in trenches leading away from the planting hole. (A planting hole does not have to be round.) For B&B trees, place the ball in the hole; remove the rope around the trunk; then reach down in the hole and cut away as much burlap as possible. Also, use wire cutters to remove as much of the wire basket as possible. This should be done after the tree is in its final position and ready to be back filled.
- **Backfill:** Use the same soil that was taken out of the hole. If the soil is very poor and appears to need topsoil, increase the hole size and sparingly mix in some local topsoil (avoid using potting soil, peat moss, and soil amendments). Remove stones and other debris. Fill hole halfway with backfill, then water. Finish filling the hole with backfill and water again. Work soil around the ball firmly to eliminate air pockets. Ensure tree is vertical and properly supported. Do not pack the soil around the trunk.

- **Mulch:** The area around the tree should be mulched. The mulch should be 3 to 4 inches thick and cover the entire planting area and beyond. The mulch needs to be placed in a donut or tire shape around the trunk of the tree. The mulch must be kept away from the trunk of the tree to keep insects away and prevent the trunk from being excessively wet. Mulch helps conserve soil moisture, reduces the competition from unwanted weeds, keeps lawn mowers and string trimmers from damaging the trunk, and moderates soil temperature extremes. Do not use sawdust, black plastic, or grass clippings as mulch. Do not make mulch volcanos.
- **Trunk Wraps:** Research indicates there are no benefits from using trunk wraps and it may encourage damaging insects or diseases.
- **Staking:** Staking is not necessary if the tree has a proper size rootball and has not been pruned too high. Stakes may help prevent lawnmowers and string trimmers from damaging the tree. If staking is needed for support, attach them so the tree has some sway. NEVER leave wires or straps on the tree for more than one growing season.
- **Fertilizing:** Generally new trees do not need fertilizers. Using the wrong product could damage the already reduced root system. Fertilize the first year only if a specific problem develops.
- **Pruning:** Prune only the branches that are dead, broken or severely deformed during the first growing season. Buds produce hormones that stimulate root growth, so keep the removal of buds to a minimum.