

Host a Tree-Planting Project for Your Law Firm This Fall

By David W. Mitchell

As winter approaches, the last leaves fall off the trees, and the grass shrivels, you probably aren't thinking about "greening" your community by planting a tree. But winter and early spring are actually ideal times of year for planting many types of trees. With little effort, young lawyers can provide a service to their communities and build relationships with their colleagues by leading tree-planting projects for their offices. Each tree you plant counts toward the ABA Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (SEER) "One Million Trees Project" goal of having ABA members plant one million trees by 2014.

Summer clerks, associates, and partners alike can participate in the tree-planting events. Such an event is also appropriate for on-campus law school groups to organize and conduct during the school year. A well-organized tree planting only takes a few hours to complete and will have a lasting effect on a deserving area in your local community.

Inspired by the tree plantings that SEER has promoted throughout the country since launching "One Million Trees" in 2009—including at the National Audubon Society's 120-acre Jordan River Migratory Bird Habitat Restoration project in Utah, Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School in Baltimore, and a New Orleans neighborhood devastated by Hurricane Katrina—Balch & Bingham LLP recently hosted its own tree planting as a firm-sponsored event for its summer clerks. On July 27, 2010, eighteen summer law clerks and ten lawyers from Balch & Bingham planted twelve trees at Hawkins Park, a city park in Birmingham, Alabama. These trees ranged in size from three gallons to ten gallons and included native species, such as bald cypress, black tupelo, swamp chestnut oak, and sycamore. Notably, the trees were planted in the vegetated buffer zone around Roebuck Spring at Hawkins Park, home to the endangered watercress darter, and will help restore the endangered fish's habitat.

Below are some steps to follow when planning to host your own tree-planting event:

- First, consider partnering with a local tree-planting organization that can provide advice on potential planting sites and the best times of year to plant. A list of local tree-planting organizations can be found at www.itreebank.org/branches.php.
- Next, select a suitable site and obtain the necessary permission for your tree planting. Potential sites for tree plantings include schools, public parks, and areas near roadways.
- Third, select suitable trees for the site that you have selected. A tree-planting organization should be able to provide guidance on the types of trees suitable for the location.
- Fourth, locate a wholesale or retail nursery that carries the types of trees desired for your tree-planting event.
- Finally, recruit a group of colleagues to plant the trees at the site. Upon completion of the tree planting, be sure to report the number of trees you planted online at www.abanet.org/enviro/projects/million_trees/form.shtml so they count towards the ABA's goal of planting one million trees.

By organizing a tree-planting service project for your organization, you will create a positive impact on the environment and your local community, while helping to build relationships among the participants from your organization. With these benefits in mind, participation in the ABA's "One Million Trees" project is an opportunity that should not be missed.

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