

Woodland Park: Creating a legacy

Yes, Woodlands Trail and Park has been gathering native trees and seedlings contributed by the Chevron Tree Farm and USDA/NRCS Plant Material Center in Galliano for an ecosystem restoration project at Woodlands Trail. The native trees will provide the habitat needed for the deer, squirrels, rabbits and other wildlife within the forest as well as the resident and migratory birds. Additionally, the native trees provide a protection to the surrounding community by absorbing storm water runoff, serving as a wind buffer and providing a native scenic forest for local hikers and visitors.

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall, it removed much of the native tree canopy at Woodlands Trail and Park, allowing non-native trees to flourish and edge toward becoming the dominate vegetation on the front portion of the woods. Treatment funded by the Change Happens Foundation and Barataria-Terrebonne National

Estuary Program allowed the removal of invasive Chinese Tallow, Chinese Privet and China Berry trees from a 20-acre portion of the front part of the woods. Efforts are now underway to restore that 20-acre portion by planting native Louisiana trees that historically grew on the property, i.e., Bald Cypress, Live Oak, Water Oak, Persimmon, Tupelo Gum, Red Mulberry, Green Ash and Red Maple. Although the effort is a little challenging due to the undergrowth and fallen trees from the 2005 hurricane season, volunteers have begun the effort to plant seedlings and small trees that were kindly picked up from the Galliano Plant Material Center by the Plaquemines Parish Government. With the gracious assistance of the Plaquemines Parish Sheriff's Office, Trustees have begun planting the larger 5 - 20 gallon trees, contributed by the Chevron Tree Farm, along the borders of the Upland Trail.

A tree is a tree is a tree

In some respects, this is true when we talk about providing a source of shade and helping keep temperatures lower but other aspects differentiate between the value of having native Louisiana trees and trees that are exotic or non-native to Louisiana. Chinese Tallow leaves are toxic to some animals and their seeds are too difficult for native birds to digest. Without the competition of their native homeland, non-native trees flourish and can crowd out native trees.

How can you help?

- Volunteer for the planting effort - Jan. 9 or 16, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Woodlands Trail and Park, 449 F. Edward Hebert Blvd., Belle Chasse
- Adopt-A-Tree to memorialize a special event or give for a holiday gift.

For more information, visit www.woodlandstrail.org or call 504.433.4000.