

Osage Municipal Utilities, the City of Osage, and Trees Forever are in the second year of their new five-year partnership to involve homeowners, city staff, and volunteers in planting and caring for trees to lower energy usage and improve the health of the overall urban forest. Throughout 2016, the first year of planting trees together, much was accomplished thanks to the hard work of Osage community residents. The following highlights some of those accomplishments and shares ways that you can get involved and learn about trees in Osage.

Throughout 2016, and going forward, Trees Forever will work with Osage to address the diversity of the community's trees. DNR Forestry staff completed an inventory and management plan of public trees that provides a wealth of information. You can find it here: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Urban-Forestry/Community-Tree-Inventories>. The inventory revealed 66% of Osage's public trees are maples. A standard urban forestry recommendation is that a community have no more than 20% of a group of trees such as maples. In the City of Maples, it may not be surprising that Osage exceeds these recommendations. Of course we all enjoy the cool dense shade and beautiful fall foliage of maples, but we do not know what the next pest or disease threat might be or if maple trees will be the target. For the long-term, it's important for the community of Osage to gradually work toward planting a variety of different trees, and great strides were made toward this goal last year.

One concrete step in the move toward diversity was offering different species of trees in the OMU spring tree distribution. In 2016 red oaks and thornless hawthorns were offered. This past spring honey locust and Japanese tree lilacs were made available. Look for different species next spring, and be sure to reserve yours early.

A new tree committee formed and met eight times in 2016. One project the committee has been working on is a tree arboretum along the Maple Trail. A goal of this project is to showcase different species of trees that residents could plant in their yards so that residents can get a sense of the size, look, and general characteristics of each tree before planting their own. Students from Osage schools will be involved in creating permanent signs for the trees. A first phase of 11 different species of trees was planted this spring. They include hackberry, swamp white oak, ironwood, and redbud to name a few. Donations are being accepted for additional trees. The committee welcomes new members; if you are interested in joining the committee, please contact staff at OMU or call city hall.

Another exciting accomplishment for Osage in 2016 was receiving its first ever designation as a Tree City USA. This is a national program administered by the Arbor Day Foundation to recognize communities that make tree planting and caring a priority. For more information see <https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityUSA/> and watch for the Tree City USA sign to be posted in town.

Looking ahead, Trees Forever will work with the City of Osage and OMU to offer educational workshops focused on how community residents can care for trees throughout the community including in their own backyard. In March of this year a free public workshop focused on pruning was offered. Watch for more of these workshops to come. If you want to join the tree committee, suggest a tree

topic for a workshop or help with the celebration of Arbor Day in 2018, please let an OMU staff person or tree committee member know. 2016 was an exciting first year, and there is much left to do to grow Osage's urban forest. Hopefully your interest has been piqued to learn more and get involved. Find your full copy of the 2016 Osage Trees Forever program annual report online at https://osage.net/wp-content/uploads/2016_trees_forever_report.pdf.