

Forest ReLeaf of Missouri  
2024 Annual Report



# Rooted in Community



## 2024 Impact



Trees Planted

13,922



Planting Projects

347



Missourians Engaged

12,532

Forest ReLeaf of Missouri enriches communities by growing, providing, and planting trees through the power of people and partnerships.



Volunteer Hours

16,117



## Director's Note

Experiencing the total solar eclipse this year was breathtaking, but just as moving was the shared experience of witnessing it with thousands of others together in nature. It was a reminder that awe-inspiring moments are all around us – in the trees we plant, nurture, and enjoy.

Outdoor spaces will continue to inspire – whether it's people pausing to look up from their phones at a gorgeous red maple, children playing under leafy green oaks, or families gathered for a picnic next to a weeping willow. Unlike a fleeting celestial event, trees offer wonder that lasts decades. An eclipse happens whether we prepare for it or not, but trees require our ongoing care and commitment.

At Forest ReLeaf, we know trees spark joy, clean our air and water, connect kids to nature, support biodiversity, and strengthen communities in so many other ways. In 2024, we made significant strides in expanding our impact to care for Missouri's trees.

### 2024 Highlights

**Expanded access to trees statewide** Leveraged unprecedented federal funding to distribute trees to more rural areas, assisted underserved homeowners with tree removal and replacement, and launched the ReLeaf St. Louis stewardship team to plant, prune, and water thousands of city trees.

**Strengthened our urban presence** Relocated our City Office to the St. Louis Operation Brightside building, next door to the Missouri Department of Conservation, to better collaborate and serve the region. Secured a Cooperative Agreement with Missouri State Parks to anchor the City Tree Farm at the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site.

**Expanded our nursery** Increased the growing capacity of our Creve Coeur Park Nursery and Arboretum, adding 2,000 larger Priority ReLeaf trees.

**Invested in staff** Hired a third Canopy Crew intern as a full-time employee, continuing our commitment to growing the next generation of urban forestry leaders.

We know challenges remain, including uncertain federal funding that makes a great deal of our work across Missouri possible, but we believe that the strength of this community will carry us through. Whether you're planting, volunteering, or advocating for trees, you are part of something bigger. You are helping to grow a legacy of green spaces to inspire generations.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Here's to growing together in 2025 and beyond!

**Meridith McAvoy Perkins**  
Executive Director



The Perkins Family observing the solar eclipse on April 8, 2024



**A community is  
a group of people  
who agree to  
grow together.**

- Simon Sinek

## Our Dedicated Staff



**Meredith McAvoy Perkins**  
Executive Director



**Elijah Belz**  
Field Operations  
Coordinator



**Dan Billman**  
Nursery Specialist



**Billy Haag**  
Forestry Manager



**Emily Halpin**  
Office Manager



**Rebecca Hankins**  
Partnerships Manager



**Kelly Hicks-Holloway**  
Community Conservation  
Coordinator



**De'Nonna Jones**  
Stewardship Specialist



**Jake Roeckle**  
Nursery Manager



**Glore Ruiz**  
Engagement Specialist



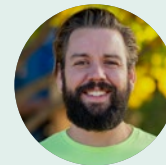
**Ellen Sulser**  
Engagement & Volunteer  
Manager



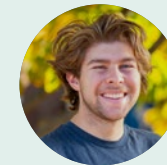
**Jess Underwood**  
Finance & Operations  
Director



**Adara Ameer**  
Seasonal Stewardship  
Technician



**Dave Anderson**  
Seasonal Stewardship  
Technician



**Michael Barash**  
Urban Forestry Fellow

**“When I graduated I wanted to be a part of something that is bringing pockets of nature to places that don’t have it. When I started this work I realized that we are doing just that.”**

- DE'NONNA JONES



### Canopy Crew

Each summer a group of young interns joins our team to support stewardship goals. In 2024, that included watering 1,822 trees!

