

Northwestern Vermont Riparian Planting Guide

This guide is intended to be a living document that describes planting programs and funding sources available in northwestern Vermont, guidance for designing and implementing planting projects, and opportunities for future collaborative efforts across the region.

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Partner Organizations and Programs

Many partner organizations active in northwestern Vermont do not offer specific planting “programs,” but will scope, secure funding, design, and implement planting projects on a case-by-case basis, often in collaboration with other partner organizations. Reaching out to these organizations directly about a potential riparian planting project is the best way to determine if the project is a good fit for that organization.

Natural Resources Conservation Districts

- Most NRCDs have tree planting programs, which are often focused on planting 35 ft wide riparian woody buffers
- NRCDs can also connect landowners with additional local, federal, or state programs that can support tree planting projects
- NRCDs in Missisquoi Bay basin:
 - [Franklin County NRCD](#) - email info@FranklinCountyNRCD.org or call 802-528-4176
 - [Grand Isle County NRCD](#) - email molly.gicnrcd@gmail.com or call 802-372-8400
 - [Orleans County NRCD](#) - email sarah.damsell@vt.nacdnet.net or call 802-334-6090 x 7008
 - [Lamoille County NRCD](#) - email lcddirector@gmail.com or call 802-521-3004

Local and Regional Organizations

[Missisquoi River Basin Association](#) - email lindsey@mrbavt.com or call 802-393-0076

- Geographic Focus: Upper Missisquoi River basin
- MRBA partners with local landowners to identify riparian planting projects
- Often partners with Vermont Land Trust to conduct plantings on conserved land

[Friends of Northern Lake Champlain](#) - email info@friendsofnorthernlakechamplain.org

- Geographic Focus: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties
- Focuses on riparian buffer planting projects with goal of reducing nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Champlain
- Partners with municipalities, farmers, shoreline homeowners, and other community members to identify areas where runoff can be better managed to reduce nutrient loading

[Franklin Watershed Committee](#) - email tuckerwehnerfwc@gmail.com

- Geographic Focus: Lake Carmi watershed
- Supports projects that reduce erosion and improve water quality on Lake Carmi shoreline and hydrologically connected properties

[Vermont Land Trust](#) - email allaire@vlt.org or cara@vlt.org

- Main mission is to conserve and protect land, but also coordinates tree plantings (often on land conserved by VLT)
- Often partners with CREP, Partners for Fish & Wildlife, and Missisquoi River Basin Association on planting projects

[Northwest Regional Planning Commission](#) – email dpierce@nrpcvt.com

- Geographic Focus: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties

- Does not plan/implement riparian planting projects directly, but is involved in water quality work and stormwater management projects throughout Franklin and Grand Isle Counties
- Part of the Franklin County Stormwater Collaborative, which typically hosts several volunteer events such as stream cleanups each year and is also open to supporting streamside plantings.
- Can be a useful partner to connect with when planning projects
- [Clean Water Service Provider](#) for Missisquoi and Lamoille basins

Federal Organizations

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- Call 802-527-1296 (St. Albans Office) or 802-888-4935 (Morrisville Office)
- Offers financial and technical assistance for agricultural or forest producers looking to address resource issues and improve land stewardship. Producers must be an NRCS customer and have a comprehensive conservation plan prior to applying for financial assistance.
- Most common tree-planting practices are riparian forest buffer, hedgerow planting, tree and shrub establishment, wildlife habitat planting, windbreak/shelterbelt, and silvopasture
- Specific programs:
 - [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#)
 - Provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and non-industrial forest managers to address natural resource concerns
 - Tree planting may be supported through EQIP when it addresses a resource concern (e.g. planting trees as part of a woody buffer to reduce streambank erosion, or planting trees to restore degraded wildlife habitat)
 - [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#)
 - Supports agricultural producers and landowners who are already implementing conservation practices
 - Often seen as a “next step” after participation in EQIP program
 - [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetlands Restoration Easements \(ACEP-WRE\)](#)
 - Easement program with goal of restoring and conserving wetlands that have been degraded by agricultural activity
 - Planting trees is typically a part of that restoration

NRCS/Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets

- [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program \(CREP\)](#)
 - Contact Ben Gabos (ben.gabos@vermont.gov or call 802-461-3814) or Phillip Wilson (phillip.wilson@vermont.gov or call 802-505-5378)
 - Voluntary program designed to reduce sediment runoff and improve water quality by removing land from agricultural production and establishing vegetative buffers
 - State and federal funds compensate landowners for the loss of productive agricultural land through upfront incentive payments and annual rental payments based on the total acreage dedicated to vegetated filter strips, forested buffers, or grassed waterways

- Contracts are typically for 15 years of land rental. Planting materials costs covered by program. The only program that pays the landowner a rental payment, in addition to the costs of the tree planting.

US Fish & Wildlife Service

- Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
 - Contact Chris Smith (chris_e_smith@fws.gov or call 802-662-5303) or Katie Kain (katherine_kain@fws.gov or call 802-238-3316)
 - Provides financial and technical assistance to design and implement riparian habitat restoration projects on private land (often agricultural) with willing landowners
 - Projects on town-owned land are also eligible
 - Focus is on restoring habitat for fish and wildlife
 - Partner with local organizations to conduct site assessments and design restoration plans
 - Can advise any partner organization on designing and scoping a project

Funding Opportunities for Partner Organizations

Block Grants for Partner Organizations

Trees for Streams

- **Who can apply:** Natural Resources Conservation Districts
- **Contact:** Holden Sparacino, holden.sparacino@vacd.org
- **Funders:** Vermont DEC, Lake Champlain Basin Program, PUR Projet, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- **Eligible projects:**
 - **DEC Funds:** Riparian buffers at sites identified in Tactical Basin Plan or River Corridor Plan (or with approval of DEC Watershed Planner or River Scientist)
 - **LCBP Funds:** Riparian planting projects within the Lake Champlain basin
 - **PUR Projet Funds:** Plantings on agricultural land (do not need to be riparian, does not require DEC staff approval)
 - **NFWF Funds:** Riparian buffers that improve fish and wildlife habitat in targeted high-priority areas for eastern brook trout. 1:1 match required. PUR Projet funds can be used as match, but DEC funds cannot.
- **Deadlines:** Applications for 2022 spring and fall plantings are due Feb 11, 2022. Applications then are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. Projects planned for 2023 and 2024 can also be funded.

Watersheds United Vermont Woody Buffer Block Grant

- **Who can apply:** Watershed groups (i.e. MRBA, FNLC, FWC)
- **Contact:** Lyn Munno, watershedsunited@gmail.com
- **Funders:** Vermont DEC, PUR Projet, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- **Eligible projects:**
 - **DEC Funds:** Riparian buffers at sites identified in Tactical Basin Plan or River Corridor Plan (or with approval of DEC Watershed Planner)
 - **PUR Projet Funds:** Plantings on agricultural land (do not need to be riparian)
 - **NFWF Funds:** Riparian buffers that improve fish and wildlife habitat in targeted high-priority areas for eastern brook trout. 1:1 match required. PUR Projet funds can be used as match, but DEC funds cannot.
- **Deadlines:** Applications for 2022 spring and fall plantings are due Feb 2, 2022. Limited funds may be available on a rolling basis after the deadline. The application for 2023 plantings will be available in October 2022.

Upper Missisquoi and Trout River Wild & Scenic Committee

Contact: Lindsey Wight, info@vtwsr.org or call 802-393-0076

River Community Grants

- Small grants of up to \$5,000
- Intended to advance or support projects that protect and enhance the quality and enjoyment of the Upper Missisquoi and Trout Wild and Scenic Rivers and their outstanding resources

- Projects must occur along or adjacent to the designated Wild and Scenic sections of the Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers in Lowell, Westfield, Troy, Jay, North Troy, Richford, Berkshire, Enosburgh, Enosburg Falls, and Montgomery
- Eligible applicants include libraries, schools, town-sanctioned committees and boards, and community-based organizations such as neighborhood groups and historical societies

Town Infrastructure Grants

- Small grants of up to \$5,000
- Funds roadway and infrastructure improvements that protect water quality in Upper Missisquoi and Trout Wild and Scenic Rivers
 - Has not supported planting projects in the past, but planting projects could be a part of broader infrastructure improvement project
- Eligible applicants: municipalities of Westfield, Troy, North Troy, Richford, Berkshire, Enosburgh, Enosburg Falls, and Montgomery

USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Contact: Chris Smith (chris_e_smith@fws.gov or call 802-662-5303) or Katie Kain (katherine_kain@fws.gov or call 802-238-3316)

- Have an established process to provide matching funds for plant material to Trees for Streams/Woody Buffer Block grant projects. Projects must meet USFWS criteria and require a site visit with USFWS staff
- Cooperative agreements with many NRCDs that provides funding support for riparian planting projects that support fish and wildlife habitat in and along rivers
- Other agreements in place with other NRCDs that can support site prep or maintenance work

Additional Funding Opportunities

Vermont Watershed Grant

- Can support planting projects that restore fish habitat, water quality, or reduce stream phosphorus loading
- \$3,500 grants available for planning projects, \$10,000 available for implementation projects

350VT – Rewild Vermont Program

- Connects community members with Conservation Districts and other partner organizations to fund costs of trees for tree plantings
- Currently have ~\$15,000 in funding that needs to be spent by end of 2022. Will pay for trees (not shrubs) at \$6/stem. 350VT volunteers should be invited to participate in the planting.
- Trees do not need to be planted along waterways, no requirements of land type / land use
- Contact Jaiel Pulskamp: jaiel@350vt.org

Vermont Community Foundation - Kelsey Trust

- \$5,000-\$10,000 grants supporting organizations that protect the environment of the Lake Champlain Basin
- Submit Letter of Interest by June 1st

[One Tree Planted](#)

- Funding for reforestation projects
 - Emphasis is on bigger projects with a minimum of 10,000 trees
 - Requires monitoring and maintenance plans to achieve an 80% survival rate
- Mini-grant program that provides funding for events where volunteers plant trees
 - Contact Stephanie Clement, Forest Manager for Northeast region:
stephanieclement@onetreepanted.org

[Arbor Day Foundation – TD Green Spaces Grant](#)

- \$20,000 grants to support tree planting projects that expand community green spaces
- Primary applicant can be municipality; if municipality is not the primary applicant, you must have a letter of participation from the municipality
 - Community partnerships strongly recommended
- Priority given to areas that primarily serve low- to moderate-income residents or take place in underserved communities
- No more than 50% of funding can be used to purchase trees

[Vermont Urban and Community Forestry – Communities Caring for Canopy Grant](#)

- \$1,000-\$5,000 grants, 1:1 match required
- Projects must relate to urban and community forestry in publicly managed spaces in Vermont

Considerations for Selecting and Designing Planting Projects

Watch Katie Kain's (USFWS) presentation about considerations for planning and implementing successful planting projects [here](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page), or view the slides [here](#).

Landowner Outreach

- Partners who provide technical assistance on farms (NRCDs, NRCS) can bring up options for planting projects with landowners as part of a farm visit
- Advertising, word of mouth, and community connections can help landowners, conservation commissions, or other interested parties approach your organization
 - NRCDs can advertise planting opportunities for landowners via VACD
 - Advertising through your tree sale or newsletter can also be effective in getting the word out!
- Knocking on doors or sending emails is main way to reach out directly to landowners you haven't worked with before, but success is sometimes limited

Considerations for Selecting Projects

- Does the site/project meet the criteria for specific funder(s)?
 - Different funders have different priorities and requirements, which may include clean water benefits, wildlife habitat benefits, and specifics like width of planted buffer
 - NRCS EQIP and CSP programs include a competitive ranking process based on watershed, soil type, and resource concerns
- Visibility of site - some organizations may focus on sites that are visible from the road, which can build long-term connection to site for volunteers
- Landowner willingness
 - Projects are more likely to succeed when landowners are highly invested and will put in work to maintain the project long-term
 - It may be helpful to keep a running list of possible sites and landowners who may be interested in future planting projects
- Site conditions
 - Presence of invasive plant species can reduce likelihood of project success
 - Sites with unstable riverbanks may not be suitable for riparian planting projects

