



## **Nonprofit offers \$10 tree kits to help restore the forest**

18 May 2020

It's springtime in the Sourlands – and five foot metal fences are popping up all over! Residents have planted nearly 200 persimmon, shadbush, and tulip poplar trees in their yards throughout the region and protected them with deer fencing as part of a new program by the Sourland Conservancy that makes it easy for homeowners to replace trees lost to blight. Kits will be available through June.

"The Ash Crisis Team (ACT) developed this idea as a way to raise awareness of the over one million trees being killed by the emerald ash borer in this area," said Marylou Ferrara, Sourland Conservancy Trustee. "Due to COVID-19 we can't hold large plantings on public lands, so we're offering native tree kits to region residents. This is not a fundraiser, we just want to give everyone the opportunity to connect with nature and help restore the forest – even while we're all in quarantine."

The New Jersey Forest Service estimates that the invasive emerald ash borer is on track to kill over one million trees in the 90-square-mile Sourland Mountain region within the next few years. The Conservancy's staff and ACT volunteers urge all residents, land managers, and municipalities to help #KeepTheCanopy by helping to replace this generation of ash trees.

"Approximately one-third of the Sourland Region is privately owned, so homeowners can provide critical habitat by simply choosing native plants for their landscaping," said Carolyn Klaube, Sourland Conservancy's Stewardship Program Coordinator. "Reducing the size of your yard will reduce your water consumption and lawnmower emissions – and planting is fun!"

Each tree kit includes one native sapling, 5' x 6' length of heavy-duty metal fencing, and a metal stake. Currently, the selection includes tulip poplar, magnolia, redbud, persimmon, red oak, and shadbush. These trees have coevolved with the native animals – some rare and endangered. Humans will benefit, too, from the fruits, flowers, birds and butterflies – not to mention the clean water and oxygen that each tree will provide.

"Each kit includes 5-foot-tall fencing to protect the sapling from deer herbivory," "This is really, really important. You need to protect anything you plant from deer herbivory," Ms. Klaube continued. "There are about ten times more deer than our forest can support. They're eating up all of our seedlings. If we want to have a forest, we need to protect the seedlings."

The Conservancy staff and Ash Crisis Team volunteers have planned three pickups, May 2, May 30 and June 13 with the potential for more to be added. All orders must be made in advance online on Sourland's website, <https://www.sourland.org/act-ash-crisis-team>. Roger Thorpe, Stewardship Committee Chair, said, "We're very fortunate to have a great group of volunteers who are very dedicated to the environment. The first no-contact pick-up day went very well. Participants ordered their tree kits in advance, and everyone got an email that told them their pick-up time and spot number. Eight volunteers prepared the fencing in the morning, and the staff set out their orders in designated areas in the Conservancy parking lot. Folks just pulled up and loaded up their own fence and trees."

The trees are small, 8-24" tall, but the fences are large. Participants are advised to come alone to help with social distancing and to bring a pick-up, SUV or minivan. "We knew we were going to need a lot of room," said Conservancy member Meg Harmsen. "So we emptied out the Subaru!"

"You need to have a fence that's tall enough that deer can't bite off the leaves and strong enough that they can't push it over," said John Hart of Rosedale Mills. "These fences are going to last until

the tree is tall enough that won't kill it by eating a few leaves." In fact, they will probably last long enough to protect the next generation of seedlings.

The Sourland Conservancy's ACT program is sponsored by Pinelands Nursery in Columbus New Jersey and Rosedale Mills in Pennington. Rosedale Mills is a family run store located in Pennington that has been in operation for more than 65 years. They carry small animal and pet foods, horse and livestock needs, lawn and garden equipment and supplies, wild bird feeders and seed, and more. Same day call in/pick up services are available on orders before 11am. During quarantine, Rosedale Mills offers delivery service to accommodate the special needs of seniors, expecting mothers and those with disabilities and compromised immune conditions. Call 609-737-2008 ext 101 or visit [www.rosedalemills.com](http://www.rosedalemills.com) for details.

Source: <https://mercerme.com/nonprofit-offers-10-tree-kits-to-help-restore-the-forest/>