



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE**

Plant Trees in Your Neighborhood



The Challenge



National results indicate that tree cover in urban areas of the United States is on the decline at a rate of about 4.0 million trees per year.[1]

(file:///S:/CLIENTS%20&%;20COLLABORATORS/CNCS%202014/MLK%20911/Updated%20Toolkits/2014%20Reviewed/Updates09_Plant%20Trees%20in%20your%20Neighborhood%201.30.docx#_ftn1)

This can result in greater flooding in recent years after rain and the effects of pollution and air quality are creating increases in asthma for many communities. Sometimes, simple changes to our environment can be just the thing we need to help our community live longer and healthier. Trees turn an ordinary city street into a pleasant strolling ground, providing shade, color, and texture. They also soak up carbon dioxide and stabilize soil, which helps to clean up the air we breathe and guard against flooding.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting

[1]

(file:///S:/CLIENTS%20&%;20COLLABORATORS/CNCS%202014/MLK%20911/Updated%20Toolkits/2014%20Reviewed/Updates09_Plant%20Trees%20in%20your%20Neighborhood%201.30.docx#_ftnref1)
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1618866711000999> (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1618866711000999>)

Prepare

Learn Associated Terms

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **Arbor Day:** (from the Latin *arbor*, meaning tree) is a holiday in which individuals and groups are encouraged to plant and care for trees. The first Arbor Day was held in the state of Nebraska on April 10, 1872; an estimated one million trees were planted that day. It is usually observed in spring.
- **Seedling:** A seedling is a young plant developing out of a plant embryo from a seed. Seedling development starts with germination of the seed.
- **Greenhouse Effect:** The distinctive heating effect on the Earth's surface due to the gases in the atmosphere that trap solar radiation and emit infrared radiation. Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide, methane and water vapor, function like a "greenhouse" that traps radiation and consequently warms the (internal surface) temperature.



Identify a Location

The grounds around schools, churches, community centers, and parks are excellent choices for placing a cluster of trees. Be sure, however, to get permission with the owners or managers of the space and involve members of that organization in your efforts. You'll need to secure the site from the owner. It is best to establish a written agreement for its use.

If you are planning to plant trees next to a street, you will need to get permission from your municipal government. In many places, this typically would come from the department of planning and community development, public works, or transportation.

Browse Helpful Resources

- ANSI Tree Planting Standards (<http://tcia.org/business/ansi-a300-standards>)
- Ten Tree Planting Rules (<http://forestry.usu.edu/htm/city-and-town/tree-planting/ten-tree-planting-rules/>)
- Alliance for Community Trees (<http://actrees.org/>)
- ACT Tree Guides (<http://actrees.org/resources/about-trees/tree-guides/>)
- Tree Ordinance Guidelines (<http://www.isa-arbor.com/education/onlineResources/treeOrdinanceGuidelines.aspx>)
- International Society of Arboriculture Planting Specifications (<http://www.isa-arbor.com/education/onlineResources/cadPlanningSpecifications.aspx>)
- Watershed Forestry Resource Guide (<http://www.forestsforwatersheds.org/planting-and-maintaining-trees/>)



Plan

A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

Build a Team

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Consider inviting local environmental groups or walking groups to work with you.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.



Set Goals

Build your planning team

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
- Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
- Communications Team
- VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
- Fundraising Team
- Event Team

- Set goals, such as number of trees planted, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along to others what they've learned about the value of trees in a community.
- Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

Plan Your Project

There are a number of ways you can get involved with planting tree in your community. Here are a few ideas for planning tasks to complete before jumping in:

- Research various trees to determine the best types of trees to plant in your community. Consider how much sunlight and water they require; how large they grow, and how much space the roots require. This is an excellent task for your younger volunteers to do and report back to the larger group.
- Decide what kind of trees you would like based on your research into what grows well in your area and space constraints.
- Think ahead! Trees require continuous care especially early on. Who will water the young trees? Check they haven't been vandalized and take protective measures? Prune them if they get close to cables or sidewalk? Handle pests that can infect bark, leaves, and roots?
- **Incorporate learning into any service you do** ([node/292](#)) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue. (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>)

Raise Resources for Equipment/Supplies

Involving and engaging kids

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to plant trees your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day

Manage Your Project

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.
- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Even if some volunteers will be doing door-to-door distribution of materials, it is important that the group start off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: planting trees in the community in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing materials.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#).
- Document the day with pictures and videos and be sure to have participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.



Communicate Your Message

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:



- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Building partnerships with potential collaborators or sponsors
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service

Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

Low-tech Outreach

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

Traditional Media

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

Digital and Social Media

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event

Share Impact

Assess and Reflect

Assess and reflect on the project after it is completed. Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What tree planting resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example: If you planted a tree in honor of MLK Day, what else could you do after the day of service to become a steward of environmentalism in your community? With what other organizations or programs could you partner?



Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a tree planting event once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered you service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>)

34 reads

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