Choosing Plant Species

- Riparian planting projects face many challenges, including invasive plant pressure; transplant shock; drought stress; deer, vole, and beaver browse; flooding; and ice damage
- See Katie Kain's presentation (linked above) for detailed guidance on selecting plant species and designing planting projects
- Visit the site yourself, observe if there are native species in the area that seem to be doing well, and gather as much information as possible from the landowner – do they see a lot of deer at the site? Does it flood? Do the soils dry out?
- Use tools such as [NRCS Technical Forestry Note](#) to select plant species that are most likely to succeed at project site

- Can also try to mimic native plant community at site
- Plant early successional species and get the shade and bird habitat established however possible – might not be very biodiverse at first, but birds will bring in other tree seeds once habitat is established
- When landowner has affinity for particular plant species, try to match what they want – they will maintain it better
- Live stakes can do well in riparian environments, but make sure they are planted in wetter locations or they won't take
- Species suggestions:
 - Silky dogwood (does better than red osier dogwood when there is deer browse pressure)
 - White pine (good early successional species)
 - Arrowwood
 - Nannyberry
 - Shrub willow (Streamco willow should not be used in NRCD planting projects, as it is not native to Vermont)
 - Chokecherry
 - Tamarack
 - MRBA and VLT are attempting to plant with sweetgrass!

Additional Considerations for Designing Projects

- Will fencing be needed to keep animals away from the planting site?
 - Cows
 - Deer browse
- If invasive plant species (e.g. knotweed, goldenrod, reed canary grass) are present, may need to consider site preparation with plowing or herbicide
- Can make a follow-up maintenance plan based on your knowledge of site conditions and pressures

Nurseries

- [Redstart Consulting](#) has their own nursery and provides the trees when you contract them to plant

Name	Location	Website
Intervale Conservation Nursery	Burlington, VT	https://www.intervale.org/intervale-conservation-nursery
Meadowview Tree Farm	Naples, NY	https://www.meadowviewtreefarm.com/
Essex County NRCD Nursery	Brunswick, VT	https://www.vacd.org/conservation-districts/essex-county/programs-services/
Poultney-Mettowee NRCD - Champlain Nursery	Poultney, VT	https://www.pmnrcd.org/champlain-valley-native-plant-restoration-nursery/

Cold Stream Farm	Free Soil, MI	https://www.coldstreamfarm.net/
Fedco	Clinton, ME	https://www.fedcoseeds.com/
Schumacher's Nursery and Berry Farm	Heron Lake, MN	http://schumachernursery.com/
East Hill Tree Farm	Plainfield, VT	https://easthilltreefarm.com/
Perfect Circle Farm	Berlin, VT	https://www.perfectcircle.farm/
Prospect Rock Permaculture	Johnson, VT	https://prospectrockpermaculture.wordpress.com/
Hunt's Tree Farm	Berkshire, NY	www.huntstreefarm.com
Hewitt's Garden Center	Saratoga Springs, NY	www.hewitts.com
Dandelion Acres	Bethel, VT	https://www.dandelionacres.com/
Rocky Dale Gardens	Bristol, VT	https://www.rockydalegardens.com/
Cabot Greenhouse and Nursery	Cabot, VT	http://www.cabotgreenhouseandnursery.com/
Horsford Nursery	Charlotte, VT	https://horsfordnursery.com/
Marijke's Perennial Gardens Plus	Starksboro, VT	http://www.perennialgardensplus.com/
Lang Farm Nursery	Essex Junction, VT	https://langbarn.com/plan-wedding/make/nurseryflowers/
Northridge Nursery	West Seneca, NY	https://northridgenursery.com/
Bailey Nursery	Cambridge, VT	https://www.baileynurseries.com/
Elmore Roots Nursery	Wolcott, VT	https://elmore-roots-nursery-108496.square.site/
Hillcrest Nursery	Greensboro, VT	https://hillcrestnursery.net/
Equinox Valley Nursery	Manchester, VT	https://www.equinoxvalleynursery.com/
Greenhaven Gardens and Nursery	New Haven, VT	https://www.greenhavengardensandnursery.com/
Breezy Acres Garden Center	St. Albans, VT	https://www.breezyacresvt.com/
New England Nursery Sales	Waterford, VT	http://www.newenglandnurserysales.com/
Gardener's Supply Co Outlet	Williston, VT	https://www.gardeners.com/outlet

