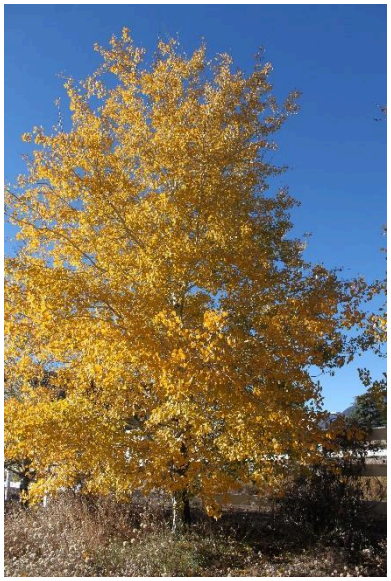
Arbor Day is April 25—Why We should Celebrate







Caption: Three of the numerous and diverse species of trees and shrubs Arbor Day Foundation donates across the globe are forsythia, Colorado blue spruce, and quaking aspen. Lisa Miller edited my article on Arbor Day.

By Cindy Murray

As a member of Arbor Day Foundation, I learned in their October 2022 newsletter that, over the 150-year history of Arbor Day and the 50-year history of the Foundation, they have planted and distributed nearly 500 million trees. What's more, the Foundation chief executive, Dan Lambe, declared a new ambitious goal of planting 500 million more trees by 2027! He states, "This 500-million-tree goal is our way of stepping up, saying we're ready to be part of the positive change that must happen in the coming years…We need to focus our efforts on neighborhoods and forests where trees are needed most. With our science-based approach, our history of effective tree planting, and our network of planting partners around the world, we have a solid goal at the scale and pace needed to make it happen."

The tree-planting partners Dan refers to include the Bureau of Land Management, the USDA Forest Service, state forest services, nonprofits, and more. Importantly, Arbor Day Foundation makes certain that planting projects include community input, and that the right trees are chosen for the right places at the proper time. Every project includes achieving long-lasting goals that are empowering and beneficial for local folks.

The Foundation also takes into consideration watershed health, wildlife diversity, and environmental justice.

I'll briefly highlight a few of the projects The Arbor Day Foundation is currently working on.

- On September 26, 2024 Hurricane Helene wreaked havoc across parts of Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee with flooding and 140 mph winds. Over 200 lives were lost. Less than two weeks later, Hurricane Milton made landfall near Siesta Key, Florida, spawning 46 tornados and eventually killing over 150 people in several states. As you can imagine, countless trees were lost. The Foundation has pledged to help plant 10 million trees over the next four years in the six most storm-devastated states hit by hurricanes in 2024. They intend to accomplish this with the help of 25,000 volunteers.
- Wildfires ripped through over eight million acres in our country in 2024. The Foundation has pledged to help some of these communities rebuild their lives by bringing them young, healthy trees, either native or adapted to their environments.
- Bridgeport Connecticut often experiences 100 degree-plus temperatures during the summer, yet its tree canopy cover is merely 5%--the lowest level in that state. Many folks living there have low incomes and can't afford sufficient air conditioning. Recognizing this critical situation, Arbor Day Foundation has taken action, not only by distributing trees throughout the community, but encouraging citizens to participate in choosing planting sites and pitching in with the work. Groundwork Bridgeport, an Arbor Day planting partner, has trained and hired a group of resident youths to keep an eye on and care for some of these trees.
- Let's not forget The Foundation remains seriously active throughout the world. Take for instance their commitment to replanting devastated mangrove forests of tropical and subtropical coastal environments. A mangrove forest is a biome comprising about 80 species of salt-tolerant trees and shrubs that have undergone evolutionary adaptions to thrive on land as well as under fresh water entering the ocean and saltwater brought in by tides twice a day. Mangrove forests play indispensable roles in filtering river water entering the ocean, protecting people and land from tropical storm surge, sequestering carbon, and maintaining ecosystems for countless lifeforms.

A few weeks ago I received an Arbor Day newsletter where Dan Lambe himself sums up the goals and commitments of the foundation: "These efforts are about including everyone…ensuring that each person has access to the wondrous benefits trees provide. Cleaner air, cooling shade, nutritious fruit, inspiring green spaces…no one should be kept from the gifts nature can provide."

To learn more about Arbor Day Foundation, see arborday.org.