

# F. Organizing and Conducting a Riparian Buffer Community Planting

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Conducting community planting days can be great fun and rewarding as volunteers come together for the camaraderie and to make a difference in their community. The planning process can also be fruitful as partnerships are built and resources are shared. Following are steps to organizing and conducting a planting. They are not a one-size-fits all and will need to be adapted to the needs of your community and partners.

**1. Consider potential project partners who can assist in identifying possible planting sites and provide resources (e.g., plant knowledge; loan tools). These may include your local:**

- municipal stormwater program.
- county Extension office.
- NRCS district office.
- watershed group.

**2. Conduct initial partner planning meeting to discuss:**

- project goals (individual and mutual) and timeframe;
- candidate planting sites;
- potential sources of project funding if not secured ( A project may have to be delayed up to a year if supporting grant funds must be secured);
- and a date to conduct a field outing to assess potential buffer sites.

**3. Select your buffer site**

- Conduct a “windshield survey” in your community, looking for riparian areas devoid of vegetation. Consider using on-line maps (e.g., Google Earth) to help.
- Identify the landowner of potential planting sites and discuss with them their interest in participating in a planting project and their willingness to protect the site if planted.
- Obtain landowner’s approval to go onsite to conduct the initial buffer prioritization assessment in order to rank and select a site (see Appendix B).

**4. Create a buffer plan (See Appendix C)**

- Conduct a site inventory.
- Create a planting sketch including features affecting the planting area size.
- Determine planting quantities.
- Identify mix of desired plant species.

## 5. Check on sources of seedlings and B&B/container trees and shrubs.

- Check cost, availability and shipping dates of bare root seedlings from on-line nurseries.
- Check with local nurseries and garden stores to find desired B&B/container trees and shrubs. This should be done far enough in advance (e.g., one month) to ensure desired stock can be found. Often nurseries and garden stores will let you purchase in advance and will hold the stock, particularly if it is for a community planting event.

## 6. Select a tentative planting date at least three months in advance

- Best time of year for planting container or B&B plants is from November through March, and for bare root seedlings is January through March when they are dormant
- Check calendars to ensure that other events will not conflict with your targeted volunteer source.
- Identify a rain date.

## 7. Identify number of needed volunteers and supervisors. Consider:

- Number of plants to be installed and the length of planting event
- About one supervisor per 10 volunteers

**Estimated Number of Volunteers Needed  
for Planting Bare Root Seedlings**

# of Volunteers or Volunteer Teams	Bare Root Seedlings Installed	
	Per Hour	Per 3 Hours
10	60	180
15	90	270
30	180	540

## 8. Develop a draft volunteer recruitment strategy

- Consider key groups for obtaining volunteers (scouts, watershed and conservation groups, civic groups, churches and home school networks) and/or whether the event will be promoted community wide.
- Identify the most effective ways of reaching candidate volunteers:
  - » websites
  - » social media
  - » listserves
  - » on-line community calendars
  - » flyers (see example on page F-9)

- Identify the event's contact person who can answer event questions and interact with the media.
- Determine if pre-registration for the event is required and how registration will be conducted (via e-mail, telephone or on-line registration).
- Provide volunteer expectations (e.g., bring shovel) in marketing materials or in a follow up participation confirmation call or e-mail.
- Consider making a real-estate size sign that promotes the upcoming planting and place it at the buffer site two weeks in advance. This will also notify the adjacent landowners of the pending planting installation (see example page F-10).

## **9. Conduct partner planning meeting**

- Finalize planting date.
- Discuss draft volunteer recruitment strategies given needed number of volunteers. Seek input and contributions each partner can make.
- Discuss needed supplies and potential sources.
- Finalize planting plan budget including costs of plants, materials for recruiting volunteers and day-of-event supplies. Often when multiple partners are involved the costs can be shared or items/services can be donated (e.g. copying of flyers).

## **10. Order plants**

- For bare root seedlings, order early in nursery's shipping period to ensure availability.
- Ask for delivery the week before planting. Nurseries typically dig the seedlings right before packaging for shipping.
- Call nursery two weeks before delivery to confirm delivery date.

