



Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205
agriculture.arkansas.gov
(501) 225-1598



Wes Ward
Secretary of Agriculture

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 9/11/2024

Contact: Shealyn Sowers, 501.355.6667
shealyn.sowers@agriculture.arkansas.gov

Shade Trees on Playgrounds Program Accepting School Applications Until September 27th



LITTLE ROCK, AR — The Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Forestry Division (Forestry Division) is accepting applications for the 2024 Shade Trees on Playgrounds (STOP) program through September 27, 2024. Arkansas schools needing additional shade on playgrounds can find the STOP program application and guidelines [here](#).

Selected schools receive up to five Arkansas native shade trees, mulch, watering supplies, and planting guidelines. Forestry Division staff will help plant the trees during a ceremony with students this fall.

The STOP program started 22 years ago to help lower adult skin cancer risk by reducing childhood exposure to direct sunlight on school playgrounds and outdoor learning areas. Since then, approximately 175 Arkansas schools have received trees. The STOP program also provides teachers with curriculum resources about the environmental benefits of trees, how shade reduces skin cancer risks, and tips for keeping trees healthy.

“From the hands-on experience of planting their own tree to engaging classroom lessons, the STOP program provides an excellent opportunity for students to learn about the benefits of shade trees,” said Kristine Kimbro, Urban & Community Forestry Coordinator. “Our hope is that this program will not only benefit students’ health but also foster a lasting appreciation for our natural resources to carry with them as they grow into homeowners and community leaders.”

Trees native to Arkansas are chosen by Forestry Division staff to fit the region and conditions of each playground. Sycamores, oaks, tulip poplars, and black gum trees are common species for the program.

To participate in the STOP program, a school must meet the criteria below:

- Have a lack of shade on a school playground or outdoor learning area.
- Participate in a STOP workshop to be held virtually on October 10, 2024.
- Use provided curriculum resource materials to emphasize the importance of trees during the week(s) leading up to the tree-planting event.
- Involve students in tree-related projects that culminate with a school-wide tree-planting ceremony.
- Hold a tree-planting ceremony prior to December 20, 2024.
- Have a plan for maintaining the trees after planting.

Applicants may be any public or private Arkansas school serving grades pre-K through 12, or a non-traditional educational facility such as a juvenile detention center, residential childcare institution, or long-term care facility.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Urban & Community Forestry services and programs.

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