

# NEBRASKA

## Nebraska Forest Service

**The Nebraska Forest Service and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum found ways to break down barriers to come up with a successful new tree planting grant program. Perhaps even more important than getting trees in the ground, together, they introduced an underserved audience to tree planting and the importance of the community forest.**

The Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) and partner, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA), have been managing a variety of tree planting grants for years. Some time ago, they realized that their typical grant process, often targeted at larger projects, didn't work well for smaller projects and could be seen as intimidating for less experienced applicant organizations. They heard from enough potential applicants that they decided to try something new, and the mini-grant program was born.

To reduce barriers and better accommodate the less experienced and underfunded groups, their mini-grant program offered:

- A simple, one-page application
- Up to 10 pre-selected trees for free
- Delivery to community or regional pick-up site
- Outreach materials and templates
- Detailed guidance

The tremendous response quickly made it clear that the new program was a success. What was offered was substantial enough to motivate “first-timers” to try a project, but easy enough that they weren't overwhelmed. The number and size of trees were enough to have an impact, but small enough to manage. The match requirement—volunteer planting/care and outreach activities—allowed those with limited funds to contribute what they did have—time, effort, creativity, and enthusiasm.

NFS and NSA are extremely happy with the results. Although the projects are relatively small, the large number of projects and outreach requirements helped spread messages to a broader, more diverse audience. The smaller projects have helped bring in many communities and groups, often in underserved areas that hadn't been able to participate before, including small villages, inner-city neighborhoods, and Native American communities. In addition, the emphasis on species diversity has resulted

in a wide variety of underused species to be introduced to communities. The resulting trees planted and the broad audience throughout Nebraska that has been educated and inspired make it clear that this was an idea worth pursuing.

Year	Trees	Communities	Projects
2018	598	47	64
2019	577	49	62
2020	591	56	76
Average	588.67	50.67	67.33
Totals	1,766	152*	202

*\*Not unique communities because of some duplication from year to year.*



*(Left) In a Lincoln neighborhood with declining canopy, a gap is filled.  
Photo: Nebraska Statewide Arboretum*

*(Right) An enthusiastic, next generation tree-planter.  
Photo: Nebraska Statewide Arboretum*