

Backyard Tree Planting Program FAQ

Oakvillegreen Conservation Association is collaborating with LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) to offer a subsidized backyard tree planting program to Oakville residents. Here are some frequently asked questions regarding the program:

How does the program work?

The program offers both a full-service and Do-It-Yourself option. Through the full-service option, LEAF arborists conduct on-site consultations with homeowners to determine suitable planting locations and suggest native trees and shrubs that would thrive best in the soil, light and moisture conditions of the site. LEAF then delivers and plants the trees, and provides the homeowners with instructions on how to care for them so that they thrive in their new home. If homeowners wish to plant the trees themselves, they can choose the Do-It-Yourself option, which includes a virtual consultation, tree delivery and tree care information.

Who is running this program?

The program is a collaboration between Oakvillegreen Conservation Association and LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests). Oakvillegreen is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting our environment and promoting sustainable planning and urban forest stewardship in Oakville. LEAF is a non-profit organization based in Toronto that is committed to enhancing urban forests.

How do residents sign up for the program?

Participants sign up for the program by filling out a questionnaire online at www.yourleaf.org. They will then be contacted by LEAF to book a consultation. You can also call 1-888-453-6504 to get started.

When do consultations and planting occur?

Consultations are available in fall 2017 until the first major frost, and will start again in spring 2018, from approximately March/April until mid-June, depending on when the ground begins to thaw. However, participants can still sign up for the program by filling out a questionnaire at www.yourleaf.org at any time. Those that fill in a questionnaire in the winter will be contacted by LEAF in the spring to set up a consultation. Residents that book their consultation early enough can have their tree planted this fall, up until the end of November (or the first major frost). The rest of the trees will be planted in the spring, from April to June 2018.

Has this program been successful elsewhere?

The LEAF backyard tree planting program began in Toronto in 1996. Since then, it has delivered and planted over 24,000 trees and shrubs in backyards throughout Toronto, York Region and Ajax, with 1000-1400 trees and shrubs planted each year. We hope to build on the successful LEAF model to meet the needs of Oakville residents.

What is the purpose of this program?

This program will be crucial in helping Oakville to reach its 40% urban forest canopy cover goal, as residential land contains the greatest proportion (1300 hectares) of Oakville's plantable space. The backyard tree planting program will also support residents to take action on climate change and private ash tree losses due to Emerald Ash Borer, and increase native biodiversity.

Growing our urban forest can benefit the entire community. Healthy urban forests perform many environmental services including storing carbon, producing oxygen and filtering pollutants from the air and water. In fact, Oakville's urban forest removes 113 tonnes of air pollution each year. Trees also provide direct economic benefits to homeowners, as they increase property values and reduce home energy costs. Studies show that trees can improve human physical and mental health, and the native species planted by LEAF will ensure that our native pollinators and songbirds are healthy too.

Is there a cost to participants?

Ordering a tree through the full-service option costs between \$150 and \$220, depending on the species chosen. This cost includes the consultation, the tree, delivery, planting service and a tree care guide. Ordering a tree through the DIY option costs between \$100 and \$170 and includes the virtual consultation, the tree, delivery and a tree care guide. This is a subsidized program - the service is valued at \$300 to \$400 and the difference is paid by our funder.

How is this program funded?

The Backyard Tree Planting Program pilot project in Oakville is supported by a seed grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and has a goal of planting a minimum of 40 large-growing shade trees in private yards in Oakville by the summer of 2018. We hope to receive further funding in the future to incorporate lessons learned in the pilot and expand the program.

What are the benefits of planting a tree through the LEAF program?

1. The LEAF program is subsidized, so it offers trees at a more affordable cost to homeowners.
2. The program includes a consultation with an ISA certified arborist, so homeowners can be sure that the tree species are well-suited to the conditions of their yard and are planted in appropriate locations to maximize tree health and avoid future conflicts. The trees are planted by knowledgeable staff so homeowners can be sure that they are planted properly so they have a greater chance of survival.
3. LEAF plants only native species from local nurseries, so the species are well adapted to the local climate, improve native biodiversity and support native pollinators and other wildlife.
4. The LEAF program includes a guarantee that trees will leaf out by the first July 15th after planting. If trees do not leaf out by this date, LEAF will replace them.
5. LEAF provides tree care information to residents so that they understand the importance of watering and mulching their tree. This investment by homeowners improves tree health.
6. LEAF conducts random follow-up visits in the years after planting. These visits are free and include a tree health assessment and minor pruning. These follow-ups help to address any problems with the tree's health and any concerns of the homeowner.

How big are the trees that are planted?

Deciduous trees are 5-8' tall and coniferous trees are 2-4' tall at the time of planting.

Is the LEAF program suitable for homeowners who are required by permit to replant a tree?

Permits issued under the tree removal bylaw require homeowners to plant trees of at least a 30mm caliper size. While LEAF cannot guarantee a specific size, most of the deciduous tree species planted by LEAF are at least a 30mm caliper size, and would therefore be acceptable for permit replants. Since the LEAF program has a number of benefits that improve tree health and survival, bylaw officers will accept deciduous trees planted by LEAF as long as they are close to the 30mm caliper size. If you have questions or concerns regarding this, please contact your bylaw officer, or LEAF at 1-800-453-6504.

Can I get more than one tree planted by LEAF?

You can order as many trees as you'd like, as long as you meet LEAF's minimum spacing requirements, which can be found at www.yourleaf.org. LEAF has requirements for the amount of space between trees and fences, buildings, other trees, etc. so that the trees they plant have enough room to reach their full potential and remain healthy as they grow. This also prevents future conflicts with buildings and other obstacles which can save money down the road.

Who can I contact if I want to discuss the program further?

You can contact Mara McHaffie, the Residential Tree Planting Coordinator for Oakvillegreen, at 289-813-1568 or info@oakvillegreen.org.

You can also contact the LEAF office at 1-888-453-6504.