

Plant America with Trees: Each One Plant One

NGC members are encouraged to reach out to members of their communities in the Plant America with Trees effort as we hope to plant *at least 165,000 trees in each year in the 2019-2021 administration*. All it takes is for “Each ONE” (member) to “Plant ONE” (native tree).

A recent study using Google Earth® mapping published in “Science Magazine” concluded:

“... there is enough space globally to plant more than a trillion trees without interfering with existing farmland or cities... an area of trees about the size of the United States could scrub 205 billion metric tons of carbon from the atmosphere — out of the roughly 300 billion metric tons of man-made carbon pollution produced over the past 25 years.”

The NGC initiative, Plant America with Trees: Each One Plant One reaches far beyond the physical planting of trees. Increasingly, studies are finding that climate change understandably causes depression, especially among young people. Not only are even the best prospects pretty grim, but the large scale of problems can be overwhelming. For example, planting 165,000 trees in one year, and the example this sets in our communities, can be empowering. Even planting a single tree in a small garden provides an opportunity to talk with neighbors about choosing a tree, planting a tree and nurturing that tree. However large or small your tree-planting project may be, it is important to look for ways to incorporate community education into your plans.

Why native trees and which trees are native?

Native trees do not inherently sequester more carbon, but they support wildlife in many ways. The goal is to not just look for a reduction of atmospheric carbon, but to give a boost to local biomes.

In *Bringing Nature Home*, by Doug Tallamy, noted author and professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware in Newark, he explains how planting native trees increases insect populations that are vital to nesting mother birds and chicks. In addition:

- If you want to be very exact, trees native to your county or zip code can be easily located. For example, if you live in a state with relatively homogenous geography, statewide lists should be helpful. While agricultural zones are helpful in terms of high and low temperatures, they do not factor in other climate elements. For this project, it is important to select native plants that thrive in your biome.
- Tallamy lists the 20 U.S. native tree genera that are lepidopteran host plants. The genus *Quercus* (oak) supports 534 Lepidoptera species. There is a very good chance that there are one or more *Quercus* species native to your area. Others in the top five are: *Salix* (willow), *Prunus* (cherry, plum), *Betula* (birch), and *Populus* (poplar and cottonwood).

Tips for planting a tree

There are a number of things to consider when planting a new tree. For example:

- The correct site is paramount. Assume that the tree will grow to its maximum size. Don't just go by the size on the tag. In the “*Manual of Woody Plants*,” author Richard Dirr discusses each tree in detail, often noting that it will grow larger in certain areas.

- Remember that root systems will extend as far as the drip line. Roots should not impede walkways, driveways or foundations!
- Note conditions such as sunlight, moisture in soil, and irrigation. Test the soil.
- Plant the tree according to directions from the local University Extension service or state Extension website. The depth and width of the hole dug for a new tree depends on species, soil and climate.
- Research maintenance, especially pruning. Some trees should not be pruned at all for a year or so, while others need to be pruned earlier.
- Many readers may live in areas plagued by deer. Even if the tree you plant is a species deer are known to dislike, they still may saunter over, bite out the growing tip and spit it out. Another branch may be trained as the main leader, but it is best to make a simple cage for the tree from a roll of 4-foot-high garden fencing. A green PVC-coated fence will last a long time and is almost invisible from a distance.

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