

Tree Steward Spotlight

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Tree Fredericksburg

Tree Steward Seat on Trees Virginia Board

Periodically we will try to focus an article on different Tree Steward activities around the state. This month's article is from Tree Fredericksburg and what they are doing to help the tree canopy in their city.

Tree Fredericksburg has gone through a number of different activities over the past seventeen years since we were founded in 2008. When our city did not hire a new city arborist after the retirement of their existing city arborist because of the cutbacks from the great recession, Tree Fredericksburg in partnership with the City of Fredericksburg Clean & Green Commission, stepped up and started planting trees along city streets and in parks and school yards. We received funds from the city and signed an MOU agreement with the city, to plant, prune, water and care for the trees that we planted. We also secured grants from Trees Virginia and many other sources for an aggregate of over \$458,000.

Over the past seventeen years, Tree Fredericksburg has planted over 10,000 trees in the city. Last year the city hired a new city arborist, and he has taken over the task of planting and caring for the trees along the streets. Another non-profit in our city, Friends of the Rappahannock, is in the process of helping with the remaining planting of trees at the schools and in the parks.

So, are we out of business as a Tree Steward organization? Not in the least. We feel that we have a higher calling – getting trees into the hands of residents so they can plant in their yards and care for those trees. Over the past 17 years, we have been giving away trees. To date, we have given away over 57,000 native trees and shrubs free to the public. Some seedlings, some 3-gallon, some one-gallon size. We have funded these efforts with grants, donations from other businesses and non-profits, and also asking for the public to “Pay it Forward” when they get a free tree. The public has been very generous with donations to this concept, and we have found a way to continue to support our giveaway efforts by cobbling together a number of ways to fund the giveaway events.

We give away 3,000 native tree seedlings in the spring. We obtain the seedlings from the Department of Forestry. Friends of the Rappahannock pays for the seedlings with a grant. We pot up the seedlings into tall plastic one-quart pots using ground up mulch for the potting medium. We recruit student volunteers to help our stewards two days prior to the giveaway event. We pot up the trees on a Thursday and Friday afternoon and then on Saturday morning, our “customers” come and pick up the trees that they pre-ordered on our website. Donations are solicited as a “Pay it Forward” concept and the public is generous in giving.

In the fall, we take a different approach and give away 3,500 native one-gallon trees that we order 10 months in advance and purchase from a local grower for \$7.75 each. At the same time, we sell 3,500 native one-gallon shrubs (same cost as the trees) for \$11 each – there is no limit on the shrubs a customer can get, but we do limit the free trees to five trees per household. These sales give us a little money towards the trees that we give away. Grants and corporate donations can also

help make up the cost for the plant materials. Again, we also ask for donations to “Pay it Forward” and the public continues to be generous. We pre-book the sales and ask the public to pick up their purchases on a Sunday afternoon at our local baseball stadium which has donated use of their parking lot for this event.

This year we will be having our event on Sunday, September 28th. To enhance this event we will also have lectures and workshops throughout the day on tree and plant care and information on native plants. There will be tabling from other environmental organizations and selling of native perennials from vendors. This is our Native Plant Festival, and we invite all steward groups to visit us that day. If you would like more information on how to successfully do a tree give-away event, please contact Anne Little, Tree Fredericksburg, treefredericksburg@gmail.com