



Recruiting and Coordinating Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of all Trees Forever programs. In fact, Trees Forever was started by two volunteers.

As volunteers working for local tree programs, you have an important role to play in helping others in the community understand the benefits trees provide the community. With your involvement as citizen advocates, your efforts in the community have the potential to become a positive driving force in the community and to develop into a long-lasting community forestry program. This guide contains some suggestions for coordinating volunteer tree-planting and care efforts and for rewarding volunteers.

Recruiting Volunteers

Use of Media

Your first job in volunteer recruitment is to get the word out – inform the community of your program. One of the most obvious ways to do this is to use the media. Through the use of newspaper, radio, TV, city websites, and social media websites like Facebook and Twitter, you can inform people in the community of what you are doing. Be sure to share success stories of your work – people tend to support positive work that improves their community.

Ask

The best way to get people involved is to **ask them**. Go to service clubs, environmental groups, and other organizations in the schools and the community to tell them about your program and ask for support. An even better way to recruit volunteers is by asking them personally. At your first meeting, ask everyone attending to invite one person to come with them to the next meeting. Repeat this process until you have a sufficient number of volunteers.

Match the Volunteer to the Task

Not everyone wants to do the same job or can give the same amount of time. Inform people of the tasks that need to be completed, the job description of each task, and the time commitment required.



Team Building for Volunteers

It is important that you give volunteers respect and a sense of ownership in the community tree program – the goal is to develop team spirit. This can be accomplished by:

- Asking volunteers for their input and advice.
- Providing orientation, training, and supervision for jobs accepted (train ALL supervisors!).
- Creating pleasant surroundings for work and meetings.
- Valuing volunteers' time by being prepared and coordinated and by striving for cooperation within the organization.
- Knowing what motivates your volunteers and assigning them to tasks accordingly.
- Giving encouragement and recognition.
- Organizing occasions for volunteers to get together to share their experiences and successes.

- 2 - Recruiting and Coordinating Volunteers

- Providing leadership opportunities and rotating leadership roles.
- Providing an opportunity for new assignments if the present one is incompatible or more responsibility is requested.
- Considering interrelationships and compatibility when making group assignments. Whenever possible, allow volunteers to choose with whom they want to work.
- *Thanking the volunteers for their time, enthusiasm, and commitment.*



Volunteer Appreciation

One of the basic ways to motivate volunteers is to thank them. They deserve it. And they will be more likely to help in the future if they feel appreciated and a part of the team. There are many ways to say “thanks”:

- Plan a potluck dinner to which you invite all volunteers. The event might include speeches, certificates, awards, and/or gifts to honor those who volunteered. Give volunteers an opportunity to share their experiences with others. It is an effective way to show appreciation and to build team spirit. This event should be done soon after the completion of a planting project.
- Provide snacks and/or lunch on planting day. A good role for some volunteers that aren't able to engage in physically planting trees is to help provide refreshments.
- Send newsworthy information and photos about volunteers and/or partners, such as city staff who donate equipment, to the local newspapers.
- Provide thank-you gifts such as t-shirts, water bottles, etc.
- Send thank-you notes.
- Provide thoughtful feedback.
- Smile.

Join Trees Forever on its mission to plant and care for trees and the environment by empowering people, building community and promoting stewardship.

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