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[www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org)



Alliance for Community Trees

## Guide and Workbook

Recipes for Community Action

In partnership with



**FOUNDATION**  
Building Affordable Healthy Homes



The Alliance for Community Trees (ACT) is a national network of local, state and national nonprofit organizations dedicated to engaging the public in tree planting, care, conservation and education.

ACT was incorporated in 1993 as a problem-solving center for leaders of community-based urban forestry groups. Our founders shared a vision of healthy, functioning urban forest nurtured by a broad base of community stewards. Today, ACT is a growing alliance of organizations engaged in urban and community forestry. Our members are involved in grassroots community greening, public education, policymaking, job training, environmental design and other activities that support better urban forest stewardship. ACT members have planted more than 8 million trees by engaging more than 450,000 volunteers.

ACT's goals are to:

- Support member groups by providing services and networking opportunities
- Enlist member groups who represent the diversity of our communities
- Promote the vital contributions of ACT and its member groups
- Represent the collective concerns of members on selected public policy issues
- Nurture effective working relationships with national organizations and public agencies
- Build the infrastructure of ACT to support its members

Membership in ACT is open to all 501(c)(3) nonprofit urban forestry organizations that have been in existence for a minimum of one year prior to membership application, and whose programs engage the public in the planting, care and appreciation of community trees. The cost for joining ACT is determined on a sliding scale based on an organization's annual budget.

For further information, contact ACT at [www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org) or write

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# NeighborWoods

## Guide

*Recipes for Community Action*

## A Message from ACT's NeighborWoods Partner, The Home Depot Foundation

**T**he Home Depot Foundation invests in nonprofit organizations that are in the business of building better communities. The Home Depot and many of the suppliers who help fill the company's shelves contribute to The Home Depot Foundation to help fulfill their shared vision of creating stronger, healthier neighborhoods. The Foundation focuses its efforts in the areas of affordable, efficient and healthy housing production and rehabilitation and tree planting to restore urban and rural forests.

Our support of the Alliance for Community Trees (ACT) began in 2005 with a grant to support tree planting activities of its local member organizations and to support educational efforts such the creation and distribution of a national edition of the NeighborWoods Guide and Workbook. We're proud to be affiliated with organizations all around the country that are mobilizing volunteers (including The Home Depot associates) to restore or enhance their community environments.

We invite you to visit our website at [www.homedepotfoundation.org](http://www.homedepotfoundation.org) for more information about our grant programs and other activities.

Kelly Caffarelli  
Executive Director of  
The Home Depot Foundation



**FOUNDATION**  
Building Affordable Healthy Homes

## Foreword

The Sacramento Tree Foundation originally published a NeighborWoods Guide and Workbook in 2000 in response to community requests in Sacramento.

Our Guide introduced people to the concept of the urban forest. We wanted them to understand that they lived within an urban forest, and all that this implied. We wanted them to know how to enhance, preserve and protect their urban forest. We wanted the concept of NeighborWoods to spread throughout Sacramento and beyond.

We are indebted to many people in the preparation of the original NeighborWoods Guide and Workbook. These included resident leaders, volunteers, city staff and elected officials, the USDA Forest Service and the National Tree Trust.

The NeighborWoods Guide and Workbook was so popular and useful that the Alliance for Community Trees suggested replicating it for a national audience. We were only too happy to agree. Anything any one organization can do to help others succeed in caring for all of our forests — be they large public lands, state or local parks, or those in our own backyards - is something worth doing.

Planting trees is another way to strengthen communities. Trees are powerful tools for change, because everybody agrees that correctly planting and protecting trees is a good thing to do.

I hope you find this book useful in helping you tap into the power of trees in your neighborhood. You will see the results in streets lined with giant “trophy” trees. You will see more of your neighbors out and about on summer evenings, talking with one another and enjoying a stroll or bike ride. Visitors will gaze up in amazement at the massive limbs and canopy that tower overhead as your efforts progress. The power of the trees brings peace, calm, and comfort.

We started out envisioning an active group of residents, businesses, and public servants in every neighborhood dreaming, planning, planting, and caring for their neighborhood forest. “Plant a tree, grow a community” is one of the favorite sayings of our most active volunteer. And the vision is happening - one by one we have neighborhoods that are organizing around trees. They have seen the possibilities.

We hope sharing these strategies with you helps you see the possibilities as well, and that you are successful in envisioning and bringing to fruition a greener and more involved community.

Best Wishes,  
Ray Tretheway  
Executive Director, Sacramento Tree  
Foundation; Founding President,  
Alliance for Community Trees

## Introduction

### The NeighborWoods Vision

Without Sacramento Tree Foundation’s generosity and enthusiasm, this book simply would not have been possible. Ray Tretheway and Steve Schweigerdt’s open and sharing spirit is remarkable—and reveals a spirit of collaboration that is a deeply held value among ACT members. The Home Depot Foundation’s extraordinary partnership with ACT, dedicated to expanding NeighborWoods nationwide, made it possible for ACT to undertake the revision and national release of Sacramento Tree Foundation’s original work. Our deep appreciation goes to Kelly Caffarelli and DeAnn Fordham for their vision and commitment to this effort.

ACT’s NeighborWoods Program envisions a future where all people live in communities with tree-lined streets, shaded parks and school grounds, and full-canopied neighborhoods. Our center cities, suburban neighborhoods and small towns provide daily opportunities for people to discover and learn about nature. In fact, there is a forest just outside your door.

A successful NeighborWoods effort begins with community members who can imagine, plan and work together. The result will be neighbors learning together, supporting one another, and sharing an understanding of what it takes to make both the community and the forest thrive.

ACT offers this Guide and Workbook to help you discover your community forest. How you use it is up to you:

- You may choose to embark on any of these activities by yourself.
- For individuals, this Guide and Workbook offers rewarding opportunities to learn about and discover your local forest. You may select activities in whatever order appeals to you. Like a cookbook, each entry offers something unique and worthwhile.
- You may choose a deeper journey into your own NeighborWoods. By working your way through the Guide’s five sections with your neighbors and other supporters, you will learn to strengthen communities and healthy forests.

ACT’s mission is to help you in these endeavors. Please let us know how you have used this publication and share your success stories.

We invite you to join the Alliance for Community Trees for more ways to get involved. Together, we can create a strong voice on behalf of the urban forest. We can make a great difference in the health, beauty and livability of our communities. We can strengthen communities by offering action-oriented approaches that bring people together around a common purpose.

We are proud to share this Guide and Workbook with you and again thank The Home Depot Foundation and the Sacramento Tree Foundation for making this possible. We look forward to hearing about your successes as you create your own NeighborWoods.

Sincerely,  
Alice Ewen Walker  
Executive Director,  
Alliance for Community Trees

# The NeighborWoods Guide

## To Help You Get Started

In addition to the NeighborWoods Guide and Workbook, the Alliance for Community Trees is building other resources that you can draw upon for inspiration and advice.

### The National NeighborWoods Program™

*In partnership with The Home Depot Foundation*

Through generous support from The Home Depot Foundation, the National NeighborWoods Program™ builds upon the work of ACT member organizations as they seek to restore and improve tree canopy in their communities. The goals of the National NeighborWoods Program are to increase volunteerism to benefit urban forests, disseminate information on best practices in the field, replicate the NeighborWoods concept in additional communities, and build a national collaborative network of community tree-planting organizers.

### National NeighborWoods Grants™

In partnership with The Home Depot Foundation, ACT offers competitive grants to its members to fund citizen forestry projects that enhance community development and affordable housing in neglected neighborhoods. The effort brings together two passions of The Home Depot Foundation — people and trees — and focuses resources on communities that need assistance most. National NeighborWoods Grants™ encourage the formation of local-level partnerships between urban forestry groups and The Home Depot's community development partners.

The goals of the grants are:

- To produce tangible results that improve communities and urban forests,
- To provide meaningful volunteer experiences for The Home Depot associates and community members, and
- To jumpstart local partnerships between urban forestry groups and community development organizations.

### National NeighborWoods Academy™

In 2005, ACT launched its first National NeighborWoods Academy™. The academy features panel discussion with experienced NeighborWoods organizers about what works in their communities, expert insight from social science researchers about the connection between trees and community development, and assistance to help grassroots tree groups increase their impact. Sponsors include the USDA Forest Service and The Home Depot Foundation.

