



Earth Day Native Tree Giveaway Program

Guidelines

Purpose

In an effort to support educators, wildlife, and instill an admiration for and connection with nature in the generations to come, MWCD has developed an Earth Day Native Tree Giveaway program. This program aims to provide public and private regional elementary school students with seedlings to celebrate Earth Day to its fullest potential. Trees provided to schools for distribution to students, with the expectation that they will be planted at students' homes or property. This program provides children with the opportunity to watch their seedlings grow throughout their lifetime and see firsthand the benefits trees bring.

Trees are remarkable resources. From air quality improvement and soil stabilization, to cleaning and filtering polluted water, and even flood control; trees are truly invaluable. With a mission in conservation and flood control, this endeavor aligns perfectly with the Official Plan of the MWCD.

Eligible Applicants

Superintendents (or those with the written authority from the superintendent) are encouraged to apply. Applications are open to districts who agree to distribute the awarded seedlings to elementary grade levels (kindergarten through the 5th grade) within the *physical boundary* of the Muskingum River and Duck Creek watersheds. Applications from an authorized person who is not the superintendent (i.e. principal, school administrator, teacher, etc.) will be accepted and reviewed only when submitted with a letter of approval from the school superintendent and/or the school board.

Cross-sector collaborations will also be accepted and reviewed (ex. local soil & water conservation district partnering with a school and/or school district). Letters of support must demonstrate this partnership.

General public, daycares, high schools, colleges, or schools outside the physical watershed boundary of the Muskingum River or Duck Creek are unfortunately not eligible for this program.

Eligible Requests

Applicants must request a minimum of 210 seedlings but can request up to a maximum of 600 seedlings. Applications must outline the participating school(s), the grade level(s), and the anticipated number of students reached. Applications must also demonstrate capacity to accept, maintain, and distribute the requested seedlings. Schools may only submit one application within a two-year period.

Expectations

Schools within the Watershed

Only schools within the physical boundary of the Muskingum River Watershed, as well as the Duck Creek Watershed, are eligible for awards. Portions of those watersheds can be found in the following counties: Ashland, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Knox, Licking, Medina, Monroe, Morgan, Morrow, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Richland, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas, Washington, and Wayne. Attached in Exhibit A is a map of the Muskingum River and Duck Creek watersheds to showcase the eligible counties. If you are unsure if your school qualifies, please reach out to the contact information listed below.

Award Cycles

Schools may only receive one award within a two-year period. For instance, schools that apply in 2025 and are awarded a tree giveaway to occur on Earth Day 2026 may apply again in 2027 for a giveaway on Earth Day 2028.

Minimum Requests

Applicants must be able to receive a minimum of 210 seedlings but may request up to a maximum of 600 seedlings. Applications may request any combination of the offered species to meet the minimum requirements.

Species Will Vary Year-to-Year

The MWCD is committed to supporting conservation efforts that benefit human health, wildlife, and the environment. Available species may vary year-to-year to increase biodiversity and aid wildlife habitat across the region. Additionally, MWCD will make concerted efforts to ensure the species offered each year are appropriate for a variety of growing conditions and situations including, but not limited to, urban settings and small yards, shade benefits, aesthetics, tolerance of varying soil conditions, and maximizing wildlife value. In other words, there's a tree for every home. The 2026 Giveaway Tree Species are provided below (Table 1).

Approved Species	Height	Site Conditions Needed	Additional Notes
Eastern Redbud (<i>Cercis canadensis</i>)	Small-Medium 20'-30'	Average soil, tolerates clay soil, shade tolerant, full sun preferred.	Vibrant pink blooms in spring, can be grown as single or multi-stemmed tree with proper pruning.
Red Maple (<i>Acer rubra</i>)	Large 40'-60'	Adaptable to most soil types, shade tolerant, full sun preferred.	Inconspicuous blooms in the spring, excellent shade trees for cooling sidewalks, parking lots, and playgrounds, spectacular red fall foliage.
Red Oak (<i>Quercus rubrum</i>)	Large 60'-70'	Best planted in average soil but tolerant of drier conditions, thrives in full sun, tolerant of shade.	A wildlife haven that provides excellent resources for wildlife, butterfly host plant, acorns adored by deer, squirrels, and birds alike, great choice for shading sidewalks, parking lots, and playgrounds, fantastic fall color.
Serviceberry (<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>)	Small 15'-30'	Average soil, adaptable to most soil types, well-drained areas are best, tolerant of shade.	A fantastic small tree that produces edible purple berries and is favored by birds, white blooms in spring.
White Oak (<i>Quercus alba</i>)	Large 80'-100'	Best planted in average soil but does well in wetter conditions, thrives in full sun, tolerant of shade.	A wildlife haven that provides excellent resources for wildlife, butterfly host plant, acorns adored by deer, squirrels, and birds alike, great choice for shading sidewalks, parking lots, and playgrounds, fantastic fall color.