Implementing Planting Projects

Watch Katie Kain's (USFWS) presentation about considerations for planning and implementing successful planting projects [here](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page), or view the slides [here](#).

Watch Kristen Balschunat's (Winooski NRCD) presentation about engaging volunteers in planting projects [here](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page), or view the slides [here](#).

Site Preparation

- Site preparation should be done the season prior to planting if possible— goal is to reduce competition and allow planted trees to establish.
 - Herbicide treatments to kill weeds and competing vegetation
 - Plowing – however, results of disturbing the soil can be mixed, depending on the site. Tilling can reduce the pressure from competing vegetation, but it can also release weed seeds from the seed bank and make competition worse. Avoid tilling flood-prone sites prior to spring flooding season.
 - Can lay hay mulch
- For fall plantings, tilling, herbicides, and mulching can all be done in the weeks or months prior to planting
- For sites with heavy knotweed infestation, significant advance site prep can be necessary. When possible, USFWS recommends a five-year chemical treatment plan, where planting can begin in year 3 or 4.
 - When landowners don't want to use chemical methods, can also set up a strip in between knotweed infested banks and planting site where landowner commits to mowing regularly to keep knotweed from encroaching on planting site
 - Solarization can also be an option to try to kill knotweed
- The success of different site preparation activities depends on the site! If you are only able to do one isolated instance of prep work at a site, it can be challenging to predict the results.

Conducting Plantings

- Who conducts the plantings?
 - Some organizations stick to hiring contractors to plant – improves survival rate, which can be important when funding source specifies a certain survival rate
 - Some organizations involve volunteers in planting days because they are very energized about planting, and having volunteers plant builds engagement
 - School groups and corporate groups can be great volunteers!
 - Organization staff
 - Vermont Youth Conservation Corps; RedStart; Intervale Conservation Nursery crew
 - Division of labor is an option, especially when working with volunteers who may not stay for whole planting day. Can have one person dig all the holes, another person come in and fill holes with trees, etc.
- See Kristen Balschunat's presentation/slides (linked above) for detailed information on engaging volunteers in planting and maintenance programs
- Quality over speed is important on planting day – trees need to be planted well to survive!

- Try to time delivery of plants from nursery as closely as possible with planting
 - When dealing with bare root plant material (typical), make sure to keep roots wet and plants covered so they do not dry out
- Some organizations have had good results from mulching trees after planting. However, mulching can also create habitat for voles, which can kill or damage trees.

Monitoring and Maintenance

- Post-planting maintenance can be critical to project success, but many funders do not provide funding for these activities
 - PUR Project funding requires follow-up visits
 - One solution is to engage volunteers in follow-up maintenance ([Winooski NRCD](#) does this)
- Typical activities
 - Tree survival counts
 - Weed whacking, mowing
 - Pulling weeds manually from around plant bases
 - Herbicide weeds
 - Soap, Plantskydd, tubes for deer repellent
- Try to water after planting when it's dry
 - Can rent sump pump for \$50/day for irrigation from brook at planting site

Current Challenges and Opportunities for Riparian Planting Projects

Identification and Development of Projects/Landowner Outreach

- Plantings do not always survive! When landowners put effort and energy into working with organizations on planting projects that ultimately don't survive, it can leave a bad taste in their mouth about working with organizations on these projects.
- Riparian buffer planting projects typically need to be 35 feet wide, and it can be a challenge for landowners (particularly agricultural producers) to be able to take that much land out of production/use.
- It can be challenging to reach out and find landowners who might be interested in planting projects – there is potentially a need for a messaging campaign that might make people more aware of opportunities for planting projects on their land, or can reach people based on their other interests (such as fish habitat).
- Current incentives may be insufficient to convince landowners to plant – CREP provides incentive payment/rental money, but the amount does not always make it worth it to landowner to give up that land for production.
- Projects need to be on streams for most funding sources, which limits the scope of projects that can be done.