The goals of the Academy are:

- To learn "what works" from ACT member organizations
- To promote the creation of new NeighborWoods programs
- To present best practices and cutting-edge research
- To foster ACT's network of peers for collaboration and sharing

### Leadership Training for Urban Forestry Volunteer Organizations

In partnership with the National Arbor Day Foundation and the USDA Forest Service, the Alliance for Community Trees developed an intensive three-day training program focused on the needs of nonprofits, service groups, volunteer coordinators, and community organizers engaged in urban and community forestry. Whether you are an experienced executive or passionate amateur, we encourage you to take part in this enriching and comprehensive program.

Community Tree Leadership Forum Core Modules:

- Nonprofit Standards of Excellence & Accountability
- Marketing & Urban Forestry
- Fundraising
- Program Models for Community Groups
- Partnerships & Collaboration
- Public Policy & Advocacy

If you're not already a member of ACT, consider joining today. Membership gives you and your organization the opportunity to network with your peers, participate in mentoring relationships, have a voice in forging national policies, and participate in annual conferences and educational forums. You will receive ACT's electronic newsletter and membership directory and have access to the resources of our headquarters office and the ACT network. For more information, e-mail Executive Director Alice Ewen Walker at [alice@actrees.org](mailto:alice@actrees.org), call 301-220-2251 or visit [www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org).

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# Five Steps to NeighborWoods

**Learning & Exploring: Your community and its forest**

This section focuses on discovery. Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned community forester, these activities will help you explore the forest outside your door.

**Joining Together: Creating the capacity for NeighborWoods**

This section leads you and your neighbors to engage in community action. Activities range from inventorying your trees to walking your neighborhood with your local arborist. You may find yourself leading a neighborhood project or even establishing a NeighborWoods group.

**Moving Forward: Taking action to care for your forest**

This section outlines action for a sustained NeighborWoods effort. Projects include neighborhood planning, forest stewardship, and resource attainment. These activities offer a menu of opportunities for long-term forest care and community involvement.

**Spreading the Word: Sharing your success with others**

This section offers a range of activities centered on learning and teaching. These steps help you share the value of trees with schools, businesses and neighbors. Spreading the word will inform your neighborhood, resulting in broadened support and interest.

**Moving Beyond: Supporting action beyond NeighborWoods**

The concluding section serves as an invitation to expand beyond your neighborhood. Building from your knowledge and experience, activities include ways to effect change in other neighborhoods throughout your city, county and state.

## Planting the Seed

Before you continue, pause five to ten minutes and write what your local trees mean to you. Try to recall a moment when you noticed something memorable about the trees in your yard or neighborhood. Also, make a note of one activity you might imagine sharing with one or more of your neighbors.

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What does a successful NeighborWoods project look like? Like a good meal, every community action project is different, based on different community needs (appetites) and different projects undertaken (recipes). What is true for every successful project is that neighbors develop stronger relationships, residents become more aware of their surrounding forest, and neighborhood leaders ensure a thriving NeighborWoods.

This Guide is a list of recipes and an invitation to imagine. As you progress through these pages, remember that accomplishments, both great and small, are built on simple appreciation and actions like those you have noted above.

We ask that you keep us informed of your progress. Share your lessons, questions, frustrations, and successes as we grow NeighborWoods together.

Good luck in your ventures. May you plant the seed that blossoms into a beautiful, thriving addition to a united community.



## Using This Guide

There are two ways to approach the activities in this Guide. The sections are ordered to lead you in the development of an active NeighborWoods group. By working together and following the basic order of the five sections, you will discover the joy of community and trees.

You may also use this Guide in any order you choose. Feel free to skim through to those activities most appealing to you.

The following symbols offer a brief overview of each action and provide a quick means of choosing activities.

### Symbols:



Connecting to Government 18, 20, 21, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34



Fun for Kids 1, 2, 3, 15, 22, 25, 27, 28



Looking Around 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 26, 34



Networking 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33



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Walking 1, 4, 5, 7, 23, 34



Writing 1, 7, 11, 14, 21, 22, 29, 32, 33



## SECTION ONE

### **Learning & Exploring**

*Your community and its forest*



## Activity

# 1

### Take a walk

Once you begin learning about the trees in your neighborhood, you will never view trees the same way again. Whenever and wherever you walk, your awareness of the forest's distinct qualities and characteristics will grow.

#### Directions:

Walk to your front or back yard and notice your trees' distinct characteristics. Choose just one to start. Take note of its height, the shape of its leaves, the texture of its bark, the structure of its branches, its scent, and its colors.

When you are ready, take a walk and look at the trees along your street or in a nearby park. Are there common species? Are there certain trees that stand out for their height, leaf size or branches? As you appreciate specific species and characteristics, ask your neighbors for their opinions. Reinforce your tree knowledge by sharing your tree discoveries with others.

If you yearn for more facts, try to identify your trees using a tree identification guidebook. If you get stumped, take a small branch to your local nursery. Most importantly, follow your own inspiration. Track the different birds and animals that enjoy your trees. You might keep a journal, create a tree list, take pictures, or notice the changes through the four seasons.

*"You don't need to know the name of a tree to love it."*

John Muir

See Appendix A: Helpful Organizations



#### Areas of Interest:

Fun for Kids, Walking, Looking Around, Writing

#### Ingredients:

Comfortable shoes, pen and paper (optional), tree identification guide, tree journal



## Activity

# 2

### Adopt a tree

Every forest is a collection of trees. Old, young, tall, short... it's easy to find a favorite. One of the best ways to appreciate your forest is by paying regular attention to one special tree.

#### Directions:

Choose a tree holding some unique appeal. It may be an old tree, a colorful tree, an unusual tree, or one recently planted. Consider giving it a name. Take steps to provide for its needs. Try to pamper it. Take time to observe how it changes through the fall and the spring. Note the animals that visit, take nourishment from or live in your tree.

Trees planted for special occasions may be some of the best trees to adopt.<sup>1</sup> Marking a child's birth by planting a tree provides an opportunity to take annual pictures of the child with the tree, marking his or her growth. Planting a tree in memory of a loved one who has passed can create a living legacy. Celebrating a marriage, anniversary, or retirement with a tree also creates a lasting memory. A well-planted and cared-for tree can be an ongoing reminder of the person or event for decades.

*"He who plants a tree loves others besides himself."*

English proverb

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix B: How to Plant a Tree



#### Areas of Interest:

Fun for Kids, Looking Around, Physical Labor

#### Ingredients:

Warm heart, tree journal, mature or young tree



## Activity 3

### Ask children to describe a tree

**C**hildren are extraordinary teachers because they see the world with fresh eyes. Children often see things adults never notice. Imagine what they see in a tree.

#### Directions:

Ask your son, daughter, cousin, grandchild, sister or brother, niece or nephew, neighbor, student, or other young person for some of their time and insight. Explain that you are in the process of learning about trees and you want their expert perspective. Invite them to walk outside and share one of their favorite trees with you.

Ask your young teacher to share what they like about trees. Inquire why they like specific trees. Invite them to speculate how our lives would be different without trees (resist playing the instructor, at least for a while). Ask the child to write in your tree journal and invite them to start their own journal.

When your conversation is over, invite them to join you in another activity from this Guide. Try to engage as many junior arborists as you can.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Fun for Kids, Looking Around, Teaching

**Ingredients:**  
Patience, imagination, curiosity, tree journal



## Activity 4

### Learn about your native trees

**N**ative trees are a unique treasure. They are a link to past landscapes and are often the best choice to plant today. In most cities today, the majority of trees are exotic, non-native species. Native trees are a crucial part of local environments for birds, animals and insects. As development grows, our groves of native trees continue to disappear.

#### Directions:

Visit your local library, nursery, NeighborWoods organization or other urban forestry organization (if there is one), or the U.S. Cooperative Extension Service's local office to compile a list of your area's native tree species. Explore designated natural areas to find these native varieties. Read about the rich ecosystems in which these trees thrive. Learn the other plants, animals, insects and birds commonly associated with your local trees. Determine which animals rely on your native trees. Identify the benefits these trees offered indigenous people — for example: medicines, foods or fiber.

With your new knowledge, look for the native trees in your immediate area. Observe what birds, animals and insects are found there. Should you decide to plant a tree, consider planting a native.

*“Air darkens, air cools  
And the first rain is  
heard in the great  
elms. A drop for each  
leaf, before it reaches  
the ground I am still  
alive.”*

John Fuller



**Areas of Interest:**  
Looking Around, Thinking and Investigating, Walking

**Ingredients:**  
Comfortable shoes, pen and paper, tree identification guide



## Activity 5

### Meet your neighbors

**A**mericans hold a strong admiration for the rugged individual who goes it alone. But we also pride ourselves on being neighborly, saying hello and offering help during times of need. Most of us lie somewhere in between these two poles. But to have communities and local forests which thrive, we must build strong ties with our neighbors. A sense of shared strength, vast knowledge, and camaraderie inevitably grows when neighbors pull together.

