

2011 Florida Arbor Day Celebration in Crestview

In celebration of Florida's Arbor Day, free tree seedlings will be given away Friday, January 21, 10:30 am to noon at the John McMahon Environmental Education Center, 132 Butler Avenue in Crestview.

This event is sponsored by the Florida Division of Forestry (FDF), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the City of Crestview and the University of Florida Extension Service in Okaloosa County. FDF and NRCS will provide bareroot tree seedlings including flowering dogwood, flatwoods plum, southern magnolia and white oak. Seedlings will be available as long as supplies last.

University of Florida Extension Agents Larry Williams and Sheila Dunning will conduct tree planting and pruning demonstrations. Master Gardeners will be available to answer questions. You may also enjoy touring the Environmental Center.

Now owned and operated by the City of Crestview, the Environmental Center was originally conceived and started by former County Forester John McMahon in 1979. The center offers a park like setting with picnic area and two ornamental fish ponds surrounded by an impressive compilation of almost 100 native trees all of which McMahon tirelessly collected, dug and planted over the last 32 years.

Arbor Day was originally founded in Nebraska on April 10, 1872 as a tree-planting day. Every state recognizes Arbor Day but because of differences in climate, each state selects its own date to fit the best planting time for trees. Florida's Arbor Day is the third Friday in January. National Arbor Day is the fourth Friday in April. Florida foresters and other tree experts take advantage of the cooler time of the year. Planting trees now allows young trees to become established by the time hot spring weather arrives.

Directions to John McMahon Environmental Center:

At the intersection of Hwy 85 and 90 in the center of Crestview, go west on 90. Drive one tenth mile and turn right on Mapoles St. (between First Baptist Church and Burger King). Drive three tenths mile to second stop sign and cross First Avenue. You'll see a forestry tower ahead. After crossing First Avenue, continue on Mapoles for another two tenths mile and turn left at forestry tower into the John McMahon Environmental Center.

For more about Florida's Arbor Day, visit <http://www.arborday.org/states/?state=FL>.

For more about the Arbor Day Celebration in Crestview, contact the Okaloosa County Extension Office at 689-5850 or 729-1400, ext. 5850 or the Florida Division of Forestry Office in Okaloosa County at 689-7838.

Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County, January 12, 2011