

Land Care Niagara: Rural Tree Planting Program

Overview

Our Rural Tree Planting Program is a large-scale reforestation program that works with private and public landowners to plant trees on their properties. The many benefits of tree planting include:

- Providing shade / buffer / windbreak
- Restoring native forest cover
- Providing a legacy to descendants
- Eligibility for the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program
- Carbon Sequestration; Mitigating climate change
- Reducing stormwater runoff; reducing flood risk
- Improving water, soil, and air quality
- Mitigating heat island effect
- Improving biodiversity & wildlife habitat
- Many socio-economic benefits

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for this program, the subject property must be within the Niagara Region and have the capacity to plant a minimum of 1 acre of land. This equates to approximately 800 trees. Additionally, the site must fall within one of the following categories:

Afforestation: A planting area that is open or mostly open with no previous tree cover (E.g., an old agricultural field).

Riparian Buffer: A site adjacent to the banks of water bodies such as creeks, streams, ponds, and rivers.

Windrow: A row(s) of trees planted to create a windbreak or a wildlife corridor.

Forest restoration: Sites that have been impacted by disturbance including climate change events such as fire, wind/ice storm damage, insects (EAB), or others and/or require underplanting to establish regeneration for future forest growth.

The landowner is required to enter into a 15-year Stewardship Agreement with Land Care Niagara, agreeing to protect the planted area for 15 years. A financial contribution is also required by all participants to be eligible for the program. Final landowner costs are dependent on the total project costs. Participation in this program is contingent on funding approvals through the Restoration Grant Program offered by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA). Land Care Niagara will make an application to this grant program on behalf of the landowner. Funding is not guaranteed, and should the funding application be denied with no other available funding opportunities to cover the cost of the project, then the project will be put on hold until the following year.

Costs

The landowner contribution is typically a small portion of the overall project costs and ranges from a minimum of \$2,000 up to \$10,000. Larger projects will require larger financial contributions from landowners. An example breakdown of project costs is provided below. Please note that costs can vary from year to year depending on the cost of seedlings, storage and delivery of plant material, contractor costs, and site-specific considerations like the location/difficulty of specific planting sites. As a non-profit organisation, Land Care Niagara is eligible to apply for additional funding to assist with the various costs of the program. Depending on what funding receives approval, the cost for the site may increase or decrease from year to year.

November 25 2021

Budget Breakdown

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Landowner | Example |
| Project | Rural Tree Planting Program |

| Projected Costs / Funds | Amount |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Tree Seedlings (5600) | \$9,492 |
| Contracting | \$6,160 |
| Delivery | \$47.27 |
| Cold Storage | \$90.91 |
| LCN Admin | \$4,375 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Total Project Cost | \$20,165.18 |
| LCN & Funders | \$15,165.18 |
| Landowner Contribution | \$5000 |

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Timeline & Project Overview

Landowners will be contacted at least 1 year prior to the start of a project (E.g., Spring of 2022 for plantings occurring in Spring of 2023). Each landowner will first have to register with Forests Ontario using the following link:

<https://forestsontario.ca/en/page/register-as-a-landowner>. Staff will be happy to assist with the registration if requested.

Landowners are also required to complete a screening questionnaire and provide Land Care Niagara with a map of their property outlining the areas they wish to plant. If Land Care Niagara determines a property is eligible for the program, a site visit will be scheduled during the summer to discuss the details of the project and address any questions or concerns. Following the site visit, LCN staff will prepare a map of the property and quantify the number of trees/acres that can be planted. Following review and approval of the landowner, LCN will provide the following documents:

1. A 15-year Stewardship Agreement is to be reviewed and signed by the landowner
2. An NPCA restoration grant application is to be signed by the landowner (LCN will fill the application out and submit the application on your behalf).
3. A detailed breakdown of the costs associated with the project, including the required landowner contribution value.

Once all three items are completed and returned to LCN, staff will secure your spot in the tree planting program for the following year. In the fall, a field tour will be conducted with LCN staff, the Regional Forester, and the planting contractor to review all properties in person. Landowners are encouraged to attend this site visit. Moving forward, LCN will coordinate the final planting prescription, order seedlings, secure contractors, acquire site plan approval from the Forester, etc. LCN will contact the landowners at the beginning of the planting year, closer to Spring, to schedule the final planting dates.

Post-Monitoring

Following the planting, landowners will be provided with a post-planting information brochure outlining the proper care and maintenance guidelines for their tree planting to ensure long-term success. If you have any concerns with your tree planting, LCN requests that you inform staff within two weeks following project completion, to ensure any issues are resolved as soon as possible.

Survival Assessments

As part of the Stewardship Agreement, Land Care Niagara will revisit the property to complete a 2-year and 5-year post-planting survival assessment. This involves a survey of the planted area to determine the overall survival percentage. If survival is less than 60%, the site may be eligible for a refill of trees depending on the level of mortality and the reasons for low survival. There may be a small financial contribution required by the landowner to help cover the cost of infilling. To ensure your property has a good survival rate, it is important to manage and maintain the planted area up to 5 years post-planting to ensure successful establishment. LCN will provide landowners with an information package related to best management practices.

Community Involvement Opportunities

Tree planting is a great opportunity to engage the community in environmental conservation and restoration initiatives. For students, in particular, it can provide hands-on learning opportunities to enhance student understanding of the ecological importance of forest cover, wildlife habitat, species diversity, water quality, and plant management. Where possible and with permission from landowners, LCN would like to invite a few volunteers to assist on sites that require hand-planting in an effort to encourage responsible land stewardship within the community.