

Arbor Day

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Arbor Day

The History of Arbor Day

On January 4, 1872, J. Sterling Morton, a journalist and avid tree-lover, proposed a tree-planting holiday called “Arbor Day” to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture. The board agreed, and on April 10, 1872, more than one million trees were planted in Nebraska to commemorate the first Arbor Day. This celebration of trees now happens each year, all over the world, by holding ceremonies, making art and music, and of course, planting trees. The date for Arbor Day differs from state to state, but in New York, we celebrate on the last Friday in April.

Arbor Day in New York State

New York State celebrates Arbor Day annually on the last Friday in April.

Arbor Day in New York State is officially the last Friday in April, but Arbor Day can be celebrated on any day that’s good to plant a tree.

State-owned forests in New York are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council ® (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative ® (SFI) as meeting internationally recognized criteria for sustainability and multiple benefits such as clean water, air purification, wildlife habitat, recreation, carbon sequestration, visual aesthetics, and economic value.

What you can do if you are a...

Student:

- Organize a group/club at your school
- Contact your town’s office or school principal to learn how to take care of the trees in your community
- Respect trees

Homeowner:

- Plant trees in your yard for energy efficiency
- Ensure the proper care of trees in your yard
- Volunteer in your community by contacting local town officials

Community Member:

- Become a citizen pruner and street tree advocate by contacting local community leaders
- Alert grounds maintenance staff in communal living spaces if tree guards are damaging trees or if trees look unfit

Municipal Official:

- Make caring for trees a part of your annual town renovation or town plan
- Encourage community members to be involved
- Hold annual Arbor Day events in your community
- Include information on tree care/participation in town newsletter or on town website

Forest Landowner:

- Actively manage your forest land with the assistance of forestry professionals
- Encourage legislative leaders to conserve our sustainable natural resources and provide landowners with benefits for keeping forests as forests

Natural Resource Professional:

- Volunteer on your local community tree board, with schools and environmental groups to use your knowledge and experience to promote a healthier, green community and State.

New York State Arbor Day Partners

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NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

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Other Resources

Arbor Day Foundation

www.arborday.org

New York State Urban Forestry Council

www.nysufc.org

NYSDEC Saratoga Tree Nursery

www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7127.html

NYS Wood Products Development Council

www.woodproducts.ny.gov

Learn more about the NYS 5th grade Arbor Day Poster Contest at www.dec.ny.gov.

How to Plant a Tree

There are so many great reasons to plant a tree! Adding trees to your home boosts its curb appeal and can increase its value. A well-placed tree can even save on air conditioning costs. You can calculate the benefits your tree provides with an online tool from the Arbor Day Foundation: <https://www.arborday.org/calculator/>. Trees clean the air, capture carbon, and improve public health. Just looking at greenery like trees can reduce stress. But planting a tree isn’t quite as simple as digging a hole and throwing in a seedling – not if you want to ensure a healthy tree that will benefit you for years to come! So here are 4 important steps to planting the right tree for the right place and making sure it has a long and healthy life.

Step 1: Pick a site

Planting a tree is a long-term commitment. There are several things to consider when selecting a planting location in order to minimize risks to surrounding structures and maximize benefits from the tree.

Consider your space and where you’d like to plant. Grab a pen and paper and answer the following questions about your potential tree site:

- Do you have overhead powerlines?
- Are there underground utilities?
- How far from buildings and structures (yours and your neighbors) is the site?
- Is the ground flat or sloped?
- What do you know about your soil? Consider its type, acidity level, and compaction. The easiest way to find out about your soil is to request a soil test kit from the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). Find your local CCE by visiting their website: <https://cce.cornell.edu/localoffices>
- How well does the site drain of water when it rains? Does it regularly have standing water or is it very dry?
- How many hours of sun does the spot get? Put a flag, cone, or other item in the potential planting spot and watch it on a sunny day to get an idea.
- What is the width and length of the planting space? How much space will the tree’s branches have as it grows?

Having answers to these questions will help you pick the right spot for a tree. Large trees (those higher than 70 feet at maturity) should be planted at least 15 feet away from structures.

Step 2: Pick your tree

There are several things to consider when selecting a tree. Figure out your hardiness zone to narrow down what grows well in your local climate. You can do this by visiting an interactive map from USDA: <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/> and entering your zip code. Pick a tree that will grow well in your zone.

Consider the site you selected and review any concerns about overhead powerlines or nearby structures. Look at the expected height and size of the full-grown tree and determine if it will fit in your space. Select shorter trees or shrubs if there are overhead lines. If you have a small space, avoid trees that are large when fully grown, like sugar maples. Look around your neighborhood and try to pick a tree that is unique to your street – having a lot of different kinds of trees in an area protects against significant damage by disease and pests. Plant native species, they’ll add wildlife habitat and be likely to thrive in your local climate.

