

Missouri Tops 100 Tree City USA Communities

For more than 40 years, people who live in Tree City USA communities have enjoyed the benefits of having greener, healthier places to live. This year, for the first time ever, there are more than 100 Missouri communities participating in Tree City USA, representing 45 percent of the state's population.

Tree City USA is a national recognition program sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation and administered in the state by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). It provides a framework to help communities establish a healthy, sustainable urban forestry program.

"We are thrilled to see 104 communities in the program this year," said Russell Hinnah, MDC forestry program supervisor. "Trees bring so much value, and this program helps communities increase that value and keep trees healthy through good tree stewardship."

According to the Arbor Day Foundation, trees yield three to five times their cost in overall benefits to the cities that manage them. Trees can lower costs for storm water management and help reduce energy consumption. Research also has shown the positive impact trees have on people, from improving their health to boosting their property values.

Tree City USA requires communities to meet four fundamental standards. Each community must maintain a tree board or department, establish a tree-care ordinance, develop a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita, and celebrate Arbor Day each year.

"The Tree City USA program is flexible enough that communities of any size can participate, and we encourage city leaders to contact us to learn more about it," said Hinnah. "Our foresters are ready to assist any municipality interested in joining the program."

Kansas City is the biggest Missouri community in the Tree City USA program, with a population of 441,000 people. Glen Echo Park is the smallest, with 159 people. Several communities have participated for more than 30 years, including: Brentwood, Des Peres, Ellisville, Fenton, Kansas City, Mexico, Rock Hill Springfield, St. Louis, University City, and Webster Groves. Communities who joined Tree City USA this year include: Paris, Frontenac, Pineville, Pleasant Hill, Farmington, Bel-Nor, Pine Lawn, Bel-Ridge, and Glen Echo Park.

In 2017, Missouri Tree City USA communities invested over \$24 million in tree and forest management, including tree inventories, pruning, planting, hazard assessments, education, and planning.

Get more information about the Tree City USA program, including a list of all participating Missouri communities, at mdc.mo.gov and search "Tree City USA," or at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZh.