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Shade Trees on Playgrounds Program Accepting School Applications through May 3

LITTLE ROCK, AR – Arkansas Agriculture’s Forestry Commission is now accepting applications for the 2019 Shade Trees on Playgrounds (STOP) program through May 3, for schools needing additional shade on playgrounds.

Selected schools will receive five shade trees, mulch, watering supplies, and planting guidelines. Officials with the Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) will help plant the trees during a ceremony with students in the fall. The STOP program application and program guidelines can be found here.

Urban forestry staff began the STOP program sixteen years ago to help lower adult skin cancer risk by reducing childhood exposure to direct sunlight on school playgrounds. Since then, more than 100 Arkansas schools have received trees. The STOP program also provides teachers with a full curriculum about the environmental benefits of trees, how shade reduces skin cancer risks, and tips for keeping trees healthy.

“The STOP program combines hands-on, outdoor experiences with classroom curriculum about the importance of trees and how to care for trees,” says Urban Forestry Program Coordinator, Krista Quinn. “We hope this program not only improves the health of Arkansas students, but also leaves a lasting impression about the value of forests and how to be good stewards of our natural resources.”

Trees are chosen by AFC staff to fit the unique region and conditions of each playground. Lacebark elms, oaks, tulip poplars, and black gum trees are common candidates for the program. To participate in the STOP program a school must meet the criteria below:

- Lack shade on a school playground
- Participate in a STOP workshop to be held in Little Rock on September 9
- Use provided curriculum materials to emphasize the importance of trees during the week leading up to the tree planting event
- Involve students in tree-related projects that culminate with a tree planting ceremony
- Hold a tree planting ceremony prior to November 15, 2019
- Be willing to maintain the trees after planting

Learn more about urban and community forestry services and programs, here.

The Arkansas Agriculture Department is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit www.aad.arkansas.gov.