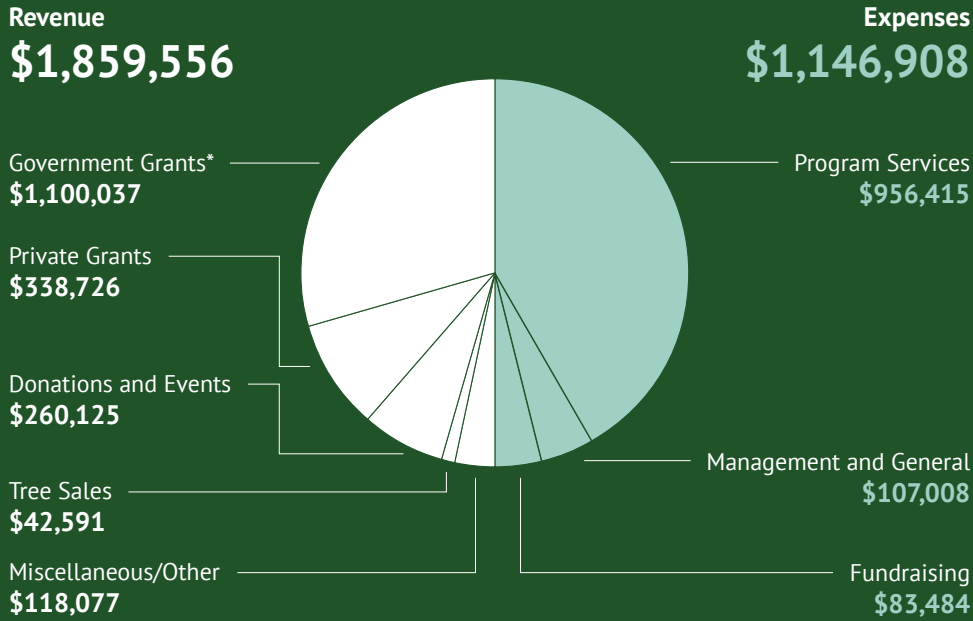


### ISA Certifications

Jake Roeckle and Elijah Belz join Dan Billman, Billy Haag, and Meredith Perkins as Certified Arborists recognized by the International Society of Arboriculture.



# Financial Highlights



\*Forest ReLeaf received an installment of \$750,000 for a multi-year grant in advance of work to be completed over 5 years.

# 2024 Board of Trustees

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Environmental Scientist,  
Ameren

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City of St. Louis

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Missouri Department of  
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**Kara Strider**  
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Barnes-Jewish Hospital

# Community Support

## Core Sponsors

Missouri Department  
of Conservation  
St. Louis County Parks  
St. Louis City Forestry

Clifford Willard Gaylord  
Foundation  
E. Reuben and Gladys  
Flora Grant Charitable  
Trust  
Great Rivers Greenway  
Foundation

Trio Foundation of  
St. Louis  
The Trust for Public Land  
UPS  
Urban Forestry  
Organization  
VGP Holdings, LLC

## 100+ Hours of Service

Terry Alan  
Lori Brinkman  
Warren Davis  
Dave Durham  
Frank Dvorak  
Matt Fitzgerald  
Wayne Fitzmaurice  
Christine Garhart  
Rick Gregory  
Alison Jenkinson  
Nan Johnson  
Bob Keppel  
Kay LaBanca  
Robert Lindecke  
Steve McCarthy  
Glenn Meyer  
John Milton  
Corki Moller  
Lee Phillion  
Terry Powers  
Cathy Rauch  
Susan Rode-Perkins  
Howard Warth  
John Willmann  
Gary Winter

## Sustaining Partners

Amazon Corporation  
Ameren Corporation  
Charitable Trust  
Arbor Day Foundation  
Bank of America  
Charitable Foundation  
The Bellwether  
Foundation  
Big River Management  
LLC  
Charities Aid Foundation  
of America  
Chicken N Pickle  
Davey Tree Expert  
Company  
Victor and Selene  
deLiniere Charitable  
Foundation  
Edward Jones  
Enterprise Mobility  
Foundation  
Edward Chase Garvey  
Memorial Foundation

Heart of Oak Foundation  
ICL Specialty Products  
International Paper  
JM Family Enterprises Inc.  
KPMG U.S. Foundation  
Land Learning  
Foundation  
Mastercard  
McDowell Family  
Charitable Fund  
McPheeters & Rickard  
Family Fund  
Mesa Associates, Inc  
The Nature Conservancy  
Nestlé Purina  
ReDirect  
Seed St. Louis  
Spire Energy  
SSM Health  
State Farm  
St. Louis Community  
Development  
Association  
St. Louis Tree Pros  
StraightUp Solar

## Lead Donors

Joseph R. & Lauren  
A. Allen  
Anonymouse  
Eugene Brunk  
David Durham  
Frank Dvorak  
Elona Dyshniku  
Patrick Geraty  
Ward & Carol Klein  
Robert Lindecke  
Jean Lovati & Kathy  
Halpin  
Raymond Massey  
Vaughn Meister  
Glenn & Karen Meyer  
John & Cathy Milton  
John & Corki Moller  
David Pierson  
Sean Pluta  
Michael Spiegel  
Elizabeth & Jerold Wallis

# Wanna get your hands dirty?

Join our community

People fuel Forest ReLeaf. From tending seedlings at the nursery and planting trees in the community to talking trees with the public and providing critical connections to people and places, volunteers are essential to our success. The experience can also be transformative for our volunteers.



