

Arbor Day in Tennessee and AAMG Q & A by Kate O'Lenic

The importance of Arbor Day was recognized very early by the State of Tennessee. In 1875, just 3 years after a newspaper editor in Nebraska urged people to plant trees, Tennessee became one of the first states to adopt a special day for tree planting. In 1925, the Tennessee legislature established "Bird, Flower and Arbor Day" which is now observed on the first Friday of March as a day for government and city officials, along with educators to foster "a better understanding of nature and the importance of protecting wildlife, planting and cultivating flowers, and setting and protecting trees."

The Arbor Day Foundation presents awards to cities for outstanding efforts in urban reforestation. As of 2021, there are 45 Tree Cities in Tennessee! To become an Arbor Day Foundation Tree City, the city must maintain a Tree Board or Department, have a community tree ordinance, spend at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry, and celebrate Arbor Day. Bristol, Johnson City and Kingsport are all Tree Cities. That speaks volumes about the importance of Arbor Day to Tennessee.

This year, Tennessee continues to support efforts to restore trees through the Tree Program. For a small fee, saplings can be purchased. There is still time to reserve trees for pick up on Friday, March 17, or Saturday, 18, 2023.

You can find Tennessee tree program information, and all the information needed to plant and care for trees at: <https://www.tectn.org/tennesseetreeprogram.html>

The form to reserve trees is available at: <https://www.tectn.org/tennesseetreeday.html>

There may also be an opportunity to obtain free trees. Watch your local news sources for information.

Why all the fuss about trees? They have superpowers that we require to survive. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. They also absorb pollution from the air, making the air safer to breathe. Trees provide food and shelter for wildlife. They are natural air conditioners, providing shade on hot days. Trees store and filter water, their roots help prevent soil erosion, and their leaves are a great source of compost to enrich the soil. We cannot live without trees!

Let's all help the planet and plant trees!

Question: *Can leaves from Bradford pear trees be used for mulch?*

Answer: Bradford pear leaves are fine to use as a mulch. However, if there are any seeds in the mulch, you will probably have Bradford pear tree sprouts to remove later. These trees are very prolific, and some states are even considering them invasive. UT Extension recommends keeping the mulch layer to 2-4 inches. See UT Extension publication SP 617, *Mulching Your Trees and Landscapes*, for more information.

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/SP617.pdf>

Question: *My mother has various seeds in a chest freezer. Is there a way to remove them from the freezer without them germinating? We do not plan to plant any of the seeds at this time.*

Could they be removed from the freezer and placed in a cold area to slowly return to room temps?

Answer: We looked around the University of Tennessee Extension libraries and found some answers to your questions.

When you remove the seeds from the freezer, make sure they are sealed up or tightly covered in a dark place while they warm up from freezing. Moisture will form on the seeds if they are not kept dry during the thawing process. Seeds may start germinating if they are exposed to moisture and light. If you do not plan to keep the seeds in a freezer, keep them sealed up in a cool dark place, such as a basement. Refer to a seed saving guide from the UT Extension library and written by the Seed Saving Alliance for help. <https://seedalliance.org/publications/seed-saving-guide-gardeners-farmers/>

Question: *Rabbits, how do you keep them out of a garden or what plants are best to grow for your rabbits are a problem? Need advice!!*

Answer: The University of Tennessee publication “Managing Wildlife Around Your Home,” available at: <https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1868.pdf>, offers excellent advice about rabbits and other animals that may become unwelcome garden visitors. The best way to protect your vegetable garden is fencing. Here is the information taken directly from the document: “A 3-foot-high fence of chicken wire or galvanized hardware cloth will help keep rabbits and groundhogs out of gardens. Burying 6–12 inches of the fence will help prevent digging under. An electric fence with three strands approximately 4 or 5 inches apart, with the bottom strand about 3 inches above ground, also helps exclude rabbits, groundhogs, and raccoons.”