



Contact: Jeff Fucci, Communications Assistant
(201) 460-2002; (201) 693-1113 (cell)
jeff.fucci@njmeadowlands.gov

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NJMC Celebrates Arbor Day with Gift of New Jersey State Tree

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission today continued its tradition of celebrating Arbor Day by presenting trees to the mayors of the 14 Meadowlands District municipalities through the Community Tree Planting Program.

“With enthusiasm, we look forward to the continued proliferation of green spaces and natural areas in the Meadowlands municipalities,” said Susan Bass Levin, NJMC Chairwoman and New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Commissioner. “One hundred and thirty-five years after the first Arbor Day, we must all continue to improve the parks our children play in, the sidewalks we greet our neighbors along, and the downtowns areas we visit for dinner and shopping.”

A total of 140 Northern Red Oak (*Quercus borealis maxima*) trees will be distributed to the municipalities this week, culminating on Arbor Day, April 27.

The Northern Red Oak was designated the Official State Tree of New Jersey in 1950 for its “beauty of structure, strength, dignity and long life.” The tree is adaptable to a wide variety of soil conditions and compatible with shrubs, evergreens, grass and flowers planted beneath its canopy.

A popular park and sidewalk tree, the Northern Red Oak is best noted for the russet-red leaves it produces during the autumn months. The species can be found from the Dakotas to the Carolinas and grows at a rate of 12 to 15 inches per year, reaching a maximum height of 60 to 90 feet tall. It transplants easily and is hardy in urban conditions.

“The new trees provided through this program not only improve the look of today’s Meadowlands District, but the outlook of tomorrow,” said NJMC Commissioner Leonard Kaiser. “They are an investment in the environment, as habitats for birds and wildlife, as sources of clean air to breathe, and as means of natural flood and erosion control.”

The NJMC has been providing trees to District municipalities for the past five years, including Thornless Honeylocust trees last year, American Basswood trees in 2005, Green Ash trees in 2004, and a variety of species in 2003. Each year, a different tree is selected to prevent disease and encourage species diversity.

The agency also provides advice and consultation to municipalities on park planning, design, management and groundskeeping. In the spring of 2006, NJMC horticultural staff assisted the Township of Lyndhurst in tree selection and planting. At the request of the Rutherford School District, NJMC parks staff recently completed a garden and landscaping plan for Washington School.

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