#### Directions:

Start noticing when you are most likely to speak to a neighbor. Is it when you get out of your car, pick up the newspaper, walk your dog, borrow a cup of sugar, or when your children play? Whatever it is, try to do it a little more often. Identify several neighbors whom you have not met or who you rarely see. If you feel bold, knock on their door to simply say, "Hello." You might seize an opportunity to strike up a conversation.

Share your interest in trees. Ask how your neighbors feel about their own trees, the neighborhood's trees, and your community overall. Ask if they have ever planted a tree or if they have a favorite tree in the area. Listen closely to their thoughts, concerns and ideas. Invite them to participate in your efforts, whether it is to appreciate the trees, take part in a planting, help care for a local park, work with local government or join a local tree group. Let your neighbors be the inspiration to keep moving forward!



**Areas of Interest:**  
Networking, Walking

**Ingredients:**  
Firm hand for door knocking and hand shaking, smile, ideas to share



## Activity 6

### Join your local "Tree Group"

**A**cross America, volunteers have built organizations to advocate and care for trees and community forests. These national, state and local groups form an extensive network. They need your support and participation.

#### Directions:

You can find a listing of local tree groups affiliated with the Alliance for Community Trees by visiting [www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org). National organizations such as TreeLink.org, American Forests, and the National Arbor Day Foundation also provide links to state and local agencies engaged in urban and community forestry. If there are no organizations in your area, try the two or three nearest to you. They may have names of people in your own community interested in your urban forest.

Once you have located a local organization, request information about their current programs, projects and upcoming events. Inquire about membership and ask to be placed on the mailing list.

Get to know your local group by reaching out to their staff and volunteers. Ask if they have trees, educational presentations or other resources available to the community. Invite the executive director to lunch. When you are ready, consider serving on a committee, volunteering to sit on a board of directors, or providing leadership in some other capacity.



See Appendix A: Helpful Organizations

**Areas of Interest:**  
Networking, Technology, Thinking and Investigating

**Ingredients:**  
Telephone, computer with internet access



## SECTION TWO

### **Joining Together**

*Creating the capacity for NeighborWoods*



## Activity 7

### Inventory your trees

**D**o you know how many trees you have in your yard, exactly? Does your local park know the number of trees under their care? By simply taking an inventory, counting the number, species and condition of the trees around us, we become better equipped to appreciate and maintain our local canopy.

#### Directions:

Draw a map of your property with a box representing your house. Number and identify each tree in its approximate location near your house. For a school, park, or street this can be done on a larger scale or with multiple pieces of paper. You also can request a campus, park or parcel map.

#### Suggested goals are:

- Number of trees in a designated area  
Count the number of trees in your designated area.
- Location of each tree, defined by
  - 1) street address
  - 2) location relative to property lines, buildings, streets, and other trees
- Species of each tree  
Using a tree identification guide, identify the species being inventoried.
- Condition or health of each tree  
Look for signs of disease or of hazardous conditions, such as pests, mistletoe, rot, missing bark, damaged limbs, or dead/missing leaves during non-dormant seasons. Note if the tree is young, mature or in decline.
- Special needs of certain trees  
Identify tree needs such as watering, pruning, mulching, fertilization, staking or stake removal.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Looking Around, Thinking and Investigating, Walking, Writing

**Ingredients:**  
Pen and paper, map, tree identification guide



## Activity 8

### Know who manages your trees

**E**ach local government is responsible for the stewardship of hundreds or thousands of trees, maintained with our tax dollars. Recreation and park districts are responsible for well-canopied parks, and school districts maintain pleasant shade for our children. Too often, the relevant agencies are understaffed, underfunded and looking for help.

#### Directions:

Begin by choosing a community organization caring for your trees. Your options include city or county government, a local urban forestry group, a local school or school district, or a recreation and park district. The first challenge is learning which trees are “owned” by the organization. In the case of cities or counties, these trees will commonly include commercial and residential street trees, median trees, public park trees, and trees growing at other city or county facilities.

Call the organization’s central office and obtain the name and title of the person responsible for the trees. Contact that individual in person or by phone and thank them for maintaining the urban forest. Learn more about the organization by asking:

- How many trees are under their care?
- How many staff care for those trees?
- What are their funding sources? Are they sufficiently funded? If not, what tree-related areas are in greatest need of funding?
- What role does the community play in their work?
- How could the community be of greater support?



**Areas of Interest:**Networking, Thinking and Investigating

**Ingredients:**  
Telephone, pen and paper, phone directory



## Activity 9

### Landscape your school or place of worship

**O**ur local schools and places of worship manage landscaped and canopied lands totaling thousands of acres. Sometimes these grounds are excellent models of quality planting and stewardship ... too often they are not. Whether the location is for learning or prayer, the mind and the spirit benefit from a well-maintained natural environment.

#### Directions:

Call the office of your local principal or spiritual leader to determine whether they have established a building and grounds committee. If one exists, attend a meeting or meet individually with committee members and identify their current projects. If you have the opportunity, become a member.

In addition to working towards quality care of the grounds, create opportunities to publicize the committee's work. A tree planting project on your site offers participants terrific educational benefits. As a volunteer landscaper or steward, you will gain firsthand experience caring for your environment and your community.

If a building and grounds committee does not exist, solicit support for the creation of one. Odds are that the principal or spiritual leader will like the idea as long as someone else assumes the responsibility. Speak with others to assess the degree of interest. The more vision and imagination you bring to this, the more excitement and support you will elicit from those around you. Focus on one project requiring many contributors and large benefits. When you have some success, expand your efforts.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Looking Around, Networking, Physical Labor

**Ingredients:**  
Ideas to share, flowers, shrubs, young trees, gardening tools, irrigation



## Activity 10

### Meet and support your municipal arborist

**M**any cities and counties have an arborist — an expert on tree care and maintenance. The care of your street and park canopy is his or her full-time responsibility.

#### Directions:

Call your local government office for the name of your arborist. Telephone or visit his or her office. Inquire about current projects. Take the arborist out to lunch! Most likely, the arborist's hard work goes unappreciated. Other conversation topics might be your vision of the urban forest, your projects, or little-known facts about your local forest.

*“As trustees, we ought to bequeath to posterity as many forests and orchards as we have exhausted and consumed.”*

J. Sterling Morton



**Areas of Interest:**  
Networking, Connecting to Government

**Ingredients:**  
Telephone, lunch for two



## Activity 11

### Identify and protect heritage and landmark trees

**H**eritage trees are mature native trees, often majestic and revered. Landmark trees are mature, non-native trees with historical value. Cities and counties nationwide often have ordinances protecting heritage and landmark trees.

#### Directions:

Contact your city or county arborist or agencies and request information regarding tree protection laws. If there are none, you might consider creating such an ordinance. Hopefully there are current ordinances describing the types and sizes of trees protected by law. Generally, municipalities have a minimum tree size to qualify for heritage or landmark status and a procedure for registering a tree. The national nonprofit American Forests also has a National Register of Big Trees and a Famous and Historic Trees program.<sup>1</sup>

Measure the circumference of each tree four feet above the ground to ascertain the Diameter Breast Height (DBH). Note the species of each tree and any other information required by the municipality. When you have collected the data, send all the information to the appropriate municipal office. Once the trees are identified, monitor them to be sure public and private interests respect these heritage and landmark trees.

<sup>1</sup>See American Forests at [www.americanforests.org](http://www.americanforests.org)



#### Areas of Interest:

Looking Around, Thinking and Investigating, Writing

#### Ingredients:

Comfortable shoes, telephone, tree circumference-measuring tape, tree identification guide



## Activity 12

### Spread the word about not topping trees

**T**ree topping is a detrimental practice commonly performed across the United States. Topping, or heading, is the practice of severely pruning the top branches of a tree, drastically reducing the size of the tree. People often top trees as a way to avoid power lines, because they have always done it, they fear branches falling down, or they are trying to remove vines. This practice, performed with good intentions, actually damages the tree physically and aesthetically. Once a tree is topped, decay starts, and new branches grow in structurally weaker and are more prone to falling. The tree loses its symmetry and integrity.

#### Directions:

The purpose of this activity is to deter the unhealthy and ultimately costly practice of tree topping. Begin by determining how common tree topping is in your area. It may not be present at all or it may be the community norm. You must look to find out. Select an area — your street, block or neighborhood — and take a walk. Look for trees that have many cuts on high branches. Tally the number of topped trees. Alert your newspapers to the damages caused by topping, or create a flyer promoting the elimination of tree topping in your community.

As fall approaches, people often prune their dormant trees. Keep your eyes out for a person beginning to prune and remind them that topping is detrimental.

*“To exist as a nation, to prosper as a state, and to live as a people, we must have trees.”*

Theodore Roosevelt



#### Areas of Interest:

Networking, Looking Around, Teaching

#### Ingredients:

Comfortable shoes, pen and paper, a good eye



## Activity 13

### Establish a NeighborWoods group

In every neighborhood there are people interested in working to improve the local forest. Some are doing it already. Some would like to start. Many do not realize the local forest needs their help. A NeighborWoods group unites these people and moves the cause forward.

#### Directions:

The first step is to spread the word. Start by asking your neighbors and friends if they are interested in preserving and expanding their local forest. Then ask them who they know with the same interests. Keep a list of all names and telephone numbers.

Once you find a few people willing to begin working with you, call a meeting. Tell your neighbors about it. Create a flyer and circulate it. If you have one, begin sharing your email address, or create a web site for this blossoming venture.

When this group gets together, spend your initial meeting discussing possibilities. Share your loves and your concerns about your local forest. Take a walk together and find out what you know collectively. Be sure to trade phone numbers and email addresses. Share this Guide and sketch out what you might do together. Take notes and have a group member keep a binder of your activities. A good start is important.



#### Areas of Interest:

**Networking, Thinking and Investigating**

#### Ingredients:

**Neighbors, telephone, pen and paper, ideas, enthusiasm**



### SECTION THREE

## Moving Forward

*Taking action to care for your forest*



## Activity 14

### Survey your neighbors

**A** successful NeighborWoods effort will mobilize people across a community. Your projects will reflect wide-ranging neighborhood interests. Undoubtedly, there will be differences in priorities. Ultimately, however, many neighbors are waiting for a plan before they offer their personal talents.

#### Directions:

Encourage group members to share their interests and concerns with their neighbors. Invite a representative from a local urban forestry organization or your city tree department to speak to your group. Compile a list of issues, concerns and desires. Using the list, brainstorm about possible activities. Include a wide range of ideas and possibilities.

Discuss the urgency of each possible action. Compare the pros and cons. Set priorities and focus on the single top-priority activity. You can always work on the other ideas after your group experiences its first successes.

Once priorities are chosen, ask group members to share the project with their neighbors. It is those neighbors who you will depend on to make your projects succeed.

*“In the woods we return to reason and faith.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson



**Areas of Interest:**  
Networking, Writing

#### Ingredients:

A local forest group (see Activity 13), flip chart, markers, many ideas, ability to make choices



## Activity 15

### Select the right tree for the right place

**W**hen we plant a tree, we make a long-term commitment. Often people plant without considering the relationship between the tree and the place it is planted. Whether we plant a single tree at our home or a whole grove at the park, we need to consider all the variables before choosing a species and a location.

#### Directions:

Take a look at the planting area. What size tree will work best? Most trees are small and cute when you plant them. Some remain dainty; others mature to be large and majestic. Be sure to allow a minimum distance from trees to buildings (20-30 feet); trees to swimming pools (20-30 feet); trees to concrete (8-15 feet); and trees to other trees (20-30 feet). Check to make sure you are not planting under overhead wires or digging into underground utility lines.

Consider the growing conditions. Is the soil generally dry or does it often get saturated and flooded with irrigation or rainwater?

Once you understand your environment, seek help from your local nursery to identify species fitting your circumstances and interests. Additional information sources are your local Cooperative Extension Service, the Master Gardener Program, or a certified arborist.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Fun for Kids, Looking Around, Physical Labor, Thinking and Investigating

#### Ingredients:

Good judgment, young tree, shovel, gloves, fertilizer tablets, tree stakes, tree ties, water



## Activity 16

### Take care of the ground around the tree

**A** tree's roots are hidden under the soil and often forgotten. Roots provide our trees with water and act as a critical anchor. Healthy roots make for a healthy tree.

#### Directions:

**Remove grass from the area around the tree trunk:** Grass likes to keep invading plants out, including your trees. It does this by releasing *alleopathic* chemicals, which kill small plants and inhibit the growth of your trees. Using a hoe or a shovel, remove the grass in a circle 3' to 4' from the trunk of the tree.

**Place mulch around the base of a tree:** Keep the tree's roots moist! Place a ring of wood chips<sup>1</sup> or other organic mulch around the tree. The mulch ring should be 2" to 4" deep, two feet wide, and should not touch the trunk of the tree (this would encourage rot).

**Practice deep watering during warm, dry months:** Roots seek water. Deep roots come from deep watering. Water a tree slowly, letting the water soak into the ground. Place a hose by the trunk, turn on a slow trickle and leave it for several hours. Repeat this once a week. (If it seems the ground is saturated, check the soil at a depth of one foot before watering.)

<sup>1</sup>Wood chips are often available for a low cost from your local municipality or electric utility.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Looking Around, Physical Labor

**Ingredients:**  
Gloves, hoe, wood chips, shovel, water



## Activity 17

### Practice selective pruning on young trees

**P**roper pruning helps trees maintain balance and integrity and can prevent more serious problems years later. Trees respond best to pruning when they are young (two to six years old). Trees younger than two years old generally should not be pruned. Mature trees respond best to occasional basic pruning. For more substantial pruning, particularly if it cannot be done from the ground, seek help from a certified arborist.

#### Directions:

##### In Winter

**Competing leaders:** If more than one limb competes to be the main trunk, choose the straightest or largest and remove the competitor.

**Lower limbs on the trunk:** If the tree grew well in the summer, remove two or three of the lower limbs.

**Limbs too close:** Prune limbs that grow directly above each other or cross one another.

##### Any season

**Dead branches:** Remove dry, brittle branches just below the dead wood.

**Broken branches:** Form clean cuts. They will heal better than ragged tears.

**Water sprouts:** Remove branches growing straight up from limbs.

**Suckers:** Prune growth coming from the rootball.

**DO NOT apply wound paint. It can seal diseases into the tree.**



**Areas of Interest:**  
Looking Around, Physical Labor

**Ingredients:**  
Clean and sharpened pruning shears, two ready hands



## Activity 18

### Protect and restore local woodlands and open spaces

**A**s neighborhood foresters, we work hard to protect the trees we have planted. Sometimes we are so busy planting new trees that we do not notice new housing or commercial developers who are removing existing trees. While development is a common aspect of life, we need to protect open spaces for ourselves, for local wildlife and for the generations that follow us ...

#### Directions:

**Conservation of existing woodlands:** Explore the outlying areas around your home and note the forested areas. Share particularly appealing areas with friends.

Check with your local Planning Department to learn 1) the zoning status on your forested area, and 2) current proposals for development on this or other forested parcels. Share ideas with your government representative about protecting local woodlands and open spaces.

**Habitat restoration:** Multi-acre plots of land provide natural-state restoration opportunities. The key to success is building coalitions. Local biologists, planners, educators, heavy equipment operators, nurseries, environmental organizations and others must embrace a shared vision for restoration to succeed. Once a coalition is formed, the first goal is gaining permission to restore the land. The second challenge is the work of restoration itself. Finally, you will need a devoted group of people to monitor and manage the restored land over the following years.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Connecting to Government, looking Around, Physical Labor, Thinking and Investigating

**Ingredients:**  
Large piece of land, team of volunteers



## Activity 19

### Turn parking lots into possibilities

**T**rees have a powerful ability to transform. We know the role they play in yards, parks and gardens. Are there other places which can be improved with trees?

#### Directions:

As you walk, bicycle or drive through your community, begin to notice tree-less areas. An obvious example is in the middle of the street. Where else? Look at parking lots, paved playgrounds, schoolyards, industrial areas, around warehouses, open lots, and apartment complexes. You may be surprised by areas where everyone has become accustomed to having no trees.

Imagine what one of these areas might look like with trees. Our cars would remain cooler parked under trees. Workers would have shade during lunch breaks. Warehouses would consume less energy for air conditioning.

Identify the owner or manager of the particular area. It may be a government official, property owner, store manager or school principal. Determine if someone in your network has a relationship with this person. Set up a meeting and suggest they consider planting trees.

