

# FIVE STEP GUIDE TO STARTING TREEPLANTERS



openlands  
conserving nature for life



change **X**

# WELCOME

**“Welcome to TreePlanters for Health! We want to inspire and empower individuals to plant trees with neighbors in Chicago or the near-south suburbs. Share the joy of meeting new neighbors, enjoying time outside and creating a healthy environment where you live.”**

**Here you’ll find all the information, practical tips, and resources you need. There is someone to help you at each stage of the journey so don’t be afraid to get in touch!”**

**Daniella Pereira**  
Openlands



## Introduction to the Idea

### What is TreePlanters?

Openlands offers trees and hands-on education to plant trees with you and your neighbors. Openlands TreePlanters Grants provide new trees to communities in the city of Chicago and the near south suburbs. The grants encourage resiliency both through planting trees and creating or reaffirming a network of neighbors working together. Communities are asked to organize themselves, find sufficient places to plant 15 – 40 trees, meet their neighbors, reach out and invite their elected officials, and create a successful event to learn about benefits of trees and the proper way to plant and maintain their new trees.

Openlands provides the education, organization, supplies, expertise, and quality control. On planting day, the Openlands Forestry Crew and certified TreeKeepers will provide tools, trees, mulch and training for volunteers. In return, we ask that you help gather your neighbors, all commit to work the full event (four hours), and keep caring for the trees for the next few years while they get established.

### Why is it important?

The lack of understanding about the benefits that the urban forest provides has made trees and tree care a low priority. There is a general lack of knowledge and implementation of best practices for urban tree care. New trees and healthy growing trees provide social, environmental, and economic benefits to communities. We need people and institutions to recognize these values so that the region acts to address threats to the urban forest created by reduced municipal budgets, poor maintenance, neglect, and new development, while planning for an urban forest that is resilient to insect/pests/diseases and climate change.

### Background

TreeKeepers is a program of Openlands. Founded in 1963, Openlands is one of the nation’s oldest and most successful metropolitan conservation organizations, having helped secure, protect, and provide public access to more than 55,000 acres of land for parks, forest preserves, wildlife refuges, land and water greenway corridors, and urban gardens.

# STARTING TREEPLANTERS

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED

### TIME



You will need approximately 2-3 hours per week to start a TreePlanters group and then the time required will increase a little around the tree planting day.

### PEOPLE



You'll need a team of approx. 5 people to help you start TreePlanting. Spreading the word helps encourage new farms to start.

### FUNDING



Funding is needed for meeting costs, water costs and refreshments for the community celebration on planting day.

#### Who typically starts a TreePlanters?

Someone who:

- is a community member
- is passionate about your neighborhood
- is interested in learning how to plant and maintain trees

#### 5 Step Summary

- 1 Complete your 30 Day Challenge
- 2 Identify Planting Locations
- 3 Engage neighbors
- 4 Confirm Planting Day and Recruit Volunteers
- 5 Plant and Maintain the new and existing trees

#### Support and Additional Resources

Support from ChangeX: Call us at 612-232-6626. Email: [hello@changex.org](mailto:hello@changex.org)

Support from Openlands: Call on: 312-863-6250 Email: [trees@openlands.org](mailto:trees@openlands.org)

# STEP 1: COMPLETE YOUR 30 DAY CHALLENGE



The 30 Day Jumpstart Challenge has been designed to get your project off to the strongest possible start by building momentum in the first month. Once you have completed your challenge your first funding payment will be unlocked.

- Learn more about the idea you're starting**  
This '5 Step Guide' includes all you need to know about the specifics of starting your project.
- Schedule a Call**  
Pick a time that works for you to talk to a ChangeX team member about what's involved in your chosen project as well as to ensure that you understand the Guidelines & rules associated with the Challenge.
- Find 4 interested people**  
You already have your own project page on changex.org. Use the site to share the project with others and recruit neighbors, friends, or other folks with an interest to be your first supporters.
- Set up a casual kick-off meeting**  
Host a meeting with your team at your home, at a community center or in a coffee shop and come up with an action plan. You can use your page on changex.org to set up an event and invite people.
- Share a team photo and your plan of action**  
Upload a team photo taken at your first team meeting to changex.org. In addition, provide us with a narrative on what you will spend the funding on, what your next steps as a group will be, and how you hope the project will ultimately benefit your community.

## STEP 2: IDENTIFY PLANTING LOCATIONS

Once you have decided to start TreePlanters and you have your organizing team together, fill out the [TreePlanters grant](#) with your team first to better understand requirements for a successful event. A member of Openlands Forestry team will be in contact with you after you submit your application form.

Once you have spoken with Openlands about the planting, we ask you complete the [TreePlanters Grants Volunteer Agreement](#). This agreement should also be shared and signed by individuals requesting trees.

