



Community comes together to stabilize the forest at Miantonomi Park in Newport

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NEWPORT — Volunteers showed up in full force late Monday afternoon close to twilight. They shoveled, patted the earth with gloved hands and lugged buckets of water to nourish the young trees.

Thirty new trees — a combination of red maple, larch and sassafras — were planted within a small plot in the corner of the woodlands in Miantonomi Park as part of a reforestation project, made possible by contributions from an anonymous donor and the efforts of the Newport Tree Conservancy, the Newport Health Equity Zone and area volunteers.

“I wanted to bring my daughter here,” said Nycole Matthews of Newport, pointing to her 12-year-old daughter Ranya Ballard. At present, the trees come up to about knee height, but they will grow tall. Matthews said the planting is special, something her and her daughter “can look back on years from now” as they grow with the trees.

Jon Greenberg, operations manager with the Newport Tree Conservancy, said the new trees will help “stabilize the forest” by providing shade to the forest floor. Miantonomi Park hosts the largest forest in Newport, but the woodland is under threat from invasive species. Japanese knotweed, bittersweet, multiflora rose and other dense, hard-to-remove shrubs are dominating the woodland, according to a Newport Tree Conservancy press release.

About one-third of the mature forest canopy has been lost in the past decade, allowing light to reach the forest floor and the invasive species to dominate the native counterparts. The new, native trees will help provide some stability via healthy competition.

The reforestation project Monday marks the “most community-centric thing that we’ve done,” said Natasha Harrison, executive director of the Newport Tree Conservancy. She said that’s the direction the organization’s headed — doing good by the environment with the help of people who live near and in that environment.

Jasmine Lindesey of Newport, a volunteer, said she was happy to support the project. George Lindesey showed up simply because he likes to plant, he said with a smile.

Source: <https://www.newportri.com/news/20191126/community-comes-together-to-stabilize-forest-at-miantonomi-park-in-newport>