COMMUNITY FORESTS

An Introduction to Urban Forestry

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Community Forests
An Introduction to Urban Forestry

Skill Level
Beginner

Learner Outcomes
Learners will be able to:
- Define community forest.
- Compare possible tree planting locations.
- Demonstrate knowledge of tree planting guidelines.
- Apply knowledge gained to plant a tree.

Educational Standard(s) Supported

Success Indicator
Learners will:
Choose an acceptable location to plant trees on their school grounds.

Time Needed
1 ½ hours

Materials List
- Supplemental material handouts (UT Extension publication SP 511) — optional.
- Flip chart paper.
- Leaves and branches.
- Shovels, gloves, water buckets, fertilizer.
- Saplings.

Introduction to Content

This lesson serves as an introduction for several concepts associated with urban forestry. It introduces the concept of a community forest, which is put into action by students who apply knowledge gained through the learning experience in a practical way.

Introduction to Methodology

This lesson uses a variety of methods to deliver content to the learners. Discussion takes place among groups to form ideas and share thoughts. Prior knowledge is assessed through opening activities. Students then apply their newly gained knowledge by planting a tree.

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Terms and Concepts Introduction
- **Community Forest** — All the trees within a city or town.
- **Urban Forestry** — The care and management of tree populations in urban settings for the purpose of improving the urban environment.

Setting the Stage
To assess students' prior knowledge on concepts related to forestry, have several stations set up around the room with leaves, branches and flip chart paper for them to write ideas on. Divide the students into equal-sized groups and say, **"Today, we are going to do a lesson on forestry and how it effects the community around us. We will learn some rules that are important when planting trees, and then we will plant some trees of our own! To begin, we're going to do a brainstorming activity. Around the room are four flip chart pages with questions. When I say to do so, go to one of the papers and answer the question on the page."**

Opening Questions
(Write these on the flip chart pages for students to answer.)
- Can you identify this leaf/nut/tree? (Will use leaves, nuts and pictures of trees.)
- What is a community forest? (See definition above.)
- What is important to consider when planting a tree? (Water lines, power lines, buildings nearby, etc.)
- What types of trees grow well in our area? (Will depend on area of the state.)

Experience
After all groups have rotated through the stations, have the groups compile common answers for their station. Ask the students, "**Do you think the class has a good idea of what that station is asking? Why or why not?"**

Continue this discussion until all stations have been covered.

Have students return to their seats and begin covering the items that must be considered when planting trees. (These items and discussion points have been included in the supplemental information.)

Ask the learners to discuss some popular trees they see in their community. These will vary depending on the part of the state in which you live.

Share with the students that today they will be choosing a location to put their knowledge to work and starting their own community forest on the school campus. As a group, the students will decide on a general area in which to plant based on the guidelines presented earlier in the lesson.

After the trees have been planted, return to the classroom to debrief the group with the discussion questions.

Share
Ask students to share their thoughts on the following questions:
- **How well do you think the tree will grow in that location?**
- **Were there other places we could have planted the tree?**
- **What other types of trees would have grown well in the location?**
- **Does what we planted today count as a community forest? Why or why not?**

(Answers will depend on school and geographic location.)

Process
Ask students to stand depending on how long they think the tree will take to reach a height of 10 feet. "**As I say the number of years, stand up if you think a tree would reach 10 feet in that amount of time. One year ... two years … three years …**"

Share with the students that it ultimately depends on the tree, but it usually takes between seven and eight years.

Generalize
Have students share where they have seen community forests outside of their hometown. You may need to start discussion by sharing commonly known locations.

Apply
Ask students to brainstorm locations at their home where they could plant trees. (Answers will vary)

Ask students to share if there are other guidelines they feel should be considered when thinking of locations to plant trees? (Proximity to a building, expected size of the tree, tree growing time)

Life Skill(s)

Fourth Grade
Participate in 4-H club meetings by saying pledges, completing activities and being engaged.

Identify at least four project areas to consider as a project area for future 4-H work

Fifth Grade
Participate in 4-H club meetings by saying pledges, completing activities and being engaged.

Select at least one project area in which to focus future 4-H participation.

More Questions to Consider When Choosing and Planting Trees

Are there powerlines overhead or under the ground?

In Tennessee, calling 811 before you dig is a critical step to remember. 811 will come out and mark underground powerlines, water and wastewater lines and gas lines.

Is there a road, sidewalk to curb nearby?

Trees have very developed root systems. Because of this, we have to be considerate of how close trees are planted to sidewalks, curbs or roads.

Are we interested in providing shade to our area?

If the goal of our tree planting is to provide shade, that will determine the tree type. Some trees are better shade trees than others.

Will there be other trees nearby?

Different types of trees have different water and nutrient requirements. Consider what other types of trees are present to determine if the location is a good choice for other trees to be planted there.

How much sunlight and water will be available for the tree?

Considering the environment in which the tree lives is important when choosing a tree and location at which to plant.

Information regarding what tress to plant, as well as additional information on tree planting can be found in UT Extension publication SP 511 Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place. This publication also can be provided to students as a take-home item.

Information regarding which trees grow well in what environments can be found in UT Extension Publication SP 512. This information will be helpful in determining which saplings to purchase for your area.