Step 3: Plant your tree

Before you stick a shovel in the ground make sure you know where underground utilities are located, as they could be damaged or pose a hazard to you as you dig (call 8-1-1 or visit www.digsafelynewyork.com for more information).

The tree you’ve bought might be balled and burlapped, container grown, or bare root. No matter which form it is, be sure to water and keep roots moist until you are ready to plant. Each type has its pros and cons and specific way it should be planted.

Balled and burlapped: Dig a hole as deep as the ball and 2-3 times its width. Once the ball is centered in the hole, remove the twine and wrap from it. Backfill the hole, firmly pack the soil, and water deeply.

Container grown: Dig a hole 3-4 times wider than the container. Remove the tree from its container and carefully untangle and loosen the roots and soil. Vertically cut any roots that encircle the root ball to prevent it from potentially strangling itself. Plant tree and firmly pack soil around it, water deeply.

Bare root: Soak tree roots in water for a few hours or up to 24 hours before planting. Dig a hole wider than the roots are long and as deep as the root system is, then loosen the soil in the hole. Plant the tree, firmly pack soil, and water deeply.

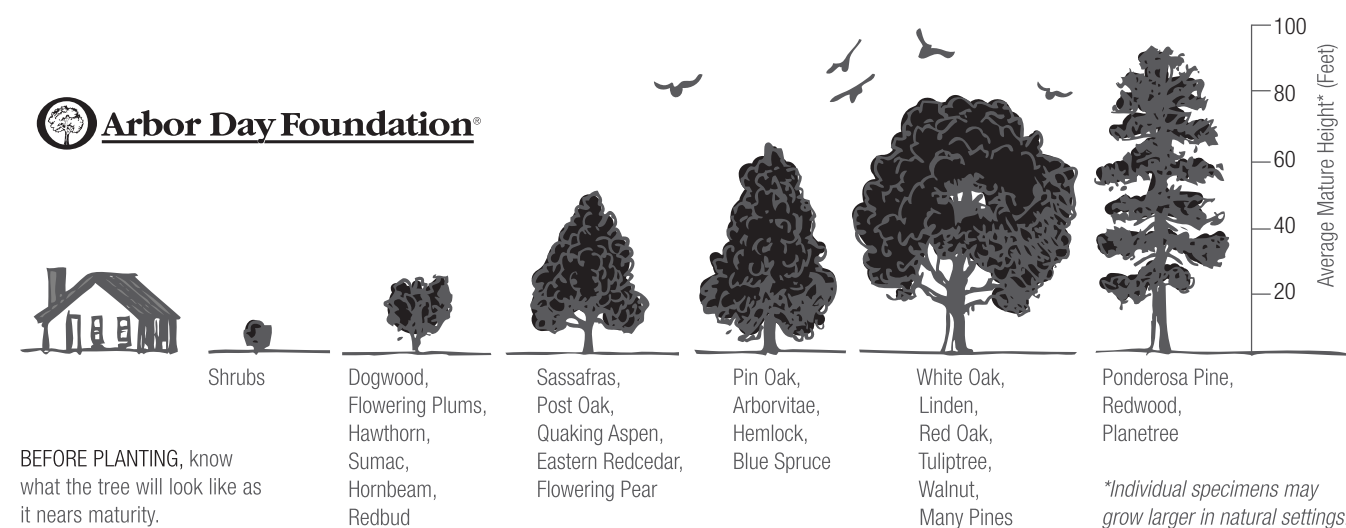
Make sure the tree is not planted too deep. The root collar (trunk flare) should be at or slightly above ground level. Do not pile mulch or soil against the tree trunk - mulch volcanoes kill trees!

Step 4: Care for your tree

To keep your new tree healthy and help it establish roots, make sure to water at least once a week if it has not rained, and more often if the weather is hot and dry. Mulching around the base of the tree will protect it from lawn mowers and weed whackers and help maintain moisture – but don’t pile it against the trunk! If deer are a problem protect the tree with a tree tube or fencing for the first few years. If your tree needs extra support, protection, or help staying anchored, then you can stake it. Be sure to remove the stakes by the next growing season.

As you care for your tree in the first few years of its life, keep in mind the phrase “Sleep, Creep, and Leap.” The first year the tree will sleep – it may not grow much above ground while its roots develop and establish. The second to third year the tree will creep – it will begin to grow a little as it settles in to its space. The third to fourth year the tree will leap in size as it has established itself and begins to thrive.

For more resources and help on planting and caring for your urban or suburban tree, be sure to visit the Urban and Community Forestry page: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4957.html>



References:

- 1: <https://blog.davey.com/2018/04/what-trees-to-add-or-cut-down-to-increase-property-value/>
- 2: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/learn/trees>
- 3: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-fallible-mind/201605/stressed-out-science-says-look-some-trees>

