

Frequently Asked Questions about Trees Across Colorado

How and Why to set up a tree program using Trees Across Colorado

Can you tell me more about the Trees Across Colorado program? Trees Across Colorado is a program of the Colorado Tree Coalition (CTC), a nonprofit state-wide organization dedicated to preserving, renewing and enhancing Colorado's community forests. Trees Across Colorado (TAC) offers low cost shade trees to groups all across Colorado. The trees, including many low to moderately low water demand varieties, will be 6-12 feet tall on arrival in April, 1 - 1 ½ inches in diameter and come bare root (BR) or balled and burlaped (B&B) and in 2014, also in containers with holes that air prune the trees (APC).

Why does TAC offer some trees bare root and how do they survive? Bare root trees (no dirt around the root systems) weigh a lot less and take up less space in a truck than B&B or container grown trees so shipping rates are much cheaper. If handled properly and planted correctly, their survival rate is higher because they lose much less of their root systems than balled and burlaped (B&B) trees when dug for transplanting. Also, determining the proper planting depth for bare root trees is much easier because the root system and the top root are very visible.

Handling bare root trees does present challenges. They are shipped in refrigerated trucks when dormant (the leaves have not started to come out) so the trees are not demanding nutrients and water yet through their root systems. **The bare roots must be protected from drying out until the tree is planted.** Protection in damp mulch from the time the bare root trees are unloaded from the refrigerated trucks until they are planted is critical for survival. The bare roots must be surrounded by damp mulch during transport from the TAC unloading site to your local distribution site, and then while being stored until distribution, and finally during transport to the planting site. Putting the roots in large trash bags with a little bit of wet mulch protects them during transport to the planting site. This is critical to the survival of bare root trees.

What is special about the trees grown in containers with holes that air-prune the roots?

At the nursery, these trees are grown in a patented system of a porous container within a larger solid container designed to prevent girdling roots common in container grown trees. The inner container has many small, funnel-like bulges with holes at the end exposed to air. As the roots reach the wall of the inner container, they are guided into the bulges so they don't start growing in circles around the inside of the pot. When the roots reach the hole they stop growing, encouraging the tree to produce more roots elsewhere. The tree grows many more fibrous roots inside the container resulting in a mass of smaller more fibrous roots that will absorb more soil nutrients and foster quicker establishment, once the porous container is removed during planting.

However, during transport and while waiting to be planted, the tree is in a porous container and **MUST BE WATERED FREQUENTLY**. Storing the trees in damp mulch that is kept damp while being stored is best. Unloading them onto hot asphalt without a layer of damp mulch underneath them will dry out the roots. During transport to the planting site, placing the porous container in a plastic trash bag will protect the container and tree roots from the open air.

Please visit www.supertrees.com for pictures of how these trees are grown and for instructions on planting.

The trees grown in air-pruning containers will be about 1¼ inch in caliper, between 6 – 12 feet tall, and weigh no more than 80 pounds. The container snaps off and must be removed during planting.

They are more expensive due to higher labor costs. People who have planted these trees say a higher survival rate with quicker early growth results from the extensive fibrous root system.

Why should we purchase trees through Trees Across Colorado instead of another source? Several reasons that I think you should get the trees through TAC are:

1. **The price is right** for what you get. They are cheap because I volunteer my time and because you come and get the trees. TAC gets a good price for the trees because we buy in large quantity;
2. **The trees are a size that volunteers, including nonprofessionals and youngsters, can handle.** Most of the trees are 6-12 feet tall on arrival, the balled and burlaped trees weigh from 50-75 pounds and the bare root trees weigh about 5 pounds each. Trees this size are easier to plant, recover more quickly from transplant shock and provide a great opportunity to educate your community about proper tree planting methods.
3. **The trees are coming from reliable sources.** We know the growers. One grower in eastern Oregon is a major supplier to a huge nursery north of Denver through whom I pay the bill. These trees begin in soil and weather more like ours than many places where folks get trees at low prices. The other supplier provides trees that transplant here easily bare root.
4. The last and to me most important reason to get trees through TAC is that this program also **benefits the CTC.** Any funds left over after the trees and shipping are paid go to the Colorado Tree Coalition which is important as federal funds for community forestry diminish.