You belong at Forest ReLeaf.



What a delight to see and celebrate as a “crew” how Forest ReLeaf has borne fruit over the years, especially in the area of ecojustice, and continues to plant new seeds of hope and inspiration for community members and for us as a community within that community. It is such a joy to volunteer for Forest ReLeaf and to get dirty with such exceptional people!”

- BRENDA LIGHT

# Our Programs

## Project CommuniTree



Free Trees Distributed

**11,240**

Native Species Offered

**62**

Zip Codes Served

**157**



At maturity, **11,240 trees** will create an average of **126 acres** of forest canopy—that's nearly **100 football fields** of new trees planted in 2024!

The CommuniTree Program expands forest canopy by providing free native trees to individuals, organizations, schools, churches, municipalities, and neighborhood groups for planting in public and nonprofit spaces. Each spring and fall, participants pick up 3-gallon trees from our Creve Coeur Nursery or statewide distribution sites. To support success, we offer a tool lending library and technical assistance, removing cost barriers and empowering local planting efforts.



We tested **seed growing**, inviting partners to collect seeds that will expand our number of diverse species available for planting.



A record **9 statewide distribution events** made 3,435 trees available to partners who otherwise wouldn't have been able to receive trees.



Volunteers pack 7,000 trees into the Nursery's **Hoop House** to overwinter, waiting for spring 2025 distributions.

## Priority ReLeaf



The Priority ReLeaf Program responds to tree planting challenges in high-need areas by providing larger 15-gallon trees, project support, volunteer coordination, resident engagement, and follow-up maintenance. It offers creative solutions to under-resourced urban neighborhoods interested in growing healthy community forests and areas impacted by invasive species or natural disasters, ensuring lasting canopy impact.

Priority ReLeaf Projects

30

Priority ReLeaf Trees Planted

2,180

Priority ReLeaf Trees Stewarded in St. Louis

1,981



The annual **Pear Buy Back** program, in partnership with Missouri Invasive Plant Council, expanded to 15 cities across the state, replacing 525 invasive pear trees with natives.



Resilient community canopy sometimes requires pruning and removal, as well as planting and stewarding. Our **Treesilience** program supports it all. Funding comes from the USDA Forest Service and the Missouri Department of Conservation.



**ReLeaf St. Louis** is a 5-year initiative with St. Louis City Forestry, resulting in 736 of 3,000 contracted street trees planted in our first year. This partnership supports planting, pruning, and watering efforts in historically marginalized neighborhoods across the City.

## Engagement



Events Supported

167

TreeKeepers Trained

40

Forestkeeper Network Members

3,155



TreeKeepers donated **217 hours** of service promoting a healthy tree canopy

The Engagement Program connects people with nature by providing tree awareness and training at conferences, workshops, and community events. In St. Louis, we build excitement and confidence year-round, from our six-week TreeKeeper course in the spring to a chestnut roast in December, while our statewide Forestkeepers Network engages Missourians in citizen science efforts, including forest health monitoring. All this adds up to empower communities to protect and care for trees.



The inaugural **Forestkeepers** “Witch Hazel Hunt” received over 360 observations tracking how climatic conditions affect plant bloom time from citizen scientists across the state, representing over 43 zip codes!



Resilient community canopy sometimes requires pruning and removal, as well as planting and stewarding. Our **Treesilience** program supports it all. Funding comes from the USDA Forest Service and the Missouri Department of Conservation.



Staff gave an impressive **66 presentations** at the local and national levels, sharing their technical expertise and why trees are awesome. Here, Rebecca Hankins interviews author Christine Carmichael during her *Racist Roots* book tour.

## Volunteers



Nursery Volunteer Corps

132

Community Volunteers

2,510

Volunteer Groups

35

The Volunteer Program offers hands-on opportunities for all ages and skill levels to help grow and care for trees. Volunteers in the St. Louis region support nursery maintenance, community plantings, and tree stewardship, whether through ongoing commitment or one-time group efforts. Every experience includes an educational component, ensuring participants grow alongside the trees.



Individual Spotlight:  
**Terry Powers** quickly became a regular, spending over 300 hours tackling projects from the new 15-gallon expansion to constructing a shed for the filter and helping install a kiosk—all with his easygoing attitude.



Group Spotlight:  
For the last 2 years, **Maryville University** students have joined us in the field as part of their annual day of service Maryville Reaches Out. Mulching trees goes a long way to ensure their survival.



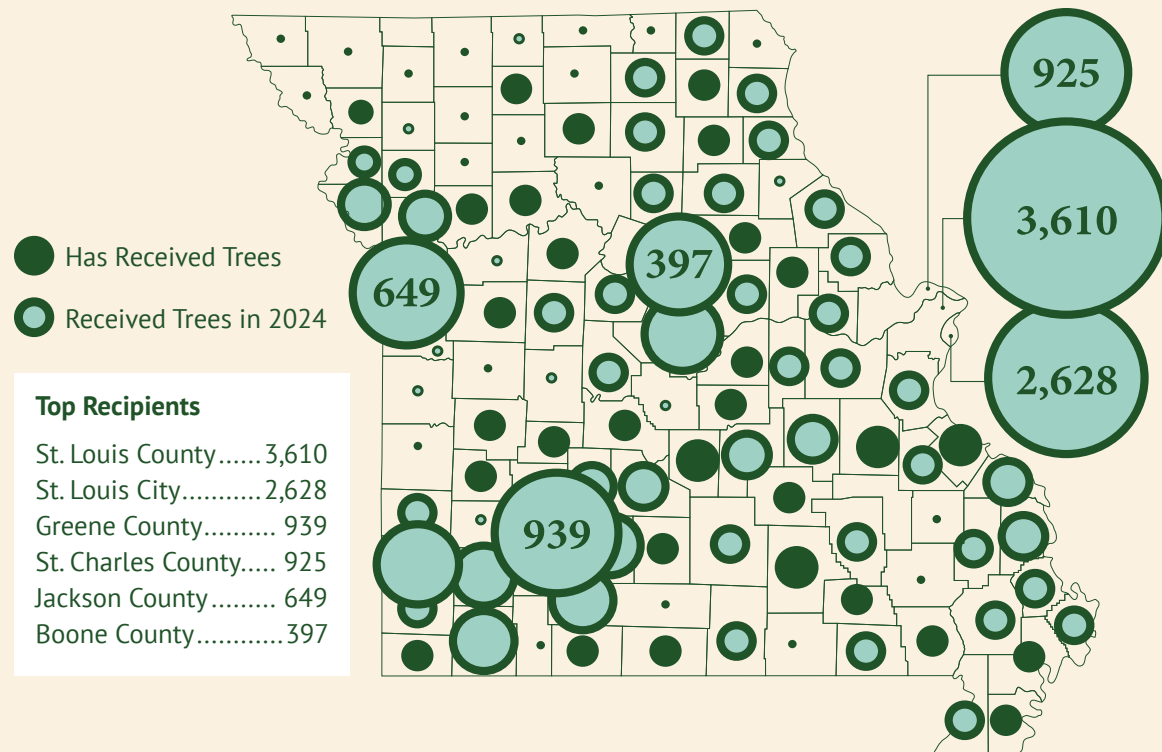
Corporate Spotlight:  
**Keeley Construction** employees not only planted trees, but also committed to 2 years of watering and mulching them at a Head Start School in the City.  
#KeeleyCares



# Statewide Impact

## Tree Recipients by County

Thanks to our partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation and statewide delivery support from Arbor Day Foundation, Spire Energy, and Amazon, we continue expanding tree distribution to planting partners of all sizes across the state. Over 32 years, Forest ReLeaf has served all but one Missouri county.



## Tree Recipient Breakdown

cities / towns /  
municipal parks /  
street trees

125



neighborhood groups

49

nature areas /  
open spaces

43

community orgs /  
nonprofits

46



schools

47

religious institutions

18

cemeteries

7

libraries

2

other

4



## Stories of Impact

### Shoal Creek

**Region:** Southwest

**Impact:** 600 trees were planted on a former cattle farm to combat streambank erosion and improve water quality at Shoal Creek just south of Joplin.



### City of Lebanon

**Region:** Central

**Impact:** Forest ReLeaf trees made it possible for Lebanon to become a Tree City USA. As new parks are continuously created, nearly 500 trees over 6 years have re-treed spaces that were previously bare.



### Elmwood Cemetery

**Region:** Kansas City

**Impact:** Elmwood Cemetery in Kansas City is growing and diversifying their arboretum as they find a new purpose as an urban oasis for both people and wildlife.



### Compton Heights Neighborhood

**Region:** St. Louis

**Impact:** After completing a tree survey of his St. Louis City neighborhood of Compton Heights, Steve Spence organized an 80-tree planting with his neighbors to replace missing street trees.



# Help Us Grow!

Thank you for considering a donation to Forest ReLeaf.

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[www.moreleaf.org](http://www.moreleaf.org)