Table 1: Native trees provide tremendous benefits to us including shade, oxygen, soil stabilization, rainwater interception and infiltration. Trees also provide important ecosystem services such as food and shelter for wildlife and floral resources for pollinators, just to name a few. MWCD finds it vital to support and promote healthy habitat along with the services they provide.

Awards Will Only Provide Seedlings

Awards will not provide any funding, material, or labor to individually package each seedling. Applicants are expected to provide and coordinate the necessary packaging materials for individual transport of seedlings to students' homes. Successful applications will detail how seedlings will be distributed and cared for in the Distribution Plan section of the application.

Note: Packaging seedlings can be a fun, educational, and interactive way for students to understand and be involved in the early stages of seedling care. Students can use old newspapers and reuse plastic grocery bags to help create the necessary package needed to transport their seedling home. Newspapers should be damp, not sopping, and used to wrap the roots to keep them moist until the time of planting (immediately once home). Place the wrapped seedling in a plastic grocery bag and loosely tie the bag shut on the trunk, just above the roots.

Creating a Distribution Plan

Successful applications will thoroughly outline a distribution plan to cover the school's capacity to accept a minimum of 210 seedlings, coordinate the delivery of the seedlings with a school-appointed Distribution Coordinator, properly manage and store the seedlings until they are given to students, distribute the requested seedlings to the students involved (which may include students in other schools/locations -

see Involving Other Schools below), and to highlight any educational activities or events occurring in conjunction with this giveaway.

Appointing a Distribution Coordinator

Applications must appoint an individual to the role of Distribution Coordinator for this giveaway. The Distribution Coordinator will be responsible for accepting, properly storing, and managing the seedlings up to the day they are given to students (ideally one week or less). The Distribution Coordinator will also be responsible for distributing the seedlings to the students and locations involved. The Distribution Coordinator can be the applicant, school staff, a school-affiliated member (a vetted volunteer, school board member, etc.), or an approved collaborative partner (ex. Soil and Water Conservation District).

Delivery and Acceptance of Seedlings

Awarded applicants will receive a single delivery of seedlings to one location. Applications must identify the location for delivery as well as the designated Distribution Coordinator who will accept the delivery and care for the seedlings until they are given to students. A signature will be required upon delivery. For large quantity requests, awardees may receive more than one shipment of seedlings to the sole destination identified on the application. Regardless, only one location per district will receive the delivery.

MWCD staff will make an effort to coordinate the delivery logistics with the Distribution Coordinator and the school. Delivery will aim to be within the week of, or before, Earth Day, and delivered between typical business hours. Shipment and tracking information will be shared with the school and the Distribution Coordinator. Should any issue with delivery arise including damages, missing components, incorrect order, failed delivery attempt, or other, please report issues to MWCD point of contact.

Arrival and Management of Seedlings

Seedlings will arrive as 12–24-inch bare root, dormant seedlings in bundles of 25 and in the quantity requested. All orders will arrive in a corrugated cardboard box with an inner plastic liner holding the seedlings. Sphagnum moss will be clumped loosely around the seedlings' roots. Labels may be present with bundles of seedlings but will not be on individual seedlings. Seedlings should be sorted in a cool dark place and left unopened until the day of giveaway. Keeping seedlings in a cool dark place will minimize stress and help retain moisture for the roots.

Involving Other Schools

While MWCD strongly encourages applicants to partner with other schools (within or outside of the school's district) to both broaden the award's impact and to meet the minimum requirements, seedlings will only be shipped to one location. It will be at the expense of the district to ensure the seedlings reach the other school locations.