Planting locations must be in the city of Chicago or the near south suburbs and on public land. Public land is considered to be the parkways between the curb and the sidewalk in front of residential houses, school property, and some vacant lots. Openlands will no longer accept proposals that are solely for planting in Chicago Parks.



## FAQS

### How many trees do we need to plant?

To qualify for a weekday planting we need locations for 15 trees. To qualify for a weekend planting we need planting locations for at least 20 trees.

### If we have locations for over 20 trees are we guaranteed a weekend day?

Due to the limited number of available weekends during planting season (September-October and April-May), not all weekend qualified grants will be able to be planted each season. If you have submitted a quality project but we are unable to schedule your planting for the coming season, we may roll your application over to the next planting season.

### Resources and Links

TreePlanters Grant Application Form: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1BqqVZ8iQjqtUo-2AffWdSorpML8ZY8frrQAI09S9C\\_8/viewform?edit\\_requested=true](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1BqqVZ8iQjqtUo-2AffWdSorpML8ZY8frrQAI09S9C_8/viewform?edit_requested=true)

Tree Care Agreement: <https://openlandsdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/tpg-agreement.pdf>

## STEP 3: ENGAGE NEIGHBORS

Your team will need to go door to door in your neighborhood to engage your local community. If they don't have a tree(s) on their parkway already, you will be asking them if they would like to receive a tree and get support to plant the tree. Many successful grants also find additional space on public school land, in or around parks, community gardens, and land belonging to houses of worship.

You will need to get neighbor's permission, physical address, name, phone number, email address (if possible), and their agreement to plant and care for a tree during its establishment period (three years), so they can receive a permit and a tree(s). You can use this form to collect this information from your neighbors and have any neighbors who want a tree agree and sign the TreePlanters Grants Volunteer Agreement.

By having more close-by neighbors knowledgeable about trees and participating in the tree planting, the trees have a better chance of surviving and reaching maturity. Community members getting to know one another increases social cohesion. The more people on your block that have a new tree and are caring for it, the less likely it will be vandalized because the neighbors will be watching all the trees.



### Support

Support from Openlands: Call on: 312-863-6250 Email: [trees@openlands.org](mailto:trees@openlands.org)  
Support from ChangeX: Call us at 612-232-6626. Email: [hello@changex.org](mailto:hello@changex.org)

# STEP 4: CONFIRM PLANTING DAY AND RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

When you have compiled the list of neighbors who would like to have a tree planted, Openlands will send a certified arborist to inspect the spaces where a tree is requested. Not all sites can receive trees due to limited space, utilities, etc. All households requesting trees will need to provide at least one person to work on a team to plant their tree(s) and additional neighborhood trees. Once we have a date confirmed for your planting, you can begin recruiting additional volunteers!

The tree planting is a community engagement and education opportunity, so we need the community to be together. Openlands will provide additional resources to help with event promotion, and you should encourage all volunteers to register in advance of planting day using the [unique event link](#). Local volunteers will be best suited to provide tree care for the three years following the planting.

On planting day, Openlands and our trained [TreeKeepers](#) will assist volunteers with planting trees.

## How many volunteers are needed on planting day?

We require one volunteer per tree being planted, with all residences receiving trees being represented by someone. Volunteers will typically work in groups of four or five on [planting day](#).

## Spreading the word

Once a planting day is scheduled, you need to spread the word and gather volunteers. Openlands will help publicize the planting event, and you can also spread the word on social media, tagging Openlands on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

### Resources and Links

Openlands Planting Day Event page: <https://www.openlands.org/trees/forestry-events/>

About Openlands TreeKeepers: <https://www.openlands.org/trees/treekeepers/>

Planting Day schedule: <https://www.openlands.org/trees/treeplanters-grants/planting-day/>

# STEP 5: PLANT AND MAINTAIN THE NEW AND EXISTING TREES

## Planting Day

Remember to share the following information with neighborhood volunteers and community groups before planting day. Remember, we need each representative from each household receiving a tree to complete the TreePlanters Grants Volunteer Agreement. Volunteers can save time at check-in by registering in advance using the unique event link. Here is a schedule that outlines the structure of the day, and beneath the schedule we have answered several frequently asked questions about planting days.

## Maintain the new and existing trees

After planting, your neighborhood group of volunteers will need to care for the young trees in order for them to become established and thrive. A city tree must battle many urban hazards daily — from air pollution and bicycles to dogs and people. We ask that you provide basic tree care for the three years following planting (what is known as the tree's establishment period).

Watering is the MOST important thing you can do for your new tree! Watering trees during the first few years will help guarantee that your tree will grow to maturity. Due to compaction and pollution, urban soil is hydrophobic and difficult to penetrate.

- Water each young tree with 15 - 20 gallons once a week between May and October. That's three to four large buckets.
- Water slowly so the water penetrates the soil and does not run off.
- Use this additional information to help you care for your tree: <https://www.openlands.org/trees/treeplanters-grants/tree-care/>

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