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Shade Trees on Playgrounds Program Accepting School Applications through May 18

STATEWIDE, ARK. – The 2018 Shade Trees on Playgrounds (STOP) program is accepting applications through May 18 for schools needing additional shade on playgrounds. Winning schools receive five shade trees, mulch, watering supplies, and planting guidelines. Officials with the Agriculture Department’s Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) plant trees during a ceremony with students each fall. Find an online STOP application and program guidelines [here](#).

Urban forestry staff began the STOP program fifteen 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 is one of our most rewarding initiatives because it gives us the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with students and teachers in an outdoor setting.” said Alison Litchy, AFC Urban Forestry Coordinator. “We strive to make the program a fun and memorable way to educate students about the many environmental and health benefits of trees, including the important protection they provide in reducing a child’s risk of adult skin cancer.”

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 4
- 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 October 31, 2018
- Be willing to maintain the trees planted

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.

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