If you want multiple school locations to receive seedlings, we suggest one of the following options:

- Have individual schools apply on their own (meeting a minimum order of 210 seedlings); or
- Give the Distribution Coordinator the additional role of coordinating between and delivering to the other schools/locations; or
- Work with your local soil & water conservation district (or other section 501 conservation agency) and ask them to assume the role of Distribution Coordinator.

Supplementing Awards with Education

Awardees are expected to supplement this opportunity with education on topics such as the benefits of trees, trees' impact on wildlife and the environment, and providing instruction on where and how to plant their trees at home. For more ideas on tree education, consider visiting the Project Learning Tree website.

Final Reporting is Required

Awardees will be expected to complete a follow-up report to cover the total number of students participating, grade levels, the educational activities that occurred, and any permissible marketing material (photos, testimonial, press coverage, etc.). An awardee's failure to complete and return the final report may result in denied awards in the future.

Application Process

The 2025 application window is September 15 through October 14. Applications submitted before or after this window will not be accepted. Applications will be reviewed for completeness and merit. Complete applications detailing the means to execute an award successfully will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Applicants will be notified of their application status via email unless an alternative contact is provided. Applications can be found at www.MWCD.org. Please submit your signed and completed applications by mail or email (in **PDF** format) to the contact listed below. Applications submitted via email will receive confirmation.

Agreement

A grant agreement will be executed between MWCD and awardee. Awardees are expected to complete a final report detailing the results of the giveaway. Details of this report will be provided. Failure to complete and return the final report may result in denied awards in the future.

Contact

Applications as well as questions and information regarding this program should be directed to:

Rome Marinelli, Watershed Coordinator
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District
1319 Third St. NW
New Philadelphia, Ohio 44663
Phone: (330) 343-6647 ext. 2707
Email: Rmarinelli@MWCD.org



Earth Day Native Tree Giveaway

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can apply?

This grant is only available to public and private schools and school districts within the physical boundaries of the Muskingum River and Duck Creek watersheds. Superintendents are encouraged to apply but requests may also be submitted by a school administrator or faculty member with written support from the superintendent and/or school board. Cross sector collaborations (ex. local soil and water conservation district) will be accepted.

Is there a minimum request for seedlings?

The 2025 minimum request is 210 seedlings. Applicants that cannot handle this volume of seedlings should consider partnering with other schools within or outside of the school district. If this happens, be sure to note this in your application.

Is there a maximum request for seedlings?

Yes. Recipients will receive a maximum of 600 seedlings.

I need more than the maximum request for my school/school district, what can I do?

For individual schools requesting more than 600:

- Provide justification in your application. MWCD reserves the right to review these requests and provide awards as we deem necessary.

For school districts requesting more than 600:

- Provide individual applications per school ensuring that each application meets the minimum requirements of 210 seedlings.

Are schools expected to coordinate the delivery of the seedlings?

MWCD staff will coordinate the shipment of seedlings to the designated address. The awardee will be notified of an anticipated delivery date. Shipments will only occur to one location and to one designated Distribution Coordinator.

What do I do once the seedlings are delivered?

Bare root seedlings will arrive in boxes. The seedlings will be bundled in sets of 25. Seedlings will need to be kept in a cool dark place until they're ready to be individually packaged and given out to the students. Please remember that seedlings will need to be individually packaged with supportive medium (damp newspaper, water-storing crystals, etc.). Individual packing material is not included and is the responsibility of the awardee.

Can I submit my application prior to the opening of the grant window or will MWCD reserve my application if I send it after the grant window closes?

Submissions outside the application window will not be accepted. Follow MWCD on social media or subscribe to our mailing list for grant updates and other opportunities.

My child is home schooled, can they participate?

MWCD wants this opportunity to be available to as many children as possible. Our goal is to reach those in grades K-5 to help instill a deeper connection with and an interest in nature. If your child is considered in the grade levels of K-5 and the school district where you reside is participating in this tree giveaway, we recommend reaching out to them to inquire if your child can join in on the activities. Alternately, school districts should contact home schoolers to gauge their interest in any tree giveaway award the school may receive.

My students loved this program; can I apply again next year?

