



## HeartLands Conservancy to Host Tree Planting Week, Other Opportunities to Engage with Nature in Your Backyard

20 April 2020



In honor of Arbor Day and the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, HeartLands Conservancy will be hosting its first regional Metro East Tree Planting Week April 19th-25th. During this week, the organization is challenging residents to plant native trees - which have a dramatic impact on urban communities. They help facilitate stormwater drainage, clean the air we breathe, cool our atmosphere and our homes, provide beautification to our neighborhoods, and most of all, support biodiversity.

HeartLands Conservancy's Conservation Manager, Sarah Vogt, emphasized the importance of planting native trees, saying, "75% of Illinois' wildlife species require forest habitat. That's why planting indigenous trees is so important - because they have developed symbiotic relationships with these animal species over time. We have to make a conscious effort to provide habitat for our wildlife, for ourselves and for future generations."

One of the most rewarding aspects of participating in Metro East Tree Planting week is that for every tree planted, HeartLands Conservancy will also plant a tree in Madison or St. Clair County this fall. Participants can report their contributions by filling out a simple online form, which can be found at <https://www.heartlandsconservancy.org/treeplanting.php>.

Additional Resources about planting trees, choosing the right tree for your space, as well as a list of native species and where to find them at local retailers can also be found on their website.

This program is part of HeartLands Conservancy's ongoing effort to bring forests back to our urban communities. Funding for this project is provided by the U.S. Forest Service and the Illinois Forestry Development Council.

For more information about Metro East Tree Planting Week, please contact: Sarah Vogt, Conservation Manager, at [sarah.vogt@heartlandsconservancy.org](mailto:sarah.vogt@heartlandsconservancy.org) or 618.566.4451 ext. 23.

### **OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH NATURE**

#### **Backyard Birding Blitz**

HeartLands Conservancy is also hosting a Backyard Birding Blitz during the month of April. As the migrating birds return to their summer breeding grounds this spring, HLC is encouraging southwestern Illinois residents to step outside in their backyard to learn more about the unique species that we often hear singing in the morning, but otherwise overlook. HeartLands Conservancy created a project using the iNaturalist app which allows users to upload photos and sound recordings to share with others. iNaturalist users then help participants identify the observed species so they can learn more about their unique traits, history, and migrating patterns.

The organization will use the images collected from this project to make a Bird Bingo card to share on social media at the end of the month. They are giving users credit on the images selected - so the more observations a participant makes, the more likely their images are to be featured!

In addition, they have several prizes that participants can win for their contributions. More information can be found at <https://www.heartlandsconservancy.org/birding.php>.

#### **Passion for Pollinators Photo Contest**

Spring is in the air and flowers are beginning to bloom! With the arrival of flowers comes the re-emergence of all the pollinators we know and love. Share your passion for these pollinators by capturing images of them in action for a chance to win a prize and be featured in HeartLands Conservancy's publications and social media.

The winner of this photo contest will be chosen by HeartLands Conservancy's Facebook followers during the week of May 11th-15th.

Please visit <https://www.heartlandsconservancy.org/photo.php> for rules and specifications. Email [photo@heartlandsconservancy.org](mailto:photo@heartlandsconservancy.org) for questions or to submit photos.

### **ABOUT HEARTLANDS CONSERVANCY**

Established in 1989, HeartLands Conservancy is a nonprofit environmental organization serving southwestern Illinois. The organization works in partnership with landowners and communities to achieve its mission of conserving, connecting and restoring natural and cultural resources to sustain the communities of southwestern Illinois. To date, the organization has preserved over 9,500 acres of land and invested more than \$35 million in the region's natural resources.

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