

## Developing a community tree planting program

**Look out your window.** Drive through your town. Can you find large, beautiful trees? Many Massachusetts communities are blessed to have many older, stately community trees that add character to our communities and improve the environment. Most of those trees are there because people planted them.

**Now imagine what your town would look like without any of these trees!** We owe a debt of gratitude for these pillars of green in our communities to the hard work, vision, and foresight of those who came before us. They recognized the social, economic, and environmental benefits of community trees and forests and made sure that they left this valuable legacy to future generations. Indeed, Massachusetts is thought to have held the first recorded public shade tree planting in the western hemisphere when, in 1646, all the residents of Boston Town gathered to plant a double row of American elms along the peninsula that connected Boston to the mainland.

**Now it is your turn** to leave the same legacy to our future and improve our community forests through tree planting.

## Why Develop a Community Tree Planting Program?

- Trees help clean the air and water.
- Trees provide shade and reduce the urban heat island effect.
- Community plantings can bring neighbors and residents together and strengthen communities.
- Trees beautify our communities.
- Most communities remove more public trees than they plant.
- Tight municipal budgets have resulted in fewer trees planted in recent years.
- We owe it to the future.

## Types of Community Tree Planting Programs

### Municipal Planting Models

The most common type of planting program is one that is municipally sponsored and organized and is implemented by paid town forestry staff. In this type of program, municipal forestry staff (or contractors) will inspect locations for planting, select a species, plant a tree when resources allow, and maintain that tree. Often these types of programs are primarily responsive to requests for trees from residents. Sometimes, public officials or citizen tree boards will identify and target areas for planting.

**Advantages:** Professional forestry staff oversee the entire tree planting operation. They can ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place, that trees are planted properly and that they get appropriate maintenance. This type of program also requires relatively little community outreach.

**Disadvantages:** The disadvantages are that the town bears all the costs of planting and maintenance, including labor, and that it encourages little community involvement.



## Adopt-A-Tree Models

These types of planting programs are joint partnerships between municipal forestry staff (or a municipality and a local non-profit) and citizens. For example, the town may advertise the availability of free or shared-cost trees to residents interested in planting and caring for street trees. Interested residents sign-up and fill out a site inspection sheet or have the site inspected by forestry personnel. These residents then come to a central location to receive training in tree planting and care and receive an appropriate species to plant. Residents commit to maintaining these trees.

**Advantages:** Costs for planting and maintaining the trees are shared between municipality and citizens. Forestry personnel can still ensure that the right trees are planted in the right place. These programs train residents in tree care and engage residents in community forestry.

**Disadvantages:** Forestry staff must give up some control over where, whether, and how the trees are planted and maintained. With this type of program, it is also difficult (but still possible) to target certain areas that may be in more need of planting. It may be challenging to equitably distribute trees this way. Communities should monitor distribution and assess for equity.

## Organized Community Planting Models

A municipality, tree board, or non-profit group organizes neighborhood residents to complete a neighborhood tree planting. Forestry staff inspects the sites and recommends species. The forestry staff, tree board, or non-profit group provides the trees, on-site training, and supervision to community volunteers on the planting day. Residents commit to caring for the trees.

**Advantages:** Municipalities, non-profit groups, and citizens share all costs of tree planting and maintenance. Professional staff maintains control over species selection and provides supervision at the planting to ensure correct planting procedures. Neighborhood plantings of this type can be targeted to areas of need and bring residents together, strengthening the sense of community and positive achievement.

**Disadvantages:** This type of program requires fairly extensive community outreach and organization up front and during plantings.



Holyoke

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