



2024 GROWING URBAN FORESTS IN THE FACE OF EMERALD ASH BORER *GRANT OVERVIEW*

The [Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program](#) (VT UCF), a partnership between the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation and University of Vermont Extension, seeks applicants needing financial assistance for tree planting and reforestation efforts in consideration of the impact of the invasive forest pest emerald ash borer (EAB).

Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer grants will support:

- Ash tree removals on public and publicly managed lands in municipalities,
- Tree planting in the public right-of-way or in public places such as parks, village greens, and educational campuses and
- Tree planting on private land, provided approved permissions and agreements are in place.

With special funds through the USDA Forest Service's *Sustainable Urban Forest Resilience Program*, VT UCF was selected to work with communities to support more resilient urban and community forests, with a focus on Vermont's most populated areas. This funding is intended for municipalities and applicants that are prepared to manage the impacts that EAB will have on their public ash trees and overall tree population.

This document contains information to support grant applications and project development. Please note that there are three grant categories in 2024: *Communities Caring for Canopy*, ***Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer***, and *Urban & Community Forestry Grants*. This overview document pertains to the second category listed.

There is [a common application](#) form for all grant categories; applicants may apply for more than one grant category but must submit a separate application for each. VT UCF has developed a [2024 grant eligibility map](#) to support applicants and project development.

WHO MAY APPLY

Municipalities, public educational institutions, and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations may apply for a *Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer* grant.

Eligibility for funding will be determined in accordance with the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#); **projects must take place within a 1-mile radius of a:**

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

- [Designated Downtown](#),
- [Designated Village Center](#),
- [Designated New Town Center](#),
- [Designated Growth Center](#), or
- [Designated Neighborhood Development Area](#).

Refer to VT UCF's [2024 grant eligibility map](#) for guidance. The Department of Housing and Community Development's [Planning Atlas](#) may also be a helpful resource. Priority will be given to applicants that can demonstrate need for funding assistance and documented prevalence of ash within the community.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Grant awards will be **between \$5,000 and \$50,000**, for a total of \$125,000 in 1:1 cost-share grants available in 2024. These funds will be distributed through a competitive grant review and selection process.

Funding for this program is available from the USDA Forest Service under Code of Federal Domestic Assistance 10.664, Cooperative Forestry Assistance, Federal Fiscal Year 2024.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Projects should create and foster more resilient urban forests by diversifying tree species planted and specifically addressing the loss of ash trees due to the [invasive emerald ash borer](#). Projects **must take place within a 1-mile radius** of an area that is designated through one of the Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#) and must include components of **one or more** of the three following focus areas:

1. Removal of ash trees located in public ways or places, as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#) or at public educational institutions;
2. Tree planting in public ways or public places as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#) or at public educational institutions in proximity to prior ash tree removals; and/or
3. Tree planting on private property, provided the municipality or applicant coordinates the planting of the trees and that approved permissions and agreements are in place.

Note that if a project includes removal of public ash trees, replacement tree plantings are a required component.

Although not required, projects **may** also include one or more other components directly related to EAB and resilient urban and community forests, including:

- Increasing municipal staff capacity to plan for and manage public trees,
- Public outreach and engagement, and/or
- Ensuring the establishment and success of any trees planted through the proposed project.

Project funds may **not** be used to support insecticide treatment of ash trees, a long-term commitment not adequately supported by a grant. However, the costs associated with these activities could be used

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

as project cost-share match. Applicants are encouraged to review the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program's [emerald ash borer management webpage](#) prior to applying. The page contains educational, planning, budgeting, and implementation resources that may be helpful in preparing a project proposal.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT GUIDELINES

Below are general guidelines for each of the eligible project components.

REMOVAL OF ASH TREES

Project funds may be allocated for the removal of ash trees in public ways or places, as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#) or at public educational institutions.

- Ash tree removals associated with the project **must** take place within a 1-mile radius of an area designated through one of the Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#). VT UCF's [grant eligibility map](#) and the Department's [Planning Atlas](#) may be helpful resources.
- These funds may exclusively be used for removal of ash (*Fraxinus*) trees; Vermont's three native ash species are green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), and black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*).
- These funds may exclusively be used for the removal of public ash trees; removal of trees on private land is not eligible for funding.
- All ash tree removals and disposal of wood waste should adhere to the State of [Vermont's Slow the Spread](#) recommendations. The project description should outline how ash wood will be managed or addressed and describe any unique or innovative ways that the applicant will use ash wood from public trees.
- For funding of public ash tree removals, eligible applicants must have completed an ash tree inventory or survey of the project location. Additionally, the applicant is encouraged to submit with the application an emerald ash borer management plan (draft or final) or a documented management strategy. The ash removal activities in the proposed project should align with this plan or management strategy.
- The estimated number and approximate size class distribution of ash trees to be removed must be included in the project proposal. Recommended size classes are <12" diameter at breast height (DBH), 12"-24" DBH, and >24" DBH.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