Planting Implementation

- Sourcing trees for plantings is a major challenge
 - Difficulty in sourcing native species, especially ones well-adapted to Vermont climates
 - Also challenging to source species that are also fruit or food species for humans, which can be desirable for some landowners
 - Because of extremely limited stock, plantings need to be planned far in advance – typically need to order trees by fall for a spring planting the following year
- Finding more people/volunteers to help plant trees
- Plantings all happen at the same time of year, which is logistically challenging for our small organizations
- Ability to use seeds or plugs – could be helpful to have options besides bare root plantings
- Many funding sources require a press release
- Spring vs. fall planting considerations, weather during planting
- Questions and unknowns
 - Would incorporating more herbaceous species into our plantings to compete with weeds improve survival?
 - Does direct seeding lead to different success rates over bare root materials?
 - How effective is tilling prior to planting?
 - How effective is herbicide treatment prior to planting, and should we be doing more solarization to kill invasive plants?

Maintenance and Monitoring

- Mortality issues
 - Invasive pressure on planted species due to species like knotweed or canary grass

- Mortality due to tree tubes
 - Deer browse
- Cost of replanting can make some projects bleed money
- Drought/lack of irrigation
- Lack of maintenance funds
 - Would extra funding for site preparation reduce maintenance costs and improve survival? What about funding for irrigation after planting?
- Determining tree survivorship
 - Difficult to do without funding
 - Can be challenging to mark trees for follow-up surveys – need flagging tape with species labels?
- There is room to provide education and technical assistance about site maintenance to improve survival rate – but lack of staff capacity is an issue. Franklin County NRCD just got a grant to compile resources about maintenance and will share when that is available.

Opportunities for Collaboration between Partner Organizations

- Connecting landowners with organizations that can assist with funding and planting
 - We can be collaborative and “hand off” projects to each other when it makes sense based on project location or the relationships that each organization has with specific regions/people
 - Share information about willing landowners
 - Time and people power are currently more limiting than project funding
 - Bolster communication between NRCS and NRCDs about projects that ultimately don’t get funded through NRCS ranking process
- Shared GIS layer of planting sites that each organization manages
 - Communicate with each other about what sites need follow-up visits and share the load
 - Vermont Land Trust stewardship may be able to assist with maintenance at projects they didn’t plan
- Get volunteers involved in local partners’ plantings
- Share knowledge about tools and availability (auger vs shovel, water pumps)
- Getting assistance from Staci Pomeroy (VT DEC River Scientist) or USFWS for input on potential projects
- Advocating for more tree planting funding!
- Is there an opportunity to pool all of our organizations’ planting projects together and then divide and collaborate on planning, ordering, and implementing to better use time and resources, and take advantage of economies of scale?

Additional Resources

VT Community and Urban Forestry Website

- Resources page provides information about tree selection and care, as well as public policy and land use planning related to tree plantings
- Main focus is urban forestry, but much of the information is also applicable to riparian plantings

NRCS Forestry Technical Note 2

- Excel file with list of trees and shrubs that can be used in Vermont conservation projects
 - Allows for filtering based on plant characteristics such as light preference, rooting depth, and drought tolerance
- Includes information about species suited for bioengineering projects and species that provide important wildlife benefits

Vermont Riparian Buffer Practitioners' Meeting

- [2022 Meeting Information](#)
- [2021 Meeting Archive](#)

Vermont State Documents

- [VT ANR Riparian Planting Guide](#)
- [VT DEC Riparian Planting Guide](#)