

# SOUTH DAKOTA

## SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, DIVISION OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION & FORESTRY

Urban forests provide similar benefits to other types of forests in many regards. Recognizing the importance of urban forests and the impacts they have on the community, South Dakota has been working to promote urban forests and increase canopy cover across the state. Since 1991, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture: Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry has been striving to help communities establish and grow their urban forests through the Community Forestry Challenge Grant program. A portion of the division's annual allocation of Urban and Community Forestry Assistance funds from the USDA Forest Service is awarded to communities in the form of challenge grants in hopes that this will showcase the major benefits of maintaining urban forests.

These challenge grants, of up to \$5,000, are used to fund community forestry projects that solve a specific community forestry problem or demonstrate the importance of trees in South Dakota communities. Deseree Corrales and her daughter's Girl Scout Troup, along with other partners in Pierre, SD, have taken advantage of the SD Challenge Grant to construct and operate a community orchard.



Front of the community orchard showcasing the donated fence and sheltered sign with current events. *Photo Credit: Deseree Corrales.*

Girl Scout Troop #40080 has taken the lead in creating and caring for a community orchard in Pierre, SD - the first community orchard to exist in South Dakota. This project is part of the 'Girl Scout Leadership Experience', which allows Girl Scouts to research, plan, and execute a community service project they feel passionate about. The community orchard began as a conversation amongst the troop which led to bringing the idea before the City of Pierre Arbor Board.

In December 2017, the Girls Scouts presented in front of Pierre City Commissioners asking for land and other vital resources and received unanimous approval. The project received three grants: SD Urban Forestry Challenge Grant, Wellmark Grant, and the USFS Pollinator/Community Garden Grant. Local businesses and families also supported the project through tree sponsorships and ad sponsor signs placed on the orchard fence.

This project engaged community participants by giving them an opportunity to be involved in establishing an orchard. A community planting day was organized to bring together a group of 40 people of all ages to plant 24 fruit trees (peaches, plums, pears, apples, and cherries). A local fencing company volunteered their expertise and time to build a 6-foot-tall fence around the premises. Pierre Young Professionals also donated their time to help with the fence. Small groups have participated in numerous work days over the summer to install landscaping fabric and mulch and to plant perennial plants to attract pollinators.

Troop #40080 has taken the lead in caring for the newly established trees/plants for this first year, watering, weeding, and other tasks with the support of the City of Pierre Arbor Board. A message board is posted at the entrance to the orchard with a list of current activities and educational information. In the coming years, educational events for adults and youth will be provided which will include topics such as: Growing Fruit Trees, Pollinators, Transplanting, Create a Healthy Policulture, Benefits of Sourcing Food Locally, Composting, Rainwater Collection, and Healthy Eating Habits. The troop will also host harvest days to gather produce to donate to local community meals and food pantry. The Discovery Center will utilize the space as an outdoor campus to hold nature and nutrition classes/workshops. Local schools will use the orchard as a hands-on 'Harvest of the Month' classroom to introduce school children to various vegetables and fruits each month. Educational signs, in both English and Spanish, will be posted at the Orchard covering the following topics: benefits of sourcing foods locally, companion planting (plant/soil health), nutrition information/use tips for produce grown in the orchard. Each tree/plant will also be labeled. The orchard will also have a compost pile and rainwater collection system from the shelter and tool shed roofs (to be built in 2019).



Honeycrisp apple tree and sign donated as a memorial for a loved one in the community. *Photo Credit: Deseree Corrales.*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

South Dakota Department of Agriculture, Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry  
<https://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/>