



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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For immediate release

April 12, 2017

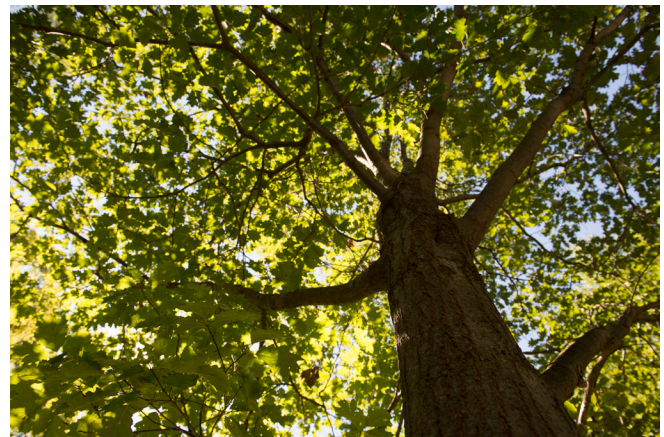
Restoring the Canopy: MWRD returns popular tree program in 2017

April showers bring water and lots of it, but April also marks a prime time to plant a tree that can eventually soak up that excess water. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) provides tree saplings at no cost to the public to protect the region from flooding. Back for a second year, the MWRD is kicking off another season of its popular “Restore the Canopy, Plant a Tree” (RTC) program. Trees can be picked up every Wednesday at six MWRD water reclamation plants and at events all year long, including two dozen area events the MWRD will be participating in this month in commemoration of Earth Day (April 22) and Arbor Day (April 28).

Since launching the RTC program last April, the MWRD has partnered with about 125 different communities and organizations and attended more than 150 events to distribute more than 24,000 trees across Cook County. This year, the MWRD is distributing five varieties, including red oaks, pin oaks, swamp white oaks, black oaks and pecan trees. Driven by the devastation of the emerald ash borer and extreme weather events that have led to the loss of approximately 13 million trees across the region, the MWRD staff embarked on an ambitious plan to help restore the Cook County canopy. To illustrate the prospects of this plan, the MWRD is mapping where the saplings are planted on its website.

“While these saplings have a long way to grow to truly restore the canopy, we know we are planting a legacy in stormwater management for a better tomorrow and many years to come,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “Not only does a tree serve as an effective form of green infrastructure to reduce flooding, but trees also reduce city heat island effects, absorb carbon gases, produce oxygen, improve the habitat for wildlife and remain an important part of the ecosystem.”

The RTC program provides the opportunity to educate the region about the importance of trees and the lasting



A mature quercus rubra, commonly known as a northern red oak, is one of the trees the MWRD is distributing as part of the Restore the Canopy program, Plant a Tree. The MWRD saplings are about 18 inches tall but can grow to about 75 feet tall.

benefits trees provide in assisting property owners and the MWRD in managing the influx of stormwater flowing through local communities due to changing weather patterns.

Community groups and schools are welcome to order free bare-root saplings in bags of 100 and organize tree planting events for educational planting opportunities or they can order pre-potted saplings.

“In restoring the canopy, we are working to prevent flooding, improve local water quality and promote resource recovery,” said Commissioner Frank Avila. “We thank the thousands of homeowners, schools and community groups that have participated in this program to protect our water environment and plant a promising future for many beautiful tree-lined streets and backyards.”

Given the 21st century challenges in flooding, the MWRD sought trees as one tool to manage excess water, while also attempting to restore the oak tree population, which has been depleted over the last century despite its contributions to vital biodiversity (*continued*)

Restoring the Canopy: MWRD returns popular tree program in 2017 *(continued)*

in the region to support a wide range of plants and animals. The program has also allowed the MWRD to combine its goals of resource recovery with stormwater management by planting the tree saplings in the MWRD's biosolids compost blend, a sustainable alternative to chemical fertilizers derived from the MWRD wastewater treatment process. For their efforts, the MWRD was honored in 2016 by the Chicago Region Trees Initiative with the "Most Sustainable Commercial Tree Program" award.

