

TreeFest 2013 to Offer Tree Seedlings and Native Grasses

TreeFest, an annual distribution of tree seedlings, returns this year with the addition of two native grasses. This year's event will be held Friday, Jan. 25 and Saturday, Jan. 26 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., or until trees run out, in the JC Penney end court inside Independence Mall. Saturday morning participants will enjoy the live talents and tree-inspired songs by Mark Herbert, also known as the "Rappin' Red Oak," from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m.

Each year our community loses thousands of trees to disease, development, and storm events. Trees do much more than provide aesthetic benefits; they help improve our air and water quality, lower energy costs, and remove carbon dioxide from the air.

Participants are invited to choose any combination of trees and grasses, up to 5 tree seedlings. A suggested donation of \$3 per household will help ensure that TreeFest returns next year. TreeFest is funded by the donations received during the event.

Tree species include: Atlantic white cedar, bald cypress, black gum, black walnut, Chinese chestnut, crape myrtle, Eastern red cedar, green ash, live oak, longleaf pine, Mockernut hickory, overcup oak, river birch, swamp chestnut oak, white oak and willow oak. Grass species include pink Muhly grass and wire grass. Availability is subject to change without notice and will be available first come, first serve.

Your seedlings will be wrapped in wet newspaper and a compostable bag that may be reused or planted with your tree, then placed in a plastic bag for transporting. Please consider bringing a plastic grocery bag to reduce the number of new plastic bags in our community. Seedlings and grass received should be kept moist and soon planted; ideally the same weekend as TreeFest. The winter season is a great time to plant trees in our area.

Because the trees will live a very long life, a little planning at home before you pick up your trees can save you lots of time down the road. Consider what size tree will fit on your property, look for utility lines above ground, determine if any utility lines are below ground, and whether any buildings are nearby. There will be experts on hand to help you decide which tree will work best for your site, as well as how to take care of your tree.

TreeFest began in 1997, after Hurricanes Bertha and Fran destroyed many trees in the area. The TreeFest Committee organizes the event; members and sponsors include Progress Energy, North Carolina Forest Service, Keep New Hanover County Beautiful, New Hanover County Cooperative Extension, New Hanover County Parks Department, New Hanover Soil and Water Conservation District, Tidal Creek Cooperative Market, City of Wilmington, and Independence Mall.