## **11. Implement volunteer recruitment strategy**

### **12. Prepare the site for buffer installation**

- Call Tennessee811 at least a week before site preparation day to ensure utility lines are marked.
- Mark site boundaries with WHITE flagging, paint or stakes.
- Locate and remove debris (e.g., washed up trash, branches)
- Mark any areas of safety concern (e.g., using flags mark holes in ground).
- Remove any unwanted invasive plants.
- Mow if area is covered in tall (one foot or greater) herbaceous plants, being careful to not mow any vegetation, shrubs, or trees that are to be retained.
- Dig several test holes to determine how hard ground is for installing plants. This may affect number of volunteers needed and/or length of planting event.
- Consider parking and bathroom (portable toilets or nearby facility) accommodations for volunteers.

### 13. Prepare supplies

- Buckets
  - » Estimate one five-gallon bucket per 50 to 100 seedlings. The seedlings should be in buckets of water one to three hours before volunteers arrive to ensure they are well hydrated.
  - » Municipal partners (Parks, Public Works) may have these for loan or ask subset of volunteers/supervisors to bring.
- Shovels
  - » Provide one shovel per volunteer. If volunteers are asked to bring their own shovels, still have on hand at least half the required number.
  - » Consider asking municipal partners if they have shovels to loan.
- Mulch ( for any container and/or B&B plantings)
  - » Check with the municipal park or solid waste department for free mulch or ground up yard waste.
  - » Mulch to a depth of three inches around B&B and container plants.
  - » Determine mulch needs:
    - ◇ A three-foot diameter mulched area with a depth of three inches requires 1.75 ft<sup>3</sup> of mulch.
    - ◇ 1 yd<sup>3</sup> = 27 ft<sup>3</sup>
    - ◇ Most scoops at nurseries are three-quarter of a yd<sup>3</sup>.
- Gloves: Check with your municipality’s solid waste department or Keep America Beautiful affiliate for a donation of gloves or ask volunteers to bring them.
- Registration Area
  - » Tent: Consider setting up a pop-up tent where volunteers can register and supplies can be kept. It will provide a central operating point, bringing more organization to the event.
  - » Table, chair(s), registration materials, clip boards
  - » Nametags
- Snacks
  - » Use coolers for water to avoid bottled water waste. Ask volunteers to bring their own water bottle but have recyclable cups available.
  - » Carbohydrate/protein source (e.g., peanut butter crackers, cereal bars, fruit) should be available for those who may have blood sugar conditions.
  - » Sponsors may want to have event-end “celebration” snack for volunteers.

**Required Mulch Amounts**

# of Trees/ Shrubs (3-ft diameter around plant)	Cubic Yards (yd <sup>3</sup> )	Scoops (0.75 yd <sup>3</sup> )
10	0.65	~1
20	1.30	~2
30	2.60	~3

- Other
  - » First aid kit
  - » Sunscreen, bug spray (if needed)

#### **14. Day of event actions**

- Have all supplies on site and organized prior to volunteers arriving.
- Sign-in volunteers.
  - » A liability form may need to be completed if participating organizations and/or landowner deems it necessary. Youth volunteers may require a parent or guardian signature on the waiver (see Appendix F).
  - » Some volunteers may require verification of their service hours for clubs or classes. Have pre-made forms for service hour verification .
- Conduct volunteer training.
  - » Recognize partners, donors, and cooperating property owners.
  - » Introduce intent of buffer – functions and benefits.
  - » Review safety considerations.
  - » Demonstrate how to properly install plants. With a large group it may be necessary to break into smaller groups so that all can easily see the demonstration and ask questions.
- Consider establishing a planting “quality control” system for younger volunteers. For example, once a hole is dug, have volunteer raise their hand so supervisor can assess hole size to ensure it is of sufficient size. If not working in pairs, have supervisor hold tree upright as volunteer backfills soil into hole.
- Install plantings.
- Water container and B&B plants if ground is dry. No watering is required for bare root seedlings if planted during dormancy months.
- Mulch container and B&B plants to approximately a three-inch depth and a three foot circumference. Avoid mulch touching stems.
- Do final walk through of site to ensure all plants have been properly installed and that all tools and trash have been collected.
- Gather volunteers for a final thank-you and a group photo. Consider a final treat or gift for all to enjoy together as a thank-you.
- Take before and after pictures of the site from a fixed photo point to document changes to the site over time.
- Take “action” shot photos of volunteers planting along with a group photo to share via internet (e.g., Facebook) and for the media.