Unfortunately, applicants may only apply one (1) time within a two (2) year period. This would mean if you applied and were awarded in 2025 (for seedling giveaway on the 2026 Earth Day), you would not be eligible to apply again until 2027 (for seedling giveaway on the 2028 Earth Day).

Exhibit A

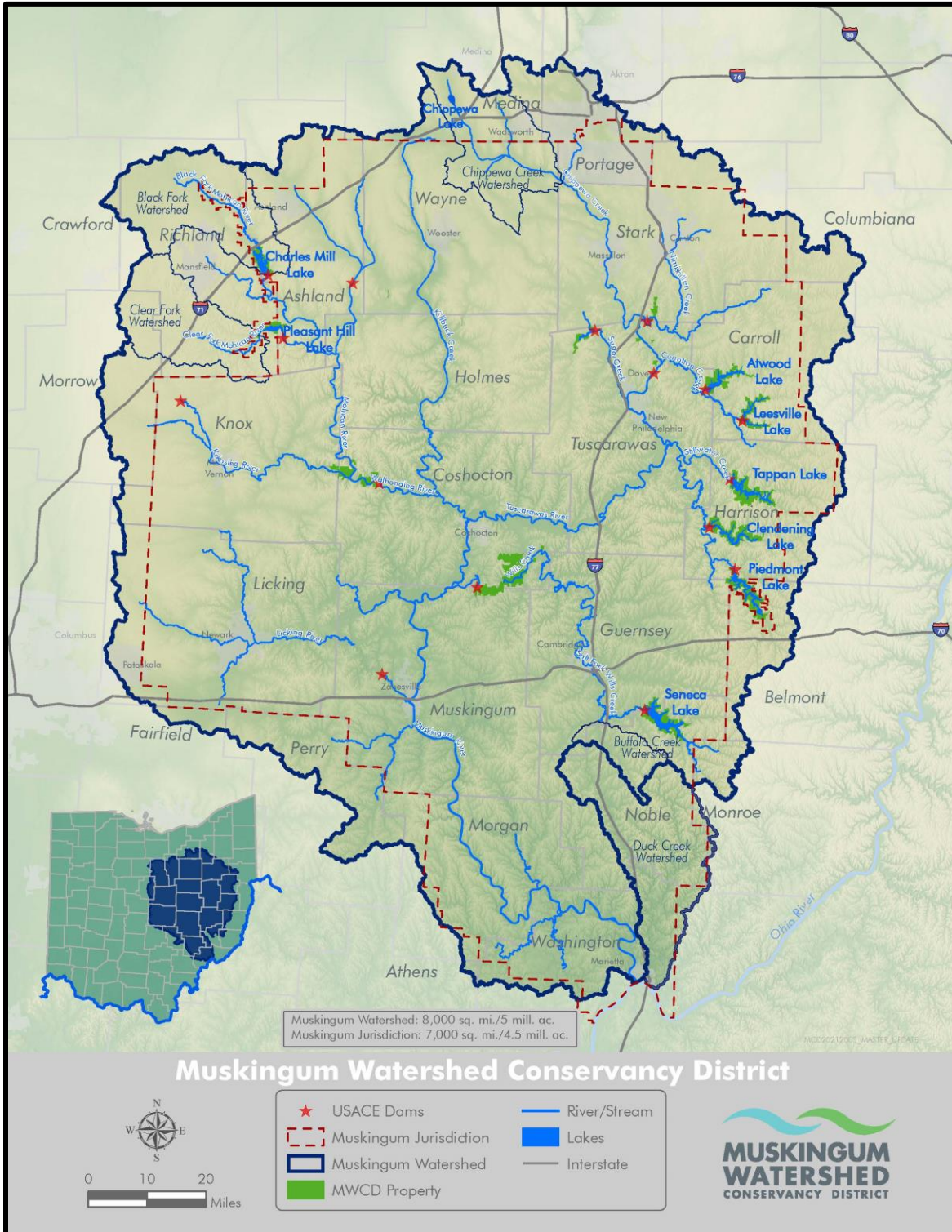


Exhibit A depicts the Muskingum River and Duck Creek Watershed boundaries in which elementary schools are eligible to apply to the MWCD Earth Day Tree Giveaway program.