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Richmond Tree Committee Gives Away 12,000 Trees for City Arbor Day

Coalition of organizations and city agencies launch Reforest Richmond campaign to increase canopy cover

RICHMOND, Va.— Today, the Richmond Tree Committee – a new subcommittee of the City of Richmond Green City Commission that formed on August 19th – announced it will distribute 12,000 eastern redbud seedlings for #ArborDayRVA, the largest free tree-giveaway in city history. 10,000 trees will be available to Richmond residents and organizations through community pickup sites with an additional 2,000 trees going to Richmond Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities for park and cemetery reforestation efforts.

“Reforest Richmond is a collaborative campaign to increase citywide urban tree canopy to 60 percent by 2037,” explained Daniel Klein, chair of the Richmond Tree Committee and co-chair of the Green City Commission. “Racist and anti-Black policies have contributed to significant gaps in Richmond’s urban tree canopy, particularly in communities of color, and is linked to hotter average temperatures known as the Urban Heat Island effect. We are committed to dismantling systemic racism and environmental injustice, and tree giveaways like this ensure that those with the lowest urban tree canopy are centered as we reforest Richmond.”

Due to COVID-19 and the transition to virtual learning, Dominion Energy canceled its annual Project Plant It!, an initiative with Richmond Public Schools aimed to send seedlings home with students around the city. Dominion approached the city about the changes to Project Plant It and Klein enthusiastically took on the challenge to find homes for 12,000 trees. With a small window to secure the trees, the two-month-old committee worked diligently to identify a plan of action and launched the Reforest Richmond campaign.

“Dominion Energy is very pleased to partner with the City of Richmond on the Reforest Richmond 12,000 Tree Giveaway,” said Melanie Rapp Beale, community affairs manager at Dominion Energy and Project Plant It! coordinator. “These seedlings will be planted in neighborhoods that will benefit from a green canopy of shade for years to come, and residents will love seeing the beautiful pink blossoms in the spring.”

“This partnership for a citywide tree distribution is a win-win for RVA and the Richmond Public Schools community,” Matthew Stanley, Director of Advocacy and Outreach at RPS shared about coordinating pick up sites for the tree giveaway. “It makes Richmond a greener and healthier city, allows our schools to continue to serve as hubs for our communities during this period of virtual learning, and provides our students with the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of their homes and communities with their own hands.”





Reforest Richmond's #ArborDayRVA 12,000 Tree Giveaway has been coordinated by the Richmond Tree Committee in partnership with [Dominion Energy](#), [Richmond Public Schools](#), [Richmond Public Libraries](#), [Virginia Department of Forestry](#), [VCU Office of Sustainability](#), [Richmond Community ToolBank](#), [Southside Releaf](#), Great Big Everything, [Enrichmond TreeLab](#), Self Made Roots, and the City of Richmond Urban Forestry division, Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, [RVAH2O](#), and [Office of Sustainability](#).

The Richmond Tree Committee brings the city its #ArborDayRVA 12,000 Tree Giveaway only two months after forming. "In order to achieve Richmond's ambitious tree canopy goals, it's crucial that Richmond's urban forestry stakeholders work in tandem. This giveaway is an ambitious first step in establishing a standard of cooperation that Richmond needs to embrace," Klein expressed, "Rebuilding canopy is impossible without rebuilding trust. We're not just planting trees—we're engaging communities and developing capacity for lasting environmental justice work as we collectively reforest Richmond."

"Planting trees at home or with Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities is one of the most immediate ways that you can help restore Richmond's urban tree canopy, which cleans our air and purifies our water, and helps beautify parks and open spaces!" Giles Garrison from the City of Richmond Parks, Recreation, and Community development expressed. "Redbuds are beautiful trees for anyone who loves the spring, with their heart-shaped leaves and pink flowers that come out when the winter ends. We're grateful to the Richmond Tree Committee for helping distribute thousands of northern red buds for free to all residents who want to participate in greening Richmond."