Buffer Planting Project Sample Time Line	
2015	
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct preliminary partner meeting</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct “windshield survey” of potential buffer sites</li> <li>• Contact landowners to discuss planting project feasibility (i.e., Is the landowner supportive of the riparian planting and willing to ensure that the riparian buffer will be protected?)</li> <li>• Rate and rank potential buffer sites; select buffer site</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with landowner on planting plan</li> <li>• Set a planting date</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Order seedlings (ask for delivery one week before planting)</li> </ul>
2016	
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scout out sources of container/B&amp;B stock if needed</li> <li>• Identify number of volunteers/supervisors needed &amp; develop volunteer recruitment strategy</li> <li>• Conduct partner meeting to: review planting plan; discuss volunteer recruitment; who can help with prep day; supply list (who can bring what)</li> <li>• Last two weeks of January begin volunteer recruitment</li> <li>• Install yard sign at site advertising the event and notify neighbors.</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By first week, order container/B&amp;B plants</li> <li>• Feb. 1 - Call Tennessee811</li> <li>• Feb. 6 - Site Preparation Day – Remove invasives, trash...</li> </ul>
February 13	BUFFER INSTALLATION EVENT
February 20	Rain Date (call to extend 811 ticket if rain date must be used)

### The Tennessee Urban Riparian Buffer Handbook Series

This handout is one of a series of supporting appendices to the **Tennessee Urban Riparian Buffer Handbook**. To download go to: <http://tn.gov/agriculture/topic/ag-forests-urban>

- A. The Tennessee Urban Riparian Buffer
- B. Tennessee Riparian Buffer Site Assessment
- C. Creating a Tennessee Urban Riparian Buffer
- D. Tennessee Native Riparian Plants List
- E. The Threat of Invasive Plants to Tennessee Urban Riparian Buffers
- F. Organizing and Conducting a Riparian Buffer Community Planting
- G. Properly Installing Plants: How to Plant Trees and Shrubs

## Sample Liability Form VOLUNTEER WAIVER

Thank you for volunteering to help with the *[insert location or event name]* buffer planting. Please read, complete, and sign the following form to participate in this event.

### **VOLUNTEER INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone or email: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Optional if you would like us to contact you for future volunteer event)

### **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### **VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

As a volunteer, I release and hold harmless [insert all partners] and their successors from any and all claims, costs, suits, actions, judgments or expenses upon any damage, loss or injury to me or to my property which may arise from this volunteer event.

I acknowledge that I am fully aware of any and all risks posed by these volunteer activities and that I have no medical condition that prevents me from engaging in them.

I also give permission to be photographed by project partners or the media for use in printed materials, through the internet or through other media outlets.

In signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand this volunteer agreement.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: If the volunteer is under the age of 18, a parent or legal guardian must sign.**

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

To download an editable version (in MS Word format) go to:  
<http://tn.gov/agriculture/topic/ag-forests-urban>

