

Unusual History of Arbor Day



Photo by Brian Wiebler at the Arbor Day Planting in January 23, 2010 at Stoneler Road Park: Family planting a tree.

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If you want to celebrate Arbor Day the Tallahassee way, plan to come to Lafayette Park on Saturday, January 22, at 9:00 a.m. and take part in a tree planting. One hundred trees will be planted by the public in the park to replace the old, decaying trees that had to be removed from the park last year.

Bring shovels, rakes, gloves, and the whole family. It's a rewarding feeling to watch "your trees" grow in the years after you help plant them. Master Gardeners from will be on hand to help direct planting and to show interested citizens how to remove invasive exotic trees and other plant species. So loppers and pruning saws will come in handy, too. Let's make this Arbor Day another great one!

This 26th Annual Arbor Day is part of a long tradition of such events in Tallahassee. Few people know that Sheik Al Fassi, driving through Tallahassee in 1983, was so taken by our oak trees that he wrote a check for \$10,000 to be used for further beautification of the city. The late David Krause formed the group Arbor Green to use the funds and enlisted a number of organizations and individuals to help. Tree Watch; Jean McCully; DOT's Gary Henry and Jeff Caster; UF/Leon County Extension's David Marshall and Stan Rosenthal; Former County Commissioner and FSU Student Affairs Vice President Bob Henderson; Bobby Bacon; and the Chamber of Commerce all were involved to organize volunteers, get matching grants, and plant, plant, plant.

Let's look back at just a few of the memorable Arbor Day projects that have had a profound impact on our community.

Dorothy Oven Park: The camellia gardens were destroyed after a hurricane but were replanted by Arbor Green, Scouts, Civitan, Friends of Our Parks, and other volunteers.

Lake Ella: Governor/Senator Bob Graham made a special appearance to speak and dig, and Governor-elect Martinez sank a shovel to help plant the 100 trees that you see when you walk around the lake. Mad Dog Design donated and built the gazebo, and E.C. Allen sold Flowers stock to donate \$1,800 for the fountain, which is matched today by a second one.

Apalachee Parkway, from the Capitol to South Magnolia Drive: This has been our largest Arbor Day undertaking. It is estimated that more than 400 people showed up to beautify this prominent section of road. Currently we are trying to spruce it up with the help of DOT, since it's been 25 years since we planted.

The City and County have taken over Arbor Green's mission in order to qualify for the Tree City USA designation, and have done an outstanding job, rotating between City and County sites each year.

This year City Parks and Recreation Manager Chuck Goodheart has ordered a wide variety of native and flowering trees to be planted within reach of water taps. So neighbors and summer campers will keep the trees watered with the park's 50-ft. hoses. Perry Odom, Tallahassee's Electric Utility Forester, and Wolf Tree Inc. will be providing mulch for the new trees.

So please, come and take part in a true community activity. Once you take part in a few of the Arbor Day plantings, you too will feel pride as you drive past "your" trees in years to come.

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