

Georgia ReLeaf

Beginner's Guide to Planning a Community Tree Giveaway Program



Planning Considerations

- Trees will be delivered directly to the event site and will need to be protected until the giveaway. If the trees need to be stored for several days, make sure the location is shaded and that an outdoor water spigot is accessible. Discuss who will maintain the trees during this time.
- Consider the logistics of how participants will move through the event site. Will they drive or walk to the event? How will participants check in, receive information, get assistance selecting trees, and load the trees?
- The best time to plant trees in Georgia is in the late fall or early spring. Many organizations host giveaways close to Georgia's Arbor Day, the third Friday in February.
- Decide if the event will be held rain or shine, or postponed to a pre-determined rain date. Communicate that information before the event
- Devise a plan for giving away any trees not distributed at your event; consider care and storage in the interim.
- Your event needs staff and/or volunteers to be successful; who will help on the day of the event? How many volunteers are needed?

Providing expertise and education is essential!

Provide education through printed information, knowledgeable volunteers or professionals, and demonstrations to help residents select a tree species and learn how to plant and maintain their tree. Consider inviting one or more of the following:

- *Georgia Forestry Commission Community Forester*
- *UGA Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources agent/Master Gardener Extension Volunteers*

- *Fort Valley Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources agent*
- *Municipal arborist or community forester*
- *Municipal tree board members with relevant experience*
- *Staff or volunteers from local community forestry non-profit organizations*
- *Botanical garden staff*

Create a tree list and develop a budget

Consult the Community Tree Giveaway Tree List, the Georgia Forestry Commission Urban Tree List, and/or your area's Georgia Forestry Commission Community Forester to determine tree species that would be good for your area. Remember, most trees should be overstory (shade trees) or medium-sized trees to meet the goal of increasing tree canopy in the community. Create a list of your preferred trees and some alternates in case some of your first choices aren't available.

Shop wholesale nurseries to see what is available, and to price out your trees. Remember to include a link or document that lists costs per tree. Use the Georgia ReLeaf Nursery list if needed to locate a wholesale nursery. The list of what a nursery has in stock at a given time is commonly called an "availability". Look for one on their website or contact the nursery directly. Note delivery fees.

Before the event

- **Order** trees as soon as possible and schedule delivery 1-2 days before the event.
- **Advertise!** Use multiple strategies and involve your partners.
- **Develop** materials and demonstrations to provide tree care information
- **Create** signage needed to label trees, direct people to the event, etc.
- **Confirm** attendance of staff, volunteers, partners, and invited guests.
- **Care** for trees after they are delivered until the event. Don't let the trees wilt, but do let the containers dry somewhat before the event so the trees are not as heavy, and they don't drip water as they are moved

Tree Giveaway Day

- **Install** signage at the location. Remember to remove it after the event.
- **Provide** a sign-in sheet for volunteers assisting with the event. Make sure to include a column for volunteers to sign out.
- **Provide** water, shade, sunscreen, and bug spray to volunteers
- **Assist** participants in selecting a tree appropriate for their planting location
- **Educate** participants about tree planting and maintenance best practices
- **Distribute** educational materials. *Handouts could include:*
 - Georgia Forestry Commission's Tree Owner's Manual
 - Information about the tree species included in the giveaway
 - Planting and maintenance instructions
 - Benefits of the community forest
- **Collect** the zip code of the planting location of each tree given away.
- **Photograph** the event!

Resources

- [Trees for Tomorrow Toolkit](#)
- [Tree Giveaways: Lessons Learned & Best Practices](#)
- [Twelve Ways to Make the Most Out of a Tree or Plant Giveaway Program](#)