"Trees can make a huge difference in our communities," shared Jenn Clarke, from the City of Richmond's Department of Public Utilities Stormwater Utility. "In addition to creating shade, reducing air temperatures, and mitigating the urban heat island effect, trees capture rainfall and slow stormwater to reduce flooding, and their roots hold soil in place to prevent erosion."

"I think the trees will really change the feel of so many areas in Richmond for the better, especially the Southside. I know how much of a difference more trees will make for people in my community on really hot or really rainy days," expressed Wafa May Elamin, a Southside resident and owner of Self Made Roots, an organization that focuses on strengthening grassroots and community initiatives. "The environmental climate change movement is taking on a more inclusive approach in the city and this is exciting to see as someone who is a product of historically under-served communities."

"As someone who loves trees, the thing that I know intuitively is that you have to get people in close proximity to nature for them to really care about it," Luke McCall, Dominion Energy's Distribution Forestry Coordinator explained. "This is a way to do that, especially for those who don't have nature close to them. When you get people close to nature to touch it and feel it—it helps them make that connection more than anything. That is always the most satisfying part of my job when I get to do that and I'm excited to see this giveaway unfold."

"ArborDayRVA is a particularly special project to the ToolBank because it allows us to use our tools, facilities, and networks to serve thousands of Richmonders in an unconventional way during a time that traditional volunteerism is down 50-60 percent," shared Toby Vernon, executive director of The Richmond Community ToolBank. "But even more than that, this project aligns with our broader strategy





of achieving the City's climate, environment, and quality of life goals through strong collaboration with a network of dedicated partners. The trees we distribute and plant together this year are nothing if not an act of hope for a better future for every Richmond City resident.”

Individuals are allowed to take up to five trees home. Organizations can bulk order to host a planting event or give away to their members. Richmond residents will be able to pick up seedlings from dozens of pickup locations citywide on Fridays and Saturdays beginning October 30 through November 14. A map of pickup sites, schedules, planting and care guides are available in English and Spanish at reforestrichmond.org/arbordayrva. Friday pickup spots will predominantly be set up at RPS meals distribution schools. Saturdays will mainly include parks and public libraries with an emphasis on Southside communities with the lowest urban tree canopy. Volunteers are encouraged to sign up through the Reforest Richmond website Event organizers note that additional efforts are being made to target Southside residents. Volunteers are encouraged to apply. .

[PICK UP LOCATIONS/TIMES, RESOURCES, AND DOCUMENTS]

[Please follow this link to find all of the consolidated information about](#) Reforest Richmond's #ArborDayRVA 12,000 Tree Giveaway including:

- [Reforest Richmond](#), [Richmond Tree Committee](#), and [#ArborDayRVA](#)
- [ArborDayRVA Tree Giveaway Flyer for Distribution](#)
- [Pick up locations, days, and times](#)
- [Map your Redbud](#)
- [Planting Instructions](#)
- [Volunteer Form](#)
- [Partner/Request Bulk Trees](#) (more than the 5/household)
- [Stay connected with Reforest Richmond on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook.](#)
- Virtual learning for students, educators and parents can view and download lesson plans, games, and activities about trees at projectplantit.com.

Reforest Richmond is a collaborative campaign to increase Richmond's urban tree canopy to 60% by 2037. We are committed, not only to increasing citywide tree canopy, but also to dismantling systemic racism and environmental injustice through an evolving, equity-centered, community-driven effort. Learn more about Reforest Richmond and #ArborDayRVA at www.reforestrichmond.org

The Green City Commission's Richmond Tree Committee is the organizing body of Reforest Richmond that seeks to protect and expand the city of Richmond's urban forest for the benefit of public health, quality of life, community resiliency, and environmental conservation through equity-centered, community engagement and education, modernized urban forestry policy, and up-to-date tree data and canopy analysis. The purpose of this committee is to provide a bi-monthly forum to share projects, research, and funding opportunities, support collaboration among community organizations, non-profits, tree care professionals, and the City's Urban Forestry division to ensure Richmond achieves its target of 60% tree canopy citywide by 2037. Learn more about Reforest Richmond, the Richmond Tree Committee, and #ArborDayRVA at www.reforestrichmond.org/RTC

