

State Nursery Free Seedling Policy

This document is intended solely as guidance, and does not contain any mandatory requirements except where requirements are found in the statute or administrative rules are referenced. This guidance does not establish or affect legal rights or obligations, and is not finally determinative of any of the issues addressed. This guidance does not create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with State if Wisconsin or the Department of Natural Resources. Any regulatory decisions made by the Department of Natural Resources in any matter addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts.

General Policy

State nursery stock can be provided at no cost to landowners, members of the general public and non profit organizations in some circumstances. State statute 28.06(2) reads: “To encourage forest planting, free stock may be allotted to any nonprofit organization or any school for the celebration of Arbor Day” This is a fairly broad policy and it is further refined under NR 1.20 which states, “Trees and Shrubs may be made available free of charge for department sponsored forestry promotional events and university research provided the department is assured the project will have adequate supervision and pending availability of nursery stock.” **It is important to note that free trees are to be distributed primarily for “forestry promotional” or educational events that have DNR employee involvement.**

The key element in this guidance is that the Department must have some level of involvement in the event where free trees will be distributed. Events that promote the benefits of good forest management and tree planting are appropriate considerations for free stock. Below are ways that the Department could meet the “involvement” criteria;

- A DNR forester helps a non-profit group or school plan an Arbor Day celebration and free trees will be distributed during the event. If a Department employee is not present at the time of seedling distribution or planting, then please share information that describes the proper care and handling of nursery stock as well as information outlining proper planting technique. Publications providing this information are available from the nursery program.
- A DNR forester attends an Arbor Day celebration, delivers a talk on the importance of managing our forests and then demonstrates the proper method of planting a tree.
- A DNR employee attends a local event such a June Dairy Day and hands out free seedlings at a department booth or display.
- The Department hands out free trees at the State Fair forestry exhibit.
- A non-profit group wants to plant trees for conservation purposes, independent of Arbor Day and a DNR employee helps with the planning and/or implementation of the project.

Fourth Grade Arbor Day Free Trees

The State nursery program can provide one free seedling to each 4th grader in the state. Individual schools are responsible for submitting the 4th grade orders to the nursery program by the March 15th annually. Home schooled 4th graders also are eligible. Order forms for schools are available on-line at the Nursery web site or are mailed to public and private schools in November..

Registered School Forests Free Trees

School and Community forests that are registered through the state's Community Forest Program are entitled to 5000 trees and 3000 shrubs per year at no cost.

Tree Order Form Required

Seedlings distributed at no charge must have a seedling order form 2420-031 completed by either the DNR employee or the recipient of the product.

Quantities Allowed

The number of seedlings that can be ordered for an event may vary depending of inventory availability. People interested in receiving free stock should contact the Griffith State Nursery at 715-424-3700, to learn about stock availability.

Free Seed Packets

Free seed packets are available from the nursery program for use at forestry promotional events. The seed packets offer a good alternative during times of the year when seedlings are not available. The seed packet consists of White or Red Pine seed with planting instructions attached.