



## Grab a shovel: Vancouver urged to get planting if it wants to become world's greenest city

If Vancouver is going to achieve its goal to become the world's greenest city by 2020, it is going to need to plant more trees - a lot more trees.

BY VANCOUVER SUN MARCH 24, 2014

If Vancouver is going to achieve its goal to become the world's greenest city by 2020, it is going to need to plant more trees - a lot more trees.

The city plants thousands of new ones every year; about 10,000 in 2013 on streets and in parks as part of the forest naturalization program.

But that is still not enough, says David Tracey, who helps manage a program called TreeKeepers, which is on a mission to get more people to plant trees in their gardens this spring.

"We are actually losing tree canopy in Vancouver, not gaining it," says Tracey.

"A lot of trees are disappearing from private land, so if we are going to meet that target of 2020 as the greenest city we are going to have to do more planting."

TreeKeepers is doing its bit by offering a variety of trees for a special discounted price of \$10 each.

You can go to the TreeKeepers website at [www.treekeepers.ca](http://www.treekeepers.ca) and order a tree that will then be available for pickup between March 29 and May 10 at one of 12 locations throughout the city.

"We know the gardening community is already in tune with this need, but we are trying to appeal to those who have never considered planting a tree before," says Tracey.

Last year, TreeKeepers sold about 1,000 trees, but this year it believes it can do better and has ordered up 4,000 trees.

The program is run jointly by Tree City, a non-profit organization, and the Environmental Youth Alliance, working with the city as part of the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan. One of the goals of the Greenest City initiative is to add 150,000 new trees to Vancouver by 2020.

"We think we can create the biggest urban orchard in North America," says Tracey. "There has been a lot of increase in fruit trees, especially from people involved in the local food movement.

"But we are trying to appeal to people who have never planted a tree before because they perhaps felt a little intimidated by the idea.

"We want to take away that fear or mystery and help them to become stewards of the urban forest,

too."

As well as providing the trees, Tracey says TreeKeepers provides expertise, so people can also understand how to properly care for their new tree.

"These people may not be gardeners now, but we think once they discover the fun of planting a tree and harvesting fruit from it, they will get the gardening bug and who knows where that will lead?" Schools are also targeted and encouraged to compete in planting the most trees.

"There will be a prize of \$500 to the school whose students plant the most trees," says Tracey.

TreeKeepers will also sell trees at Sakura Days at VanDusen Garden April 5-6 as part of the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival and at some farmers markets.

A total of 18 trees are being offered in this year's program: Pacific crabapple (*Malus fusca*), Ginkgo biloba (already sold out), vine maple (*Acer circinatum*), coral bark maple (*Acer palmatum* "Sango-kaku"), Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), Limber pine (*Pinus*

*flexilis* "Vanderwolf's pyramid"), Serbian spruce (*Picea omorika*), sourwood tree (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), five apple trees (Ginger Gold, Liberty, Cameo, Red Jonaprince and Crimson Gala), two plum trees (Santa Rosa and Early Italian), and three fig trees (Brown Turkey, Desert King and Peter's Honey Fig).

A study published in 2011 found that tree cover in urban centres across the United States declines at a rate of four million trees a year.

Another study by the Urban Forest Stewardship Initiative recorded an eight per cent drop in the urban forest in Greater Victoria between 1986 and 2005.

For more details go to [www.treekeepers.ca](http://www.treekeepers.ca).

© (c) CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc.