

## **Frequently Asked Questions Oakvillegreen's Oakville TreeKeeper Program**

Interested in joining Oakville TreeKeepers and showing you favourite woodland or green space a little extra TLC?

Here are some answers to commonly asked Oakville TreeKeeper questions.

1. What is our urban forest?

Urban forest refers to all the trees, woodlands and greenspaces located in our town. This includes trees found in parks, schoolyards, and the trees along our streets and boulevards as well as individual trees in backyards. Oakville's urban forest consists of just over 2 million trees!

2. Why are our urban forests and trees important?

Our urban forest provides a variety of benefits such as:

- Shade – important for reducing the urban heat island effect in hot summer months. This can also result in less energy usage through air conditioning, and therefore reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
- Improved air quality– trees remove carbon dioxide from the air and provide us with oxygen. They also remove other airborne pollutants including ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and particulate matter. Oakville's urban forest filters more airborne pollutants than is produced by local commercial and industrial emissions.
- Absorbing rainfall and slowing down storm water runoff – more trees equal less dollars that need to be spent on storm water retention and treatment.
- Providing habitat for wildlife – Native trees form the basis of our native food chains, supporting native biodiversity. Trees act as shelter for a variety of organisms such as birds, small mammals, and insects. Different species of trees produce berries and other fruits that act as a food source. Patches of trees can act as stop over sites for migratory birds and butterflies.
- Preventing soil erosion.
- Increased property values.
- Mental wellness, increased health indicators and enhanced livability of urban areas.
- Outdoor recreation opportunities – get outside and have fun!
- Reduced noise levels – green walls can be an effective way of reducing noise pollution in urban areas.

Oakville's tree canopy is estimated to provide \$2.93 million in environmental benefits each year and the structural value of Oakville's urban forest is \$1.04 billion!

3. Why is it important to steward our urban woodlands and trees?

Our woodlands and urban trees provide our community with many benefits but they also face many stresses and threats. Effective stewardship by local residents can help protect and enhance our urban forests, and help trees cope with the stresses of their environment. Small acts such as watering trees on your street in hot summer weather can be a big help! Removing invasive plant species, and adding new native trees are other ways we can effectively restore our urban forests.

Oakville's urban forest and trees face:

- Invasive plants and insects
- Drought
- Lack of planting space, and conflicts with hard surfaces and underground and overhead infrastructure
- Confined rooting space
- Air pollution
- Lack of nutrients in soils
- Soil compaction
- Salt
- Damage from lawn mowers, construction, and other interactions with humans

4. Who can become an Oakville TreeKeeper?

Anyone can be an Oakville TreeKeeper! All ages are welcome and you don't need to be a tree expert! We provide training, tools, and guide stewardship activities. You can also choose your level of involvement. You can volunteer to water a few trees in your neighbourhood or you can help us plan stewardship events. You can join by yourself, or with your neighbours, community group or corporate team. You can volunteer to steward an urban forest in your neighbourhood or join other volunteers at a stewardship site where we are already working.

5. What do Oakville TreeKeepers do?

Stewardship activities may include:

- tree inventory – recording size, species, health status
- invasive species mapping and inventory
- invasive species removal – by non-chemical methods
- stewardship plantings

- mulching and litter removal
- tree tending, street tree watering, and identification of tree planting candidate spots
- tree and native plant seed collection and seed starting
- organizing neighbourhood tree walks and workshops

Stewardship works best if volunteers set some reasonable goals and if they work in a nearby area that they really care about. Specific volunteer activities will depend on the needs of each forest location, resources available, and volunteers' interests, and time availability.

#### 6. What's the time commitment required?

Oakville TreeKeepers are asked to commit approximately 8-10 hours over the growing season (between April-November) to stewardship. This is usually split up into an initial 30-minute site visit, and approximately 2-3 stewardship 'work bees' (of 2 hours each) between April–November. Volunteers can join us at our existing sites or help mobilize stewardship at a new site. Sharing tree care and forest stewardship information with your neighbours and also recruiting them to help out greatly increases stewardship success and may require more time. We hope Oakville TreeKeepers will continue this level of commitment from year to year.

Oakvillegreen will guide all stewardship activities and we take care of coordination with the Town of Oakville and ensuring proper approvals are in place before any work gets started. We will help you by providing tools, advising on stewardship approaches and the proper timing of stewardship activities. Oakvillegreen also organizes 2-3 field-based technical workshops on a variety of topics and an end of season celebration.

#### 7. Count me in! Where do I start?

1. Email us at [programs@oakvillegreen.org](mailto:programs@oakvillegreen.org) or call us at: 289-813-1568 Tell us which urban forest patch, woodland or trees you care about most.
2. If you are interested in stewarding a new forest patch, we will need to set up a site visit. We will meet you at the site and conduct a 'get to know your forest' activity. Knowing how much time you have to volunteer and how many of your neighbours are already interested to help gives us a better idea of the scope of stewardship work that we can accomplish.
3. To find out about TreeKeeper events that you can join in on, please sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter.
4. Oakvillegreen will seek approvals from appropriate Town staff, and we will determine if the site is a good candidate for stewardship. Not all sites are suited to stewardship by volunteers. Sometimes we need

to direct our limited resources to where we can have the most effective impact or a woodland may already have municipal stewardship activities planned for it.

5. Oakvillegreen will help TreeKeepers develop a proposed plan for stewardship and we will work with you to identify resources, recruit other volunteers, refine the stewardship schedule and plan activities.
6. Oakvillegreen and TreeKeepers will work together during the growing season to carry out stewardship work bees!
7. TreeKeepers should plan to attend our training workshops and our volunteer thank you celebration.