Be prepared to address the issue of cost. Be creative! They may have money in a landscaping budget. Be sure to describe the potential for partnerships, media attention and community involvement. Elementary school students could plant at a factory. A local Rotary Club could volunteer to cut and remove paving in a supermarket parking lot. A landscape architecture firm could donate design work for a street median project.

Once the project moves ahead, be sure the media is alerted.<sup>1</sup> Properly publicized, events like this can pull in all sorts of new volunteer energy to support your efforts.

<sup>1</sup>See "Publicize your story: Activity 29"



**Areas of Interest:**  
Looking Around, Networking, Physical Labor

**Ingredients:**  
Sense of what could be a convincing plan, enthusiastic partners



## Activity 20

### Find funding

**S**o many worthy tree-planting projects require funding for basic materials. Don't be intimidated — the money does exist to support you in your project! You must locate the funds and make a thoughtful "pitch" to the funder.

#### Directions:

First, identify the project's components. Determine materials which can easily be donated and services volunteers could perform. Once you know the amounts required, calculate costs, and identify one or more workable strategies:

**Fundraising events:** Like any community-based project, you can sponsor local fundraising events. Car washes, garage sales and bake sales are all classic examples. Organize a neighborhood walk-a-thon on a course covering every street and have participants solicit sponsorships based on the number of blocks or miles walked. Ask local merchants and residents to donate items toward a raffle or an auction.

**Local businesses:** Write a letter describing your efforts and the specific project needing funds. Describe the benefits (such as publicity and community attention) the company will gain through its support. Be sure to follow up every letter with a phone call or a visit.

**Local government:** Contact the office of your city or county council member. Invite your representative to one of your meetings or schedule a meeting with them. Share your excitement and succinctly describe the ways they can help you. Be prepared — they may have means of supporting you. Ask them to write a letter of support to enclose with your request for donations from local businesses.

*"Most of the things worth doing in the world were declared impossible before they were tried."*

Louis Brandeis

### Find funding (continued)

**Residents:** The people in your neighborhood may be your best funding source. Send out a friendly letter inviting participation in a variety of ways. Explain that one very important need is *financial involvement*. Suggest different tiers of donations. You may need to create a nonprofit organization to officially receive the donations. Sending thank-you letters to your donors and keeping them informed of your events and progress is a must.

**Foundation funding:** There are grants available for projects like yours. Contact your local urban forestry nonprofit organization for more information on grant opportunities. Community foundations are a good source of information about funders that support causes in your area.

*"Look deep, deep, deep into nature, and then you will understand everything."*

Albert Einstein



**Areas of Interest:**  
Connecting with Government, Networking, Technology, Thinking and Investigating

**Ingredients:** Telephone, computer and printer, envelopes, stamps, determination, gratitude



## Activity 21

### Create urgency for public investment

**E**lected officials often focus on an impending crisis or the latest newsworthy events. Our trees rarely demand the same attention as crime, health care or damaged schools. We need for elected officials to recognize the importance of investing in our future urban forest **today**. We must show them tangible benefits: the value of more livable neighborhoods.

#### Directions:

Find out when your city or county council meets and attend the meetings. Take pictures of the trees that add beauty and benefits to your community. At the appropriate time, present the pictures to your council to encourage preservation and additional plantings. Propose actions you would like your city or county to take. Offer to help.

If possible, set up appointments with your mayor, council member or district supervisor. Ask them to share what they value about the city's trees. Invite them to take a tree walk with you and your neighbors. Express the importance your local forest holds for you.

Most importantly **DO NOT STOP!** Officials respond to repeated calls and regular attendance at meetings. Invite them and their administrative assistants to all of your meetings and events. Once on board, these officials offer connections to resources and services.

*"The time is always right to do what is right."*

Martin Luther King, Jr.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Connecting with Government, Networking, Writing

**Ingredients:**  
Pen and paper, telephone, loud voice



### SECTION FOUR

## Spreading the Word

*Sharing your success with others*



## Activity 22

### Engage children in the magic of planting

**C**hildren often see the wonder in what adults find ordinary. The experience of watching a seedling sprout from a seed for the first time is truly magical. To children, providing care for their own plants brings a sense of potential and responsibility.

**Note:** There are a number of regional and national environmental education programs for families, teachers and students. Check out the National Arbor Day Foundation's Kids Explore Club at [www.arborday.org/explore/parents](http://www.arborday.org/explore/parents) or Project Learning Tree at [www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org).

#### Directions:

Take children to a garden center and have them choose something to grow. Choose a category together: shade tree, shrub, flower, herb or vegetable. You may want to grow something from seed. Consider sprouting the seeds in a clear plastic cup so the children can watch their progress. Once the seedlings are ready, have the children plant them in the ground or in large planters. Teach the children how to find a good spot for their plant.

Teach the children to water the plants. Talk about the plants' growth with the children and share their excitement. Encourage them to write about or draw the plants in a project journal as they grow. Point out the diverse greenery in your local forest and help them compare the forest to their own plants.



#### Areas of Interest:

Fun for Kids, Physical Labor, Teaching, Writing

#### Ingredients:

Seeds or potted plants, water, sunlight, soil, journal



## Activity 23

### Conduct tree walks

**D**o your friends and neighbors know they live in a forest? Do you know people who are familiar with local trees, plants or birds? Assemble a group of varying ages for a special tour and watch their interest grow.

#### Directions:

Choose a nearby area with interesting or unusual trees. Learn the answers to the following questions:

- What tree species grow there?
- How do you identify each species?
- What are the unique colors and characteristics of each species?
- What types of birds and animals are drawn to your local trees?
- Which are the oldest trees? How old are they?
- What is the neighborhood tree planting history?
- How have these trees been used? (For example, medicines or foods?)

***Do not expect yourself to be an expert! People will appreciate the opportunity to learn and explore as you share whatever information you have.***

Once you have some answers, set a date and organize a walk. Invite kids, adults, business people, neighbors, and members of local community organizations.<sup>1</sup> Once you have some experience, advertise a tree walk in your neighborhood for people you do not know. Create a flyer and distribute it.

When you are done, request feedback from the participants. Make this an opportunity to brainstorm projects you and your neighbors develop for your local forest.

<sup>1</sup>Some possible examples are your local PTA, neighborhood association, homeowners association, tenants association, neighborhood watch committee, city council or county board of supervisors.



#### Areas of Interest:

Looking Around, Networking, Teaching, Thinking and Investigating, Walking

#### Ingredients:

Experience with your local forest, friends and neighbors, paper for flyers



## Activity 24

### Tell your stories

In your community, many people would love to hear about the work that you are doing to support the urban forest. Sharing your success encourages others to continue in their work and inspires the creation of new projects and partnerships.

#### Directions:

Identify community groups that meet regularly. Examples are your local PTA, neighborhood association, homeowners association, tenants association and neighborhood watch committee.

Start with one organization. Find out its meeting schedule and the names of its leaders. Contact the leaders, explain the work your organization is doing and ask if he or she would be interested in placing you on their meeting agenda to make a presentation.

When you make your presentation, offer a clear plan for how people can get involved. Distribute flyers for an upcoming project or meeting. Use photographs or slides to highlight your story. Share your excitement and create a clear image of your efforts and goals for your local urban forest.

*“The chestnut’s proud, and the lilac’s pretty,  
the poplar’s gentle and tall, but the plane tree’s  
kind to the poor dull city —  
I love him best of all.”*

Edith Nesbit



**Areas of Interest:**  
Networking, Teaching

**Ingredients:**  
Stories of local forest action, flyers of upcoming events or meetings, photographs or slides



## Activity 25

### Educate children on the many benefits of trees

How many benefits from trees can you name? You may be surprised how many benefits an average group of students — of any age — can name. By inviting them to share their knowledge, you can serve as a mirror, reflecting their own enthusiasm back to them.

#### Directions:

Set up a meeting with a youth group at your place of worship, school, park or neighborhood center. Ask that each student adopt a tree<sup>1</sup> prior to your visit. Begin your discussion by asking what they know about their adopted tree.

Ask them what they like about trees and why. It is not critical to cover every single benefit. Rather, share your passion with the students and invite them to share theirs. Bring a “bag of tricks” appropriate for the age group. This might include samples of tree parts, such as seeds, acorns, trunks, branches, bark and leaves, tree stories, photographs or slides, or crayons and paper to draw pictures. Bring flyers if you have a current project; ask if they would like to organize their own project.

Most importantly, encourage children to use their imaginations. By the time you leave, their enthusiasm should have become a better understanding of the purposes and possibilities of neighborhood trees.