Who are the “groups” that get trees through Trees Across Colorado? Can homeowners purchase trees?

One of the goals of Trees Across Colorado is to involve community members in planting and caring for trees. In some communities, parks/forestry employees organize the program for their community but there are some folks who volunteer to do it. Arvada’s program is organized by two retired Master Gardener volunteers who work closely with their parks and forestry staff in choosing the trees varieties best for their area, designing the flyer distributed to Arvada residents through a city mailing to all households, collecting the orders and payment and organizing the tree distribution and planting training in April.

In other communities, homeowners associations and neighborhood groups have put together programs of all sizes in their own areas.

The only limits I have are: An order should be at least 20 trees; The CTC is paid in two checks (1/2 in Jan, the rest in April); and the group organizer **MUST** come on time on the week-day (probably Tuesday) in April properly prepared to unload and transport their group’s trees “home” to their community. I urge organizers to work with their local, state or US forest service folks to choose trees that will do well in their soil, zone and altitude. I also hope groups will do it yearly, starting an annual community Arbor Day event.

Will this compete with local nurseries? Perhaps, but they can also benefit. If organized as a community event, it’s an opportunity for educational outreach about the value and benefits of trees, proper tree selection, placement, planting techniques and tree maintenance. Participants may whet their appetites to go buy materials and more at their local nurseries. They can learn how to make better choices from local nursery stock. We all know places that sell any tree to anyone, regardless of soil or water needs.

I’m a city/state/ county employee and I don’t have the budget or time to do this!

1. Use volunteers: Throughout the planning process, think of ways to use volunteers to help tabulating tree requests, at unloading and/or tree distribution and/or planting. A few possible sources are: your Tree Board, Master Gardeners (two of them run a 200-300 tree-per-year program in Arvada), Scouts, and employee groups, retired or still working, of local companies.

2. Start small: Don’t bite off more than you can chew. Don’t order more than you can afford. Start the first year with 20 or 30 trees of three or four varieties, all the same price, and offer them to the public with back up planting sites at schools, parks, a golf course or cemetery for left over trees. I have

sample forms used in Arvada and Littleton. Some organizers distribute a flier in city mailings or newsletters, or on their city or town web page. Some have school kids take the fliers home to their parents, or have interested community volunteers (your tree board?) distribute the fliers door-to-door in targeted neighborhoods.

It's better to have too many tree requests and ask people to come back next year (and maybe they can help you organize it!) than to have a lot of trees left over.

3. Money: If homeowners are getting the trees, have them pay for the trees. In Arvada, the organizers handle all the paperwork but have worked it out with the City to deposit the checks and have people pay the full price. Other communities have a subsidy for people who plant the trees along the street but pay full price for yard trees. Because the prices vary for the trees, some communities charge one price for bare root and a higher price for the B&B.

The Colorado Tree Coalition has grants but they announce their grant recipients after the deadline for Trees Across Colorado so call me unless you have a backup plan.

Do you provide the trees at cost? The price charged for the trees is the wholesale cost plus shipping plus a few dollars per tree to cover the volunteer time donated to the CTC. The cost is also rounded up to make calculations and administration easier.

Is there a money back guarantee? What does a community organizer tell a former tree recipient who asks for a free replacement because last year's tree died?

Trees Across Colorado and the Colorado Tree Coalition does not offer any guarantees. We do everything we can to make sure that the trees are in good shape when each group picks up their trees from the refrigerated trucks coming from the growers. We ask each group to check their trees as they are loading them up to take "home" to their new communities. The prices groups pay for their trees are slightly above the wholesale cost plus shipping and Trees Across Colorado and the Colorado Tree Coalition have no funds to cover replacement trees.

The supplying nurseries get paid almost immediately after Trees Across Colorado gets the trees in April. We can refuse to pay for trees that are damaged or dead when they come off the refrigerated trucks, but once we accept them, we pay for them. We ask each group to check their trees at that time to verify their trees are acceptable.

Some groups provide replacement trees at no cost. Those groups either get help from their own towns/cities or they charge recipients slightly above their cost for the trees to cover miscellaneous program costs like bags to carry mulch and/or bare root trees, printing planting instructions, as well as replacement trees the next year.

Comments or more questions? Please contact Gertie Grant, 303-744-3882 or gertiegrant@estreet.com