



Finding Local Assistance with Trees and Plants

Trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses, and gardens are integral to natural outdoor classrooms. Many local nonprofits and government agencies can support you in planning, planting, and caring for plants. Reach out and ask how these conservation partners can help you create, enhance, or sustain a nature-rich learning space for the children you serve.

USDA Forest Service

The USDA Forest Service manages national forests and grasslands across the country. There are more than 600 Ranger District offices in communities across the country managing 154 national forests and 20 grasslands. Most of our boots-on-the-ground activities occur on the ranger districts, including trail construction and maintenance, operation of campgrounds, and management of vegetation and wildlife habitat. We cooperate with State and local governments, forest industries, other private landowners and forest users in the management, protection, and development of forest land in non-Federal ownership. See the USDA Forest Service website (www.fs.usda.gov/) to find a Ranger District office near you for possible materials and other support for your outdoor classroom.

City Foresters

Many municipalities have a City Forester who oversees the community's tree planting and care, especially if the town is part of Tree City USA (treecityusa.org). City Foresters can advise about caring for your existing trees and choosing new ones. Occasionally, they can help provide free or low-cost trees or help source logs or tree cookies for natural large loose parts for your outdoor classroom. Search the internet or arborday.org for "Tree City USA Directory" to find out if you have a City Forester. If not, ask for help from your local volunteer Tree Board Chair.

State Urban Forestry Coordinators

Among their responsibilities, State Coordinators administer the Tree City USA urban forestry program in their state. Beyond connecting you with your City Forester or Tree Board Chair, some State Coordinators have grant programs for local tree-planting projects. Search the internet for "State Urban Forestry Coordinators."

Alliance for Community Trees (ACT) and local non-profits

ACT member organizations are community-based nonprofits that plant and care for trees, organize volunteers for planting projects, and sometimes can provide free or low-cost trees and shrubs. Search "Alliance for Community Trees Member Directory" to see if you have an ACT organization in your community.

State Cooperative Extension Services

Often housed in state universities or county offices, these agencies can provide advice on combating local pests, choosing plant varieties suitable for your area, connecting with local volunteers and more. Go to extension.org to find programs in your area.

Master Gardener Programs

The Master Gardener Program, typically offered through Cooperative Extension Services, provides intensive horticultural training to individuals who then volunteer as Master Gardeners in their communities. In addition to sharing local plant knowledge, they may offer tips on plant selection, planting, watering and care. Visit mastergardener.extension.org to find a master gardener near you.

Arboretums and Botanical Gardens

Arboretums and Botanical Gardens are excellent resources for expertise in local trees and plant material. Visiting parks and gardens is a great way to see local plants at their best. Search the Morton Register at arbnet.org to find accredited arboretums and the American Public Gardens Association at www.publicgardens.org to find a garden in your area.

Nature Centers

Nature Centers provide a place to experience and gain information about your region's plants and ecology. Search the internet for "Association of Nature Center Administrators" to find a nature center near you.

Local Plant Nurseries, Arborists and Landscape Professionals

When enhancing your space with trees and plants, look to local nurseries and landscape professionals. Word of mouth is a great way to learn about quality services in your area. To find accredited professionals, search the National Association of Landscape Professionals member directory at landscapeprofessionals.org, or search the internet for "ISA Certified Arborist near me."