To learn how to receive an oak tree sapling or participate in the program, visit www.mwrld.org, or contact MWRD Public Affairs at (312) 751-6633 or visit public.affairs@mwrld.org. Trees can also be picked up every Wednesday through the fall from 9 a.m. to noon at the following water reclamation plants:

- Calumet (400 E. 130th St., Chicago)
- Egan (550 S. Meacham Rd., Schaumburg)
- Hanover Park (1220 Sycamore Ave., Hanover Park)
- Kirie (701 West Oakton St., Des Plaines)
- O'Brien (3500 Howard St., Skokie)
- Stickney (6001 W. Pershing Rd., Cicero)

The MWRD will also be giving away trees this month at the following events and locations:

- Thursday, April 20 – 18th Ward, Earth Day Celebration, 8359 S. Pulaski Rd., Chicago, 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- Friday, April 21 – La Grange Park School District Earth Day event, Allen P. Zak Science Discovery Center, 930 Barnsdale Rd., LaGrange Park, 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.
- Saturday, April 22 – Salt Creek Cleanup Day, Bemis Woods, Between 31st Street and Ogden Avenue, off Wolf Road, Western Springs, 8:30 a.m. – noon
- Saturday, April 22 – Chesterfield Home Expo, Tuley Park Field House, 501 E. 90th Place, Chicago, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Saturday, April 22 – Franklin Park Earth Day Event, North Park 10040 Addison Ave., Franklin Park, noon – 2 p.m.
- Saturday, April 22 – 2nd Ward Earth Day Shredding Event, Parking lot at State Street and Goethe Street, Chicago, 9 a.m. – noon
- Saturday, April 22 – 28th Ward "Tire-Topia," 3927 W. Adams St., Chicago

- Saturday, April 22 – Forest Preserve District of Cook County Earth Day Event, Kickapoo Woods, 14400 S. Halsted, Riverdale, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Saturday, April 22 – Forest Preserve District of Cook County Earth Day Nature Play, Crabtree Nature Center, 3 Stover Rd., Barrington, noon – 3 p.m.
- Saturday, April 22 – Forest Preserve District of Cook County Earth Day Event, Sand Ridge Nature Center, 15891 S. Paxton Ave, South Holland, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Saturday, April 22 – Earth Day at Friendship Park Conservatory, 395 W. Algonquin Rd., Des Plaines, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
- Sunday, April 23 – Party for the Planet, Brookfield Zoo, 8400 W. 31st St., Brookfield, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Sunday, April 23 – Wheeling Park District Earth Day, Park District Pavilion, 333 W. Dundee Road, Wheeling, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Sunday, April 23 – Emily Oaks Nature Center Earth Day Event, 4650 Brummel St., Skokie, noon – 4 p.m.
- Saturday, April 29 – Streamwood SEED event, Police Department Training Room, 401 E. Irving Park Rd., Streamwood, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Saturday, April 29 – Oak Lawn Earth Day Event, Wolfe Wildlife Refuge, 109th Street and Laramie Avenue, Oak Lawn, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Saturday, April 29 – Unwanted medicine collection in partnership with the U.S. DEA at Calumet Water Reclamation Plant, 400 E. 130th St., Chicago, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Saturday, April 29 – Unwanted medicine collection in partnership with the U.S. DEA at Stickney Water Reclamation Plant, 6001 W. Pershing Rd., Cicero, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Saturday, April 29 – Unwanted medicine collection in partnership with the U.S. DEA at O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant, 3500 Howard St., Skokie, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Saturday, April 29 – 33rd Ward Senior Health Fair, DePaul College Prep, 3633 N. California Ave., Chicago, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Saturday, April 29 – Forest Preserve District of Cook County Bunker Hill Arbor Day Event, Touhy Avenue and Harts Road, Niles, noon – 4 p.m.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrld.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.