## Sample Project Check List

Include date completed and related notes

- Buffer plan completed \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◇ Site inventory
  - ◇ Planting plan
- Funding secured \_\_\_\_\_
- Plants ordered \_\_\_\_\_
- Volunteers recruited & advised of proper clothing and footwear \_\_\_\_\_
- Easements and property boundaries marked \_\_\_\_\_
- Tennessee811 completed \_\_\_\_\_
- Neighbors notified and/or notification yard signs installed \_\_\_\_\_
- Pre-photos of site are taken \_\_\_\_\_
- Site prepared – mowed, invasives removed, safety hazards eliminated and/or marked \_\_\_\_\_
- Press releases completed and sent \_\_\_\_\_
- Supplies and tools purchased or borrowed \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◇ Registration tent, tables, chairs
  - ◇ Volunteer waivers, pens, clipboards, nametags
  - ◇ Port-a-pot arranged, if needed
  - ◇ Coolers for drinking water, cups, snacks
  - ◇ First aid kit, sunscreen
  - ◇ Plants
  - ◇ Mulch, if needed
  - ◇ Buckets
  - ◇ Shovels
  - ◇ Wheelbarrows
  - ◇ Gloves
  - ◇ Trashbags
  - ◇ Water for container and/or B&B trees and shrubs if needed
- Post-photos of site and volunteers are taken \_\_\_\_\_

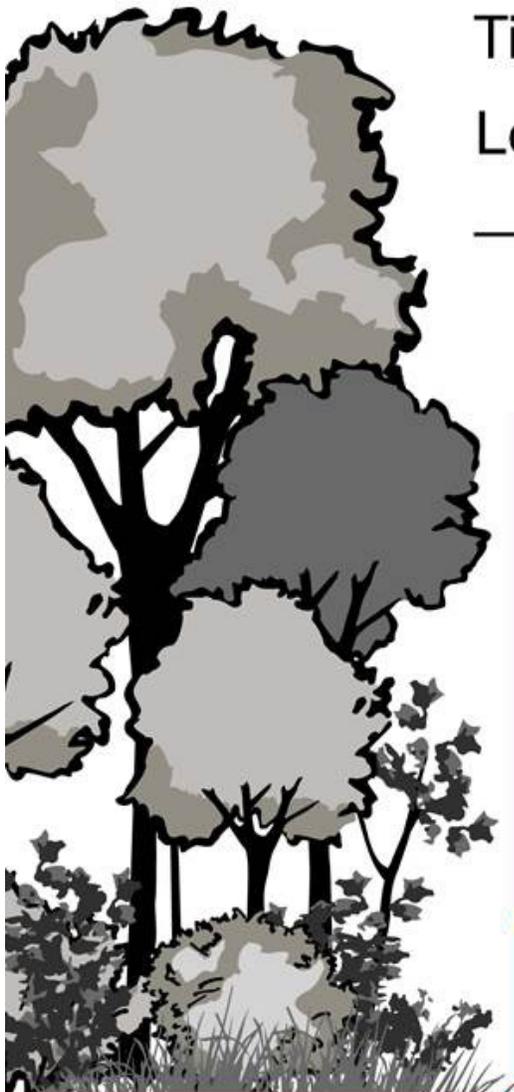
To download an editable version (in MS Word format) go to:  
<http://tn.gov/agriculture/topic/ag-forests-urban>

## Tree Planting Event Marketing Signage Flyer Template

To download an editable template (in MS PowerPoint format) go to:  
<http://tn.gov/agriculture/topic/ag-forests-urban>

**JOIN US FOR A *(insert stream name)*  
TREE PLANTING!**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

On how to volunteer  
call: ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

*We will be planting native trees  
and shrubs to create a healthy  
forested streamside buffer.*

*Benefits include:*

- A cleaner stream by reducing streambank erosion and filtering pollutants*
- Enhanced aquatic and terrestrial habitats*
- Improved air quality*

For more information about riparian buffers, visit \_\_\_\_\_

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# Tree Planting Event On-Site Marketing Signage Template

To download an editable template (in MS PowerPoint format) go to:  
<http://tn.gov/agriculture/topic/ag-forests-urban>

**JOIN US FOR A *(insert stream name)*  
TREE PLANTING!**



DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

On how to volunteer call: \_\_\_\_\_

This property will be planted with native trees and shrubs to create a healthy forested streamside buffer. The trees and shrubs will keep \_\_\_\_\_ clean by reducing streambank erosion and filtering pollutants. They will also provide aquatic and terrestrial habitat and improve air quality.

For more information about riparian buffers, visit \_\_\_\_\_

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