

# Trees and Our Bayous



Harris County  
Flood Control District

[www.hcfd.org](http://www.hcfd.org)

Our mission, in its simplest terms, is to devise the Stormwater Management Plans, implement the plans and maintain the infrastructure, all with appropriate regard for community and natural values.

Trees play an integral role in fulfilling the elements of the District's mission. To that end, the District takes several approaches to trees in its right-of-way:

- **We Plant:** The District plants trees to fulfill mitigation requirements, to enhance capital improvement projects, and as part of a routine maintenance program.
- **We Preserve:** When possible, the District looks for ways to preserve significant trees on its right-of-way or to rescue moveable trees in advance of construction projects.
- **We Partner:** The District works with individuals and organizations to plant trees in appropriate places on District right-of-way.



Areas with healthy, mature tree canopies frequently have little or no undesirable underbrush or groundcover. By planting trees, the District plans to create mature tree canopies that shade out and prevent the growth of conveyance-hindering underbrush. The areas where there is little or no groundcover do not require frequent mowing or maintenance, conserving District resources. Tree planting in non-conveyance areas such as detention basins, along natural channels, and upper ends of channels will allow the District to reduce the amount of acreage mowed by hundreds of acres annually. Of special importance are channel segments with limited, difficult, or dangerous access; reducing maintenance requirements on these segments is particularly valuable.



# Benefits of Trees

Reforestation is a cost-effective means of reducing maintenance while providing a host of other benefits.

Other documented benefits include:

- Trees reduce the conveyance of silt into waterways, reducing the number of silt-removal operations that the District must undertake.
- Trees slow and reduce stormwater runoff; they improve and protect the quality of our water.
- Trees clean our air by reducing and filtering pollutants.
- Trees beautify our community and improve quality of life.
- Trees provide habitat for wildlife.

# Top Ten Trees

Recommended species for planting on District right-of-way



### American Elm, *Ulmus americana*

Excellent bottomland species will grow in a variety of soil types. Good tree for channel or detention basin planting.



### River Birch, *Betula nigra*

Grows well on channel slopes and an excellent erosion control species.



### Red Maple, *Acer rubrum*

Grows on a variety of soils. Excellent tree for detention basin plantings, will also grow on channel slopes.



### Magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*

Grows primarily in rich, moist soils, good tree for channel planting but may also be found in wetland areas.



### Sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*

Grows on a variety of soils, good erosion control species, grows well on channel slopes and top bank areas.



### Pecan, *Carya illinoensis*

Good bottomland species, grows well in clay soils. Good for detention basin plantings.



### White Oak, *Quercus alba*

(or other oaks within the white oak family, ex. post, bur, and overcup oak) Deep root system provides good erosion control properties. Good tree for channel slopes and well drained top bank areas.



### Shumard Oak, *Quercus shumardii*

(or other oaks within the red oak family, ex. willow, water and nuttall oaks) Good tree for channel plantings, grows in a variety of soils. Better suited to saturated soils than trees in the white oak group.



### Live Oak, *Quercus virginiana*

Another white oak, this tree grows especially well in clay soils, but is found throughout the county. Good for channel plantings.



### Bald Cypress, *Taxodium distichum*

Grows in a variety of soils, excellent tree for channel or detention basin plantings.



## Where the District plants trees

Potential tree planting sites are identified and screened using several criteria, including:

- Probability of developing a woodland ecosystem along channels that requires little maintenance (i.e., eventual elimination of mowing)
- Probability of tree survival at site
- Difficult or dangerous to access by conventional mowing equipment
- Type of current maintenance
- Upper ends of channels that are not needed for stormwater conveyance
- Detention basins that cannot be included in regular maintenance because of wet or soggy bottoms or that are dug to capacity

## So you want to plant a tree...

The District provides multiple opportunities each year for volunteers to participate in the District's tree planting program. To receive information about locations and how to sign up contact us at: [www.hcfdc.org/contactemail.asp](http://www.hcfdc.org/contactemail.asp)

## Facts About the District's Tree Planting Program

The District's tree planting program is extensive. Here are some facts:

- The South Service Center tree nursery can accommodate the growth of more than 25,000 hard-to-find trees for future plantings.
- Since 2001, tens of thousands of trees have been planted on District right-of-way.
- Within the next ten years, over 100,000 trees will have been grown and planted on District right-of-way.



[www.hcfdc.org/trees.html](http://www.hcfdc.org/trees.html)

# How to Plant a Tree on District Right-of-Way

1. Sponsor must submit a written request to plant trees to the Property Management Department of the District. Request should include a project description as well as a map showing the proposed location.
2. Sponsor must research property ownership information and obtain permission from the property owner before any trees may be planted. Permission, or a written lack of objection, must also be obtained from the District when the District has right-of-way. The District has limited property ownership information available.
3. Once preliminary approval has been obtained from the District, a planting plan must be approved by the District forester. The planting plan will include:
  - a. Number, species, and size of trees
  - b. Specific locations or spacing of trees
  - c. Two year maintenance plan (should include watering, mulching, fertilizing and pruning plans)
  - d. Date of plantingModifications to the plan may be required.
4. If necessary, the District forester will arrange an on-site meeting to discuss the proposed planting.
5. 72 hours in advance of planting, sponsor must contact the Utilities Coordination Committee at (800) 669-8344 to verify location of utilities.
6. Sponsor and all people helping to plant trees must sign a waiver provided by the District.

Note: In some instances, the District is able to provide trees for a planting project. If you wish to provide trees for a project, the donation must be approved by Harris County Commissioners Court before the trees can be planted. Including that information in the written request is sufficient to start that approval process.





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For more information about the Tree Planting Program,  
write or call the District's Infrastructure Division at:

Harris County Flood Control District  
Infrastructure Division  
9900 Northwest Freeway  
Houston, TX 77092

713-684-4000

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