REPLACEMENT TREE PLANTINGS

If the project includes removal of ash trees, replacement tree plantings are a required component. Project funds may be used for the purchase, delivery, and planting of trees in public ways and public places as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#) or at public educational institutions. Tree planting components of proposed projects should be explicitly related to a strategy to address the loss of ash trees due to EAB. Eligible projects should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Tree plantings **must** take place within a 1-mile radius of an area that is designated through one of the Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#). VT UCF's [grant eligibility map](#) and the Department's [Planning Atlas](#) may be helpful resources.
- Replacement tree plantings may occur at the site where ash tree(s) have been removed, or at another location, with a goal to increase tree canopy cover over an area.
- Interplanting (planting between two existing trees) should occur in areas with high existing populations of ash trees, where there is adequate space to plant new trees to eventually replace the ash trees when they are eventually removed.
- The estimated total number of trees that will be planted must be included in the project proposal. Note that the number of replacement tree plantings does not need to match the number of ash trees removed in a project; the review committee will consider location of removals and plantings, and specific applicant situation.
- All proposals must provide a draft species list and a maintenance plan for all planted trees, including provisions for replacing trees that have not survived.
- All tree planting activities associated with a project must adhere to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 Standards for Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Management.
- Trees planted using project funding should be a minimum of 1 ½ inches in caliper and no larger than 3 ½ inches in caliper. Balled and burlapped or bare root stock are the preferred stocking materials; VT UCF cautions that large (>1" DBH) container-grown trees may lead to root binding or girdling. Please refer to the VT UCF factsheet [Planning to Purchase a Tree](#) for guidance on selecting high quality trees.
- The [Vermont Tree Selection Guide](#) should be used as a reference for site assessment and tree selection.
- VT UCF encourages project coordinators to consider purchasing trees from Vermont-based nurseries. Visit the [Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association's](#) website for more information.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

- No ash trees (*Fraxinus spp.*) should be included in the replacement planting or interplanting efforts.

TREE PLANTINGS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

Tree planting on private property can occur when property owners are willing to support community-wide tree programs by providing permission for the applicant to plant and, potentially, maintain trees on private property bordering public ways and places. Recognizing that this is a strategy that may be of interest to municipalities and organizations as they consider how to recover from the loss of ash trees due to EAB, it is eligible for this grant program, provided the guidelines below are met:

- A sample written agreement must be included with the application. This agreement must address:
 - Responsibilities of both the property owner and the municipality,
 - Tree care and survival, and
 - Duration for which the agreement will exist.

[Examples of existing agreements](#) can be found on the VT UCF website.
- The written agreement sample or template must be approved by both VT UCF staff and the program's Regional UCF Program Coordinator with the USDA Forest Service prior to the project's initiation.
- Upon approval, a written agreement must be signed by both a municipal or organizational representative and the property owner for each property on which a tree or multiple trees will be planted; copies of these agreements must be submitted with the final project report.
- Tree plantings **must** take place within a 1-mile radius of an area that is designated through one of the Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#). VT UCF's [grant eligibility map](#) and the Department's [Planning Atlas](#) may be helpful resources.
- Tree selection and tree planting specifications should adhere to the same guidelines as outlined under the *Replacement Tree Plantings* heading above.

INCREASING MUNICIPAL STAFF CAPACITY

Project funds may be used for staff training or personnel costs related to mitigating the impacts of EAB. Applicants are encouraged to consider training needs or support for their appointed tree warden, road crews, public works staff, and/or parks department staff. Applicants may also request funds to support work with regional groups, neighboring municipalities, or other organizations or public educational institutions.

PUBLIC OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Project funds may be used to support public engagement regarding the proposed project and/or the municipality or applicant's proposed EAB management strategy. This includes printing and mailing costs, signage, online and print newspaper ads, and development of outreach materials.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

ENSURING TREE ESTABLISHMENT AND SUCCESS

Project funds may be used to purchase materials to ensure that any trees planted will thrive. This includes slow-release tree watering bags or other irrigation supplies, mulch, and tree protection and staking supplies.

APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed by a grant review and selection committee for completeness, eligibility, and applicability to the grant category focus areas.

Applications should respond to the following elements, which will be used by the selection committee to prioritize awards. Sample applications are available on our [Grant FAQ page](#) as guidance.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Provide a succinct statement of the need for funding, identifying the opportunities and desired outcomes of the proposed project. How will the project help to further your community or organizational goals? Include any information that supports a comprehensive understanding of the applicant's situation, e.g., tree inventory or survey results, planning efforts, and who has been or will be involved in making decisions about urban and community forestry management. Limit 4,000 characters.

WHAT DO YOU PLAN ON DOING AND HOW WILL YOU DO IT?

What do you plan on doing and how will you do it? In list format, describe what action steps you are planning to implement. Include with each bulleted or hyphenated item a description of what will be done, the measurable results, and a timeline. Please be as specific as possible; this list should outline every distinct deliverable of your project. *Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer* projects must be completed by **October 31st, 2025**. Limit 4,000 characters.

WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE PLAN?

In concert with the action items entered above, identify who will be involved in the project and their role including services provided, financial contributions, and product donations. Consider the various municipal staff, boards and commissions, tree warden, community members, professionals, and organizations that can be called upon as partners to support your efforts. If municipal or organizational staff are planting, maintaining, or removing trees, provide details about their qualifications and experience. Limit 4,000 characters.

PRE-GRANT AND POST-GRANT REVIEW

Funded projects may require a pre-grant or post-grant site visit with a VT UCF staff member to support grant success. VT UCF will notify each award recipient if a pre-grant or post-grant review is required in the grant award announcement.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible costs are those necessary for completing the project. Costs must be documented, reasonable, and consistent within the scope of the project, in accordance with Uniform Guidance 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E, Cost Principles. Note that projects must adhere to any procurement policies in place at their organization, municipality, or educational institution.

Examples of project costs include:

- Costs of services, supplies, or equipment to remove ash trees.
- Costs of replacement trees or trees to be interplanted, site preparation, tree protection, and associated supplies necessary for successful tree planting in publicly managed places.
- Costs associated with purchase of equipment to increase the municipality's capacity to plant trees and successfully manage a community-wide tree program. Equipment is defined as tangible personal property with a per unit-cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of one year or more. Purchase, use, and management of equipment under this grant is subject to requirements in Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR Part 200.
- Costs of public outreach and engagement.
- Salaries and fringe benefits of people working directly on the project.
- Value of labor, services, supplies, equipment, or facilities donated to the project by third parties.

COST SHARE REQUIREMENTS

Funds will be awarded on a 1:1 cost-share basis; in other words, the match provided must be at least equal to requested funds. The cost-share match may be in the form of cash, services, or in-kind contributions. Match may take the form of additional tree plantings, ash tree removals, or insecticide treatment of public ash trees. In-kind contributions can include the cash value for volunteer assistance in planning and all grantee personnel/staff labor, as well as the donation of professional services or materials. *Example: The value of volunteer time assisting in a street tree inventory or tree planting are considered an in-kind contribution and an eligible match.*

Costs contributed as match must be eligible as described in the preceding section, Eligible Costs. Use of federal funds from other programs as match will be approved on a case-by-case basis and is contingent upon agreement from the organization or agency from where those funds originate. Volunteer time contributed as match must be documented to include names and affiliations, dates, hours of work performed, and description of activities. VT UCF will provide a form on which to report matching funds upon request.

VALUE OF IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

- Volunteers: Please see our [Grant FAQ webpage](#) for recommended rates
- Donated professional services: use customary rates for services provided
- Donations of materials: use fair market value
- Personnel/staff: use hourly wage rates (may also include fringe benefits)
- Equipment: use established rates per hour, per mile, etc.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

TIMELINE

Applications must be submitted on or before midnight on Friday, **January 5th, 2024**. Grantees will be notified of funding approval by February 1st, 2024. Awarded funds in the form of signed grant agreements are anticipated to be available by the end of March 2024. Projects must be completed, and a final financial report and invoice submitted by October 31st, 2025.

PAYMENT PROCESS

All funds awarded through the *Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer* grant program will be available for payment in accordance with the following schedule:

- one-third payable after the signing of the grant agreement as accompanied by an invoice,
- one-third at a mid-project point as accompanied by a progress report and invoice, and
- the balance upon completion of the project with verification of payment of all expenses and with submission of a final report and invoice.

Refer to our [Grant FAQ webpage](#) for more information.

Please note that grantees will be required to pay for contracted services before final reimbursement from the State. The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation reserves the right to make partial payment upon non-compliance of conditions in the grant agreement. Allow 4–6 weeks from the time of the payment request to receipt of the check from the State Treasurer's Office.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

New this year, applications will be accepted via the online [2024 Common Application for Urban & Community Forestry Program Grants](#). The online form application will accept applications until 11:59pm on Friday, January 5th, 2024. Note that the online form application cannot be saved or restarted; we suggest that applicants download and use the Grant Application Worksheet on the grant webpage to develop, edit, and save your work until you are ready to fill the form out entirely and submit.

Applications will not be considered complete until the application form is submitted and the four required additional documents that are outlined on the Grant Application Worksheet and within the Common Application are submitted via email to elise.schadler@vermont.gov.

HELP

For more information or assistance, contact the VT UCF staff listed below.

Grant Application & Submission Questions: Elise Schadler, (802) 522-6015, elise.schadler@vermont.gov

Project Development Questions: Joanne Garton, (802) 249-4217, joanne.garton@vermont.gov

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

VT UCF staff will host monthly 2024 Grants Office Hours as a chance for applicants to ask specific questions about the grant categories, application development, and submission process. These Office Hours will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams and pre-registration is not required. Meeting dates, times, and links are as follows:

- Tuesday, September 19th, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)
- Friday, October 20th, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)
- Thursday, November 16th, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)
- Monday, December 18th, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)

Grant funding that supports Vermont municipalities, organizations, and public educational institutions through urban and community tree planting is one of the many resources that the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program offers to support local tree care and stewardship. Learn more at [VTCOMMUNITYFORESTRY.ORG](https://vtcommunityforestry.org).