

What is the U.S. Forest Service Plant-A-Tree Program?

Planting trees can help you celebrate or remember

Forest Service **Plant-A-Tree** helps to reforest public lands while honoring someone you know. The Forest Service pools your contribution with other donations to provide funding to reestablish forest cover in areas affected by wildfire, insects and disease, or other disturbance events. Donors contribute money to memorialize loved ones or commemorate births, weddings, or other special events. Seedlings planted with the donations are not designated on the ground as a memorial, but become part of the forest ecosystem.



Reforestation is important in creating wildlife habitat, decreasing soil erosion, encouraging snow retention, sequestering carbon, providing clean air and water, and reestablishing native tree species and future seed sources. We focus on planting where the greatest reforestation needs exist in areas impacted by large-scale fires or insects and disease where there is virtually no probability the area will reforest on its own.

Sometimes fires burn with such intensity that no seed source remains. Planting reduces the time needed for sites to reforest. In the long term, it will benefit slope stability, water quality, recreation, the local economy, and wildlife.

What happens with the money donated?

National Forests around the country submit project proposals. Silviculturists (scientists who study how to grow trees) have decided the areas of greatest need, the type of tree that will grow best in an area, and the best time of year to plant. The objectives of the silvicultural prescriptions for planting sites include the reintroduction of long-lived early-seral species in order to improve the resilience and resistance of the forest to fire, insects, diseases, and the potential effects of climate change. The planting area is prepared, the disease resistant seedlings grown in our nurseries are ordered, and the planting begins.

If you would like to donate, please send a check or money order to the following address:

USDA Forest Service
Attn: Forest Management 3SW
Plant-A-Tree Program, Stop 1103
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-1103

Make checks payable to USDA Forest Service "Plant-A-Tree."

To commemorate the contribution, we provide a certificate to the donor or to another party named by the donor. If you are making the contribution on behalf of another person or family, please indicate the name of the person or people you wish recognized and the name will be placed on the certificate. We will also note your name as the contributor on the certificate unless otherwise noted. We will need the address to send the certificate if it is to go somewhere other than to the person making the contribution. The program is considered a charitable donation by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), so we will send you a receipt.

Restoration is a big job. We also have partners who accept donations to plant trees on National Forests. Please visit one of the websites below.

- [National Forest Foundation](#) plants one tree for every dollar you give.
- [National Wildlife and Fish Foundation](#) works with the Forest Service to conserve forested lands through stewardship and watershed restoration programs.
- [American Forests](#) has many ways to help plant trees.
- [Penny Pines Plantation](#) is a partnership with National Garden Clubs to help sustain national forests and provide education.
- [Trees in Memory, Trees in Celebration](#) are two programs of the Arbor Day Foundation.
- [Living Memorials Project](#) helps to create living, lasting memorials to the victims of the September 11, their families, communities, and the Nation.

Thank you for your support.

Planting Time



A typical planting day starts early in the morning. Planters get their planting bags, hoedads (planting tool), and safety equipment. They fill water containers with a mixture of water and a dried gel substance that absorbs water and releases it into the soils. Planters dip seedling roots into the mixture before planting. Sometimes we hire contractors. Sometimes groups interested in improving the environment volunteer to do the planting. It is hard work.



On good days, a planting area is free of debris and sub-surface rocks, has no overhead hazards, and has a nice slope so the planter needs to bend over less to plant the trees. Sometimes the slope can be a problem.



If there is fire- or insect-killed standing stags, the areas cannot be planted when it is windy.



Small debris can be a pain when you are trying to plant in it, but large debris makes a great planting site.





All this hard work will result in forests that will benefit slope stability, water quality, recreation, the local economy, and wildlife.

Planters use microsites to maximize the survival of the seedlings. Microsites near a dead tree provide shade, retain more soil moisture, lower soil temperatures during the heat of the day, provide protection from the wind, provide a little hiding cover from hungry herbivores, and provide protection from still standing snags that could fall on them.