<sup>1</sup>See “Adopt a tree: Activity 2”



**Areas of Interest:**  
Fun for Kids, Teaching, Thinking and Investigating

**Ingredients:**  
Passion for your local forest, seedlings, leaves, bark, stories, photographs/slides, paper, crayons



## Activity 26

### Remind neighbors to remove tree stakes

**N**urseries generally sell trees with a tall, narrow stake tied tightly to the tree. The stake makes the tree look more appealing. (Who wants a drooping tree?) Many people do not know these stakes should be removed as the tree becomes established.

We generally place two larger stakes on either side of the tree and attach ties to help the young tree stand straight. The tree should not be staked longer than necessary. A tree will grow much stronger when allowed to move freely. Usually staking the tree for one year is sufficient time for a strong trunk to grow.

#### Directions:

If you come across an established tree with a nursery stake still attached, talk with the owner about removing the stake. Look for staked trees that seem over a year old or generally capable of standing on their own. Cut or remove the ties and observe the tree. If it cannot stand straight, then re-tie it to the stakes.<sup>1</sup> If it stands proudly, pull out the tree stakes.

If the stake is firmly lodged in the roots, use a handsaw to cut it close to the ground.

Create a campaign to identify area trees unnecessarily tied to stakes. Educate local businesses, landscapers and developers about stake removal.

<sup>1</sup>See “Staking” in Appendix B: How to Plant a Tree



#### Areas of Interest:

Looking Around, Networking, Teaching

#### Ingredients:

Scissors, hand saw, good pair of eyes



## Activity 27

### Create service projects

**W**ith how many groups do you and your family have an connection? Consider your work-place, school, college, place of worship, social club, and service organization. These groups frequently have service projects that could benefit our local forests.

#### Directions:

Contact the group’s project chair and ask when the committee will be considering projects for the next year. Ask the group what their current priorities are or if they are open to new ideas. If you have a current project, invite members to participate. People may become inspired after participating in an event.

Suggest the group initiate its own local tree project. Consider ideas appropriate for the membership and suitable for your area. Share this Guide as a menu of project choices. Once the group chooses a project, encourage them to take a leadership role. They may look to you to coordinate the event, but ideally, they will take ownership in organizing it. If possible, step aside and let them plan it.

After the event, keep the group informed of your activities. With any luck, the group will take an active role in future projects, with or without you.

*“Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed. Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders.”*

Henry David Thoreau



#### Areas of Interest:

Fun for Kids, Networking, Physical Labor, Teaching

#### Ingredients:

NeighborWoods Guide, enthusiastic volunteers, ideas of what could be



## Activity 28

### Celebrate Arbor Day in the spring and National NeighborWoods Month in the fall

Official celebrations have a way of bringing people together and highlighting shared values and interests. National Arbor Day and state-declared Arbor Days are traditional celebrations of trees and tree-planting. Arbor Day has been a recognized in many states since the late 1800s.

National NeighborWoods Month was created by the Alliance for Community Trees as a way to acknowledge the cumulative successes of community tree planting programs created by members around the country. National NeighborWoods Month is every October.

#### Directions:

National Arbor Day is the last Friday in April each year. Contact the National Arbor Day Foundation at [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org) to find out your state's Arbor Day and to explore the many ways people have found to celebrate Arbor Day. Arbor Day presents a great opportunity for you to appear before your elected officials and share your stories. In turn, request from them an official Arbor Day proclamation recognizing the value of trees in your area and noting the responsibility of everyone to get involved and stay involved.

National NeighborWoods Month draws attention to the value of planting trees in the fall when most of the country's weather accommodates good tree-planting, though many people may not have tree-planting in mind. See the Alliance for Community Trees at [www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org) for inspiration on great ways to celebrate NeighborWoods Month, gain visibility for your organization or group, and educate people about the value of trees.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Connecting to Government, Fun for Kids, Networking, Technology

**Ingredients:**  
Flyers, party supplies, creativity



## Activity 29

### Publicize your story

The media is always looking for local-interest stories. How would you like to see your favorite tree in the headlines of your local paper? How about a TV report on your school tree planting? The media does not know about your story until you tell them.

#### Directions:

**Take a photograph of your favorite tree:** Outline the full story of the tree: how it got there, what type it is, how old it is, where people can find it and why you find it so appealing. Contact the editor of the Home and Garden Section of your local papers. Learn their submission requirements and be persistent.

**Write a letter to the editor of your local paper appreciating the urban forest:** Share your thoughts and your concerns in an editorial piece. Encourage your fellow community members to take action with you. Express the thoughts you think your elected officials should know. If you are knowledgeable about tree care, share some helpful or timely technical information.

**Inform the press of your urban forest activities:-** Prepare press releases before your plantings, tree tours, community garden creations, Arbor Day or National NeighborWoods Month celebrations. Include the date, time, and location of your event. Give the story a creative title and write one or two short paragraphs describing what journalists can expect. Put the name and phone number of a project contact in the upper left-hand corner and mail or email it to all local TV stations and newspapers. Give each station or paper a reminder call a couple of days before the event. ACT offers a free NeighborWoods Month planning and promotion kit online at [www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org).

**Develop a relationship with the media:** Find out which writers or assignment editors have particular interest in local trees and community action. Be sure to thank those members of the media who do respond and keep them informed of your activities.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Networking, Technology, Writing

**Ingredients:**  
Fax machine, camera, telephone, computer



# NeighborWoods

## SECTION FIVE

### **Moving Beyond**

*Supporting community action  
beyond your NeighborWoods*



## Activity 30

### Share your success with other communities

**S**tories of your success speak more clearly than the words in this Guide ever could. With your first-hand experience in caring for your local forest, you offer the spark to ignite action in other neighborhoods.

#### Directions:

Create a means for summarizing the success of your group. Remember that a picture tells a thousand words. Effective means include scrapbooks, slide shows, or PowerPoint presentations. Organize a set of photographs telling the story of what you and your neighbors have been doing. Capture the challenges you faced and the ways you overcame them. Finish with the challenges you continue to face.

Share your story with organizations in other communities. Welcome the invitations from other organizations inspired by your success. Let the Alliance for Community Trees know you have developed a presentation. We will connect you with other communities who can benefit from your wisdom and experience.

*“No town can fail of beauty, though its walks were gutters and its houses hovels, if venerable trees make magnificent colonnades along its streets.”*

Henry Ward Beecher



**Areas of Interest:**  
Networking, Teaching

**Ingredients:**  
Photographs of your group’s efforts, slide projector, photo album



## Activity 31

### Urge your city to become a Tree City, USA

**T**he National Arbor Day Foundation grants the status of Tree City, USA. Tree City status recognizes a community’s dedication to its urban forest. The designation continually reminds officials of their responsibilities toward their trees. Tree City status supports further education, has a positive impact on a city’s image, builds pride among citizens and helps cities receive financial assistance in tree-related activities.

#### Directions:

To become a Tree City, USA, there are four standards your community must meet:

**1) Establish and maintain a tree board or tree department.** A tree board is a group of concerned citizens, usually volunteer, charged by ordinance to develop and administer a comprehensive tree management program. Tree boards usually function with the aid of professional foresters. In communities with a population of more than 10,000, city forestry departments with salaried employees are often feasible. These departments may or may not be supported by advisory boards or administrative commissions.

**2) Implement a municipal tree-care ordinance.** Designate the official tree board or tree department and give them the responsibility to write and implement the annual community forestry work plan. The ordinance should determine public tree-care policies for tree planting, maintenance and removal.

**3) Maintain a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita.** The community forestry program is the essential, ongoing activity for tree care along streets, in parks and other public places.

**4) Celebrate Arbor Day with an annual observance and proclamation.** An Arbor Day ceremony can be simple and brief, or an all-day or all-week observance.

For more information, contact the National Arbor Day Foundation, 211 No. 12th St., Lincoln, NE, 68508; [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org). Toll free: 1-888-448-7337



**Areas of Interest:**  
Connecting to Government, Networking

**Ingredients:**  
Initiative, determination



## Activity 32

### Make your voice heard in your legislature

**O**ur state legislators create laws governing a wide range of issues, from medical care to the future of our schools. With so many high-profile issues competing for attention, the value of trees often gets overlooked. Each voice reminding elected officials of the importance of our community trees has impact.

#### Directions:

Look up the state offices of your State Senate and Assembly in the front of the yellow pages under "Government Officials". Call the offices of your elected officials to verify that you are in their district, and to check the spelling of their names and addresses. Describe three areas of interest you have regarding trees and urban forestry.

The Internet is an excellent tool to gain up-to-date legislative information. Once online, choose your favorite search engine and enter a search including the name of your state and the term "legislature." You might simply look up the web page for your state. When you arrive at the web site for your state legislature, search on keywords such as "urban forest," "community forest," "city trees," "canopy," or "vegetation."

When you find proposed legislation affecting the urban forest, read it over and consider its implications. It may be attached to legislation having nothing to do with urban forestry. Talk it over with friends. Contact your local urban forestry group to obtain their thoughts. Learn about current efforts being undertaken on a statewide level. Then contact your legislator — by phone, fax, mail or email — and share your opinion.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Connecting to Government, Technology, Writing

**Ingredients:**  
Computer with internet access, telephone



## Activity 33

### Create a regional organization or city tree board

**C**are of our urban forests requires leadership, initiative and imagination. Local urban forestry organizations provide trees for community tree planting efforts, offer education to local residents, and advocate on behalf of the local canopy. Tree boards exist as oversight committees to review the municipality's plans and actions on behalf of the urban forest.

#### Directions:

Take a look at your local forest and determine the two or three highest-priority issues. Discuss these issues with the people around you and see what thoughts others hold. Pursue government agencies, members of the local green industry and members of community-based non-profits who hold similar interests and concerns. Invite interested people to form an exploratory committee.

As you progress, consider what type of organization you want to create. It might be a tree board sanctioned by your municipality with an official advisory status. You might create an independent tree group enlisting community involvement in local urban forest projects.

Contact those urban forestry organizations closest to you to find out how they are organized. Contact state and national urban forestry organizations to obtain additional resources and support in founding a local urban forestry group. When ready, create a board of directors, a mission statement, and a set of initial goals and objectives.

As a new urban forestry organization, encourage everyone you know to become members and to volunteer. As a new tree board, put together a survey to assess the community's interests. To build a solid community constituency for trees, make a commitment to include the broadest base of interest, opinions and participation that you can.



**Areas of Interest:**  
Connecting to Government, Networking, Thinking, Investigating, Writing

**Ingredients:**  
Dedicated partners, commitment to your forest



## Activity 34

### Imagine the ideal community forest

To create the ideal community forest, we must have a thorough knowledge of our current urban forest and a clear vision of our goals. This effort demands collaboration between citizens, local government, community-based organizations, tree and landscaping businesses, other green industries and research scientists.

#### Directions:

Write a short proposal of your initiative. Explain what you would like to do, who should ideally be involved, why these actions should be taken, and what the benefits could be. Speak to people who may be interested and who clearly hold a stake in the health of your urban forest. Invite people to form a steering committee.

Review urban forestry assessments from other cities and, if possible, contact people who coordinated those efforts. Work with your steering committee to identify the key areas needing assessment. Assign subcommittees to key areas. As you progress, continue to recruit and involve as many people as possible.

Create a task list for each subcommittee. When each subcommittee has completed its tasks and prepared a written report, build the combined committee reports into a single report. (This task may require a new committee to be formed or may be completed by the existing steering committee.)

When your report is complete, move to the next step. After identifying the strengths and deficits of your city's urban forest, work with local officials to create a Master Treescape Plan. Use the same subcommittee approach to identify strategies for meeting the need of your urban forest. Your challenge is to find the balance between being ambitious (big plans yield big results) and being realistic (your participants need to experience success from their work). The trees in your city, and future generations, will thank you for your efforts.



#### Areas of Interest:

Connecting to Government, Looking Around, Thinking and Investigating, Walking

#### Ingredients:

Local government support, vision of an extraordinary forest

## Appendix A

# Helpful Organizations

### National Urban and Community Forestry Nonprofits

#### Alliance for Community Trees

5010 Sunnyside Ave, Suite 305  
Beltsville, MD 20705-2320  
(301) 220-2251  
www.actrees.org

#### American Forests

P.O. Box 2000  
Washington, DC 20013  
(202) 955-4500  
www.americanforests.org

#### National Arbor Day Foundation

211 N. 12th St.  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 474-5655

#### Treelink: The Urban Forestry Portal

www.treelink.org

### National Land Conservancy Organizations

#### Land Trust Alliance

1331 H Street NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 638-4725  
www.lta.org

#### Nature Conservancy

4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100  
Arlington, VA 22203  
(800) 628-6860  
www.tnc.com

#### Trust for Public Land

116 New Montgomery St., 4th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(415) 495-4014  
www.tpl.org

### Professional Associations

#### American Nursery and Landscape Association

100 Vermont Ave.  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 789-2900  
www.anla.org

#### American Society of Landscape Architects

636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736  
Telephone: (202) 898-2444  
Fax: (202) 898-1185  
www.asla.org

#### International Society of Arboriculture

1400 West Anthony Drive  
Champaign, IL 61821  
Toll Free: (888) ISA-TREE (888-472-8733)  
Phone: (217) 355-9411  
www.isa-arbor.com

### Government Agencies

*(see federal websites for links to regional, state and/or local offices)*

#### USDA Forest Service

Washington, DC  
www.fs.fed.us/

#### USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

*(includes the Master Gardener Program)*  
www.csrees.usda.gov

# How to Plant a Tree

## Planting

Proper planting techniques may mean the difference between a healthy, vigorous tree and one that performs poorly or dies. By observing the following recommendations, you will give your tree the best possible start in life.

It is better to plant a tree a little high, two to three inches above the base of the root flare, than to plant too low. Do not worry about a few roots showing on the surface. Planting too deeply may lead to less growth or crown rot and eventual death of the tree.

Dig the hole at least two times wider than the container or root ball. For bare-root trees, make the hole wide enough to accommodate the roots without bending them. Identify the trunk flare to determine the depth of the hole. Most of the flare should be visible at the soil level after planting.

Roughen the sides of the hole to make it easier for the roots to penetrate. Check for twisted, circling or kinked roots. Cut and remove roots that wrap around or are broken or discolored. Remove burlap, wire or string. Lift the tree by the rootball and position it in the hole.

Refill the hole with the original soil. If a tree is to mature in the landscape, it will have to grow in the existing soil. Soil amendments like peat moss, compost, rice hulls or fir bark are not necessary. Keep the top of the rootball free of soil.

Mulch the base of the tree with two to four inches of organic material. Do not let the mulch touch the bark of the tree.

Water the tree thoroughly after planting to settle the soil around the roots.

Trees need oxygen — Do not plant them in wet, soggy soils.

## Staking

Most trees do not require staking. In fact, improper staking may seriously weaken, deform or injure a tree. An unstaked tree with its top moving in the wind will develop a better root system, have greater trunk taper and thickness and have less wind resistance than a properly staked tree. In some cases, a young spindly tree may require staking for a short time to hold it upright until a stronger trunk develops.



If you must stake, use two stakes, one on either side of the root ball, approximately 18 inches from the trunk. Pound the stakes in deep enough so they do not move in the wind. Make the stakes as short as possible. To find the tie placement, move your hands up the tree trunk until the tree just remains upright — place the ties here. Use two broad ties of flexible material. Using a handsaw, cut the stakes two to three inches above the ties. Remove the stakes as soon as the tree will stand on its own. Most trees should not be staked longer than one year.

## Watering

Newly planted trees require regular, deep watering. When the soil is dry below the surface of the mulch, it is time to water. Water trees at least once a week, barring rain, and more frequently during hot, dry weather. To ensure deep watering, you can use a soaker hose, gator bag, or simply fill a five gallon bucket and water slowly over the root area. Keep the soil moist, but not soaked.



# NeighborWoods

## Workbook

*An Action Plan for Your Future Forest*

## Gathering the Ingredients

Your neighborhood forest plays an important role in community life. At their best, trees provide places to meet neighbors, relaxing retreats from the heat, year-round interest and color, and a sense of character along canopied streets.

But like a delicious meal, grand neighborhood forests don't happen by chance. They are planned and planted by well informed residents who understand the value and needs of trees. They take the ingredients of their community and prepare a neighborhood forest that is uniquely theirs. This workbook offers tools and guidance on your journey, but the journey is ultimately yours. Step out today with your neighbors and begin creating your neighborhood future forest.

### Using the Workbook

This Workbook is a companion to the NeighborWoods Guide, also issued by the Alliance for Community Trees, which offers many activities you can use. Suggested Guide activities are indicated with a number that matches the top of the page in the Guide.

The Workbook is composed of steps for you to follow in creating a vibrant neighborhood forest. Avoid the temptation to skip ahead to an easy project and end up with a half-baked plan, but also keep the steps moving. Your recipe may have different variations—remember to use the creative solutions you come up with.

Write in this Workbook. Glue in maps and pictures. Make it your own!

You are now an important part of NeighborWoods.

### Help from Members of the Alliance for Community Trees

As you embark upon this journey, be aware that the Alliance for Community Trees and its members around the country are prepared to help you each step of the way. To find an ACT member near you — or to start a new NeighborWoods program — go to [www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org) or contact:

#### Alliance for Community Trees

5010 Sunnyside Ave, Suite 305  
Beltsville, MD 20705-2320  
(301) 220-2251  
[www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org)

<b><i>What NeighborWoods Members Do</i></b>	<b><i>What the Neighborhood Does</i></b>
<b>Provide educational materials</b>	<b>Conduct research with neighbors, businesses, officials and others to find out what their desires, interests and concerns are</b>
<b>Facilitate workshops, lead classes</b>	<b>Commit to completing workshops to develop plan</b>
<b>Connect you to other groups and volunteers to help</b>	<b>Schedule dates, times and locations for meetings and events</b>
<b>Supply trees and related materials</b>	<b>Take responsibility for trees</b>
<b>Give ongoing advice for tree care and community growth</b>	<b>Assume leadership positions to implement plan</b>
<b>Provide materials for inventory and data collection</b>	<b>Help collect inventory data</b>

# 1. Build Your Team.

How do you define your neighborhood? What are the boundaries? Keep in mind that concentrating on a small area may lead to more pronounced results, but choosing a large area may gather more support and resources and has potential for larger accomplishments.

List or draw your neighborhood boundaries.

Many hands make for light work. Identify active people and organizations in the neighborhood that may help you. Be sure to record their phone numbers and e-mails.

Residents:

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Homeowners Associations:

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Businesses:

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Schools:

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Service groups such as Scouts, Kiwanis, Rotary, Environmental and Garden Clubs:

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Houses of Worship:

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Government agencies and offices:

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Invite all the interested parties to get together and form a NeighborWoods team. Use the Guide activity **13** to recruit and set up the meeting. Some of the things you should discuss at your meeting are:

Who will make decisions (homeowners, anyone who attends, property owners)?

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How will decisions be made (consensus, majority, voting, board)?

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Who will manage the meeting

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**Helpful Guide Activities 13, 5, and 6**

## 2. Community Visioning

Capture the positive aspects of your neighborhood that you like and want to see emphasized by gathering slides, pictures and maps. Also include aspects that you would like changed. Ask the question: "What makes our neighborhood special?" Take pictures of trees and landscapes you would like to see more of.

Hold a Community Visioning Workshop for your neighbors. Use the categories below to create a powerful workshop:

### ***Benefits of the Urban Forest***

**Economic — Energy conservation, public health savings, property values**

**Air and water quality**

**Beauty and cultural expression**

**Psychological and relaxation**

**Provide gathering places, community benefits**

**Wildlife shelter and food source**

### ***What can you accomplish with trees?***

**Shade Homes**

**Soften urban edges**

**Screen objectionable views**

**Create meeting places**

**Enclose spaces**

**Add continuity and character**

**Accent gateways**

**Separate uses**

**Add interest and diversity**

**Draw your eye**

### **Initial Ideas -What do you think we can do?**

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### ***Gateways***

### ***Announce you are entering something!***

**Examples of gateways you like**

**Where should we put them?**

**Where should we work first?**

**What should it look like?**

**Neighborhood characteristics:**

**Styles:**

### ***Street Trees***

**Consistent or variety of form?**

**What trees would you like to see along your streets?**

**Concentrate on certain streets or offer to the whole neighborhood?**



**Species** — Are all the trees in your neighborhood the same kind? A variety of species is important to prevent diseases and to discourage pests from infesting neighborhood trees on a massive scale.

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What species are dominant? Are they high quality-shade trees or problematic?

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**Age** — Were all the trees in your neighborhood planted at the same time? Are they still vigorous or are they nearing the end of their lifespan? A variety of ages is preferred to assure that the urban forest is continuous.

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**Native Vegetation Qualities** — Native trees and plants are better for the environment and can restore diminished habitat for native birds and other species of animals. Use the resources in the appendices of the NeighborWoods Guide to help you identify native plants.

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What trees in your community are native? Which are invasive? What kinds of trees would you like to see more of?

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**Helpful Guide Activities 7 and 11**

## 4. Develop Your Own NeighborWoods Plan

Using your evaluation of your neighborhood trees and following your community vision, you are ready to write a plan for how to achieve your vision.

### Goals

First, set goals for your neighborhood forest. Goals are broad statements that relate specifically to your vision and can be accomplished in a specific period of time (e.g., achieve 50 percent canopy cover within 10 years, fill all available street-tree locations with large canopy trees within five years, reforest the school grounds and create an arboretum for learning within three years).

### Our Goals:

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### Objectives

Next, set objectives for each goal. Objectives are specific steps taken to achieve a goal, and you can check to see if you accomplished them (e.g., plant 50 new trees each year, remove ivy from 50 percent of trees every three years, plant 200 new trees at schools within nine months).

### Our Objectives:

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**Helpful Guide Activities 8, 15, 16, 17, and 26**

## 5. Present Your Plan to a Wider Audience

Publicize your plan so that others in your neighborhood know about your group's vision and plan of action.

**Helpful Guide Activities 14 and 12**

## 6. Get Your Neighbors Involved

Pick one of your first objectives and get it done! Tree plantings are a great way to make a small step toward your vision and raise awareness of the process you are leading in the neighborhood. In areas with mature trees, a tree pruning project can also be a way to move toward your goals.

What do you want to do? Will it raise awareness of your plan and vision?

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When is the time to do your project? Set a date.

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Arrange publicity and recruit volunteers. Send out a press release and identify volunteer groups interested in working in your area.

**Helpful Guide Activities 9, 22, and 27**

## 7. Celebrate and Reaffirm the Vision

Now that you have educated your neighbors and completed a project, invite everyone to a celebration to reaffirm the neighborhood vision and plan. The broader your support base, the more you can get done!

## 8. Coordinate Your Plan with Other Stakeholders

Define the scope of responsibilities, relationships of partners, and authority for the aspects of the plan with your partners from the private, public, educational and nonprofit groups that have interests and resources to help you.

Have volunteers coordinate the different aspects of the plan. If a public agency will do some of the work, get a commitment from them and assign their area of responsibility.

Pick dates to invite volunteers and neighbors to help.

### Watering leader

Responsibilities

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Event Dates

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### Planting leader

Responsibilities

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Event Dates

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### **Mulching leader**

Responsibilities

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Event Dates

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### **Maintenance leader**

Responsibilities

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Event Dates

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### **Pruning leader**

Responsibilities

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Event Dates

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**Helpful Guide Activities 20**

## **9. Share Your Story**

Develop a Tree Tour for your neighborhood. Join the Alliance for Community Trees and the NeighborWoods network to meet leaders from other groups. You can get tips on what to do from people who have shared the same struggles.

**Helpful Guide Activities 21, 23, 24, 29 and 30**

## **10. Evaluate and Modify Your Plan**

Check in annually with your vision and see if you are on track or need to adjust your goals. Measure your performance against your objectives. Celebrate your accomplishments! Enjoy the sweet taste of success! Plan a festival or event to focus on your achievements. Change your goals and objectives as needed to keep your plan on course.

### **Learning More About Urban Forestry**

The Alliance for Community Trees is one excellent resource for your new group. If there is a NeighborWoods group in your area, it can also be very helpful. The website TreeLink is a great portal to numerous resources ([www.treelink.org](http://www.treelink.org)). See the appendices in the Guide for additional information on learning about urban forestry.

**Helpful Guide Activities 2, 4, 10, 12, and 25**

## More Recipes for Neighborhood Success

Congratulations on the completion of your NeighborWoods Plan! Mixing together the people and ingredients of your neighborhood has no doubt given you many challenges and exciting times. With a plan that has gathered diverse support and real world achievements, you have started a lasting future forest for everyone to enjoy!

The Alliance for Community Trees would like to challenge you to go even farther! Many of the principles and steps you followed can be applied to other neighborhood issues that require a plan and are just waiting for you to take them on. Just as the Alliance for Community Trees provided you with support, there are many other agencies and organizations that can help further develop the neighborhood ties you have begun. The deeper